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**Continued on page 4**
Between Ourselves

THE COVER

An Egyptian peasant girl is holding aloft with a perceptible sense of joy and pride a tuft of "white gold"—cotton, which symbolises Egypt's prosperity, and for that matter, many other Muslim countries.

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TURKEY’S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE ARABS AND THE STUMBLING BLOCKS IN ITS WAY

The recently proposed Turkish-Iraqi Treaty has placed the seal on a steady movement of friendship between Turkey and the Arab world which is gradually restoring the relations which existed before the Arab revolt of the Sharif Husain in the Hedjaz in 1915-16. Opposition to this Treaty in Iraq, Syria and Egypt is primarily due to internal causes, and in the case of Syria the bitterness felt by the people at the handing over of the Sandjak of Alexandretta by France to Turkey in 1939 against the wishes of the Syrian people.

Iraq

In Iraq itself, the parliament, which contained some thirty opposition deputies, including ten members of the National Front, was arbitrarily dismissed and a new parliament supporting entirely General Nuri al-Sa’id was elected in its place. As a result there is strong opposition to anything carried out by the existing Iraqi Government, including the Turkish-Iraqi Treaty. Dr. Fadhill al-Jamali and the younger generation of energetic conservative officials are strong supporters of the rapprochement with Turkey and will support the Nuri Sa’id Government.

The Iraqis are intensely nationalistic. They love what they describe as “real independence”. They hate Zionism as violently as the Palestine Arabs, and they wish to eradicate all traces of British military occupation and alleged British intrusion in their internal affairs, as they consider General Nuri al-Sa’id as being too pro-British, while they consider Dr. Jamali and the more progressive younger generation to be pro-American, and they blame the United States for influencing Turkey and thus causing her to recognize Israel. All the Arabs of Iraq support Arab unity, and most of the people who enjoy a very low standard of living feel no inclination to accept Turkey’s commitments with the other North Atlantic Treaty powers, for they are afraid that if they throw in their lot with the West they will, in the event of a world war, be occupied by Russia and be exterminated before help could arrive.

Thus it may be seen that there is no resentment felt against the Turks, but there is a feeling of apprehension against the Turks’ foreign commitments in NATO and there is a great deal of resentment felt against Turkey’s attitude towards the Zionist invaders. If Turkey should adopt a wholehearted policy of Muslim solidarity as advocated by Pakistan, then Turkish-Arab amity would become a viable proposition. The Turks on their side are looking for valuable military support and they wish that the Arab States should have powerfully-equipped modern armies ready to afford them effective and speedy support, should they be attacked by the Soviet Union, the one power which in their opinion covets the Dardanelles and Istanbul. It is for this reason that Turkey has allied herself to Yugoslavia and Greece, two predominantly non-Muslim powers whose armies and partisans fought against the huge Nazi-Fascist armies with conspicuous heroism and success in the last war.

Egypt

Egypt is naturally intent to keep the leadership of the Arab world, and the government does not feel itself at present to be in a position to enter into any Western defence scheme or any allied project owing to the opposition of the Egyptian people. Egypt is aiming at a regional Middle East defence pact backed by powerful modernized Arab armies which will liquidate or completely neutralize Israel as a first step. Naturally, in order to obtain arms from the West, Egypt has at times to soft-pedal her anti-Zionist feelings, but this is only a temporary expedient. Iraq’s Foreign Minister, Mr. Musa Shabander, forecast Iraq’s intentions with regard to Turkey, and Iraq’s attitude came as a surprise to no one. In fact, Iraq would have liked all the Arabs to have linked themselves positively with Turkey. Egypt was forced into agreeing to the return of foreign troops to the Canal Zone.
in the event of an attack on Turkey, but the Turkish and Iraqi Governments wanted something far more tangible. The visit of the Turkish Premier to Cairo is likely to help iron out a great deal of mutual misapprehensions, but for the sake of her internal prestige and her predominant position in the Arab League, the Egyptian Government is bound to protest openly. Possibly in a few years' time Egypt may follow Iraq's example, but the opposition of former Wafdist, Muslim Brothers, Socialists and Communists is still a force to be reckoned with. Anyway, it will remain so unless a great many social reforms are carried out in the interests of the majority of the people.

Syria

Syria's attitude towards Turkey can be defined by three different factors: (1) the Alexandretta question; (2) the attempt by the Iraqi opposition to express its displeasure by demonstrations in the comparatively democratic neighbouring State of Syria; and (3) the existence of a powerful neutralist so-called Socialist Party led by Akram Haurani and the existence of a well-organized Communist Party under the veteran Mr. Khaled Bugdash. Syria's emergence from the military dictatorship of Lieut.-Colonel Adib Shishakley has naturally resulted in expressions of popular feeling, such as the recent demonstrations against the Turkish-Iraqi Pact, resulting in the clashes with the police, causing eighty-two casualties. Syria's immediate problem is an internal one, and the struggle between the conservative landowners, the politicians of the old parties, the regional interest in Damascus and Aleppo, and the Socialist and Communist opposition which seeks to change the economic conditions of the country by distributing the land and nationalizing the means of production and distribution. Also the army is watching, and no doubt the former dictator is seeking to return to power, if conditions are favourable. Turkey does not, therefore, play a great part in Syria's immediate thoughts, although some of the Sha'ab Party leaders are known to be favourable to a link with a Western defence scheme. A friendly gesture to Syria over the Sandjak of Alexandretta, or Hatay, to give it its new Turkish name, would greatly improve Turkey's relations with the conservative and moderate Syrian parties. Turkey is said to be considering setting up, with American and French approval, a great military base in the Sandjak. It is possible that some formula may be worked out for Turkey to share the base with Syria in the event of that country rearming.

The outside Muslim world may well show its impatience at the slowness of the Arab-Turkish rapprochement, but unless the facts enumerated above are taken into consideration, the situation will remain incomprehensible.

Iraq and Iran and the West

The Western powers are attempting to get Iraq to join in a mutual defence scheme with Iran, but here again the people of Iraq are opposed to the government of General Zahedi, which has executed the young Foreign Minister, Husain Fartimi, and imprisoned the popular Dr. Musaddia, the symbol of Muslim anti-imperialism. Also, the Mullah Ayutullah Kashani, another opponent of General Zahedi, has considerable influence in the holy Shi'a towns in Iraq. Yet any scheme for defending Iraq against the Soviet Union, to be effective, would only be so if Iraq and Iran were involved in a mutual defence scheme, and Turkey's eastern flank would equally be vulnerable if Iran fell into the hands of an unfriendly power. It is therefore certain that the Western powers will do all they can to achieve Muslim defence unity in order to extend a cordon sanitaire around the south of the Soviet Union and in order to protect the oil reserves of the Middle East. It may well appear to the Muslim world that the two great blocs are equally well balanced and that a world war is not imminent, and that all defence schemes are thus futile. Such an attitude would naturally be welcomed for purely opportunist reasons by the Soviet bloc, but at the present time only the West can help the Muslims to achieve unity, the main task of the Muslim world, and it should avail itself of every opportunity of achieving this.

Turkey, which is ruled by the powerful Democratic Party, is in a much stronger position to implement its own foreign policy. It is true there has recently been a disquieting curbing of the power of the Press, but any rapprochement with the Arabs will meet with the support of the vast majority of the Turkish people.

M. Menderes' visit to the Arab Middle East may well result in the opening up of a new era in Arab-Turkish relations, and his initiative will be applauded throughout the Muslim world. The Arabs must oppose a united front in America and Britain against the intrigues of the Israeli diplomats and their supporters in these countries. Pakistan has played her part in this rapprochement, and it has been a constructive and creditable effort.

The Arab world and the West

At present the Arab League has adopted the sensible policy of discussing the proposed treaty, and Iraq, by agreeing to participate in this discussion, has shown that the whole weight of public opinion in Iraq is in favour of Arab unity. No doubt the Iraqi delegate will urge the other Arab representatives to form some link with Turkey. Meanwhile, M. Menderes, in Beirut, has made some more conciliatory remarks in his historic visit. It is to be hoped that these will fall on fertile soil.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister has assured British and American diplomats in Cairo that Egypt's opposition to the proposed Turkish-Arab treaty is not on the grounds of anti-Western feeling, but because it threatened Arab unity. It would seem that the old bogey of "Turkish imperialism" takes a long time to die, but it should be offset by the need to win Turkish support against Israel, for it is Israel, and not Turkey, that is the real obstacle to Arab-Turkish unity.

In a broadcast speech on 17th January 1955, the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Eden, cited the proposed treaty as one of the most hopeful events of the past year. Mr. Eden is, of course, a typical representative of the Conservative school of professional, trained diplomats, but he has consistently tried to raise the prestige of Egypt, Iraq and other Arab States. It was Sir Anthony Eden who was responsible for the Allied declaration of Libyan independence, one of the few good things (from the Arab point of view) which emerged from the last great war. His speech to the British public was couched in the friendliest terms towards the Muslim Middle East. The question of raising the prestige of the Muslim countries through a valid series of genuine alliances must be taken into consideration before this or any other treaty is lightly dismissed.
TOWARDS RE-ORIENTATION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT*

By Dr. Sayyid ‘Abdul Latif

A Fresh Examination of the Hadith Literature

V

Re-examination Favoured

It is a matter for gratification that the bulk of the opinions received on the proposal mooted by the Academy, viz., the re-examination of the Hadith literature with a view to paving the way to a re-orientation of Islamic thought in all its bearings, are very encouraging. Those who are in favour of the proposition include Ulama," university professors, jurists, administrators and publicists.

It may be recollected that six issues had been framed for consideration. Excepting the first, calling for opinion on the need for a fresh examination of the Hadith literature and the codification of a single corpus of the Hadith, not all the other issues have been touched upon by every one of the above scholars. And this is probably because issues such as the constituting of a board of research, the terms of reference to it, the method of investigation, and the provision of finance for organizing research and publishing results, were subjects which should only be taken up for consideration, once it became clear that the need for investigation was seriously felt in proper quarters.

In respect of the first issue, the replies made it abundantly clear that the proposed investigation and the codification of a single corpus of trustworthy riwayat is imperatively called for. Particular stress is laid on the need by those who hold representative positions in the field of Islamic learning such as the Maulana Abd al-Qadeer Siddiqi, for long Head of the Faculty of Muslim Theology, the Osmania University, Hyderabad, and sometime the Principal Shaikh of the Jam'ah Nizamiyyah, Hyderabad, India; the Maulana Abdus Salam Nadwi, President of Nadwha al-'Ulama and of the Shibli Academy, Lucknow, India; the Maulana Mahmud Bashiruddin Ahmad, Imam, Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyah, Rabwah, Pakistan; the Shaikh Munir al-Qadi of the Council of Ministers, Baghdad, Iraq; the Shaikh Dr. 'Abd al-Rahman Taj, Rector, al-Azhar Cairo; and the Qadi al-Qadat and the Ra'is al-Hay'at al-'Ilmiyyah al-Islamiyyah, 'Ainonan, Jordan. Indeed, some of them have emphasized that "this is the only way", to quote the Maulana Abd al-Qadeer Siddiqi, "to effect a renaissance in Islamic thought, and to promote unity among the different sections in Islam." On the second issue also there is unanimity of opinion that every riwayat should be tested in the "light of the Qur'an" or in the light of the "Qur'anic ideology", and that only those which are supported by the Qur'an should be retained and the rest rejected.

VI

The Qur'anic Ideology

Such phrases as "the Light of the Qur'an", "the Qur'anic ideology", etc., have to be clearly defined.

What, however, needs to be noted here is that none of our correspondents has attempted to define "the light of
the Qur'an or the Qur'anic ideology, or explain what exactly is to be meant by either of the two terms in their application to the testing of the Hadith literature. Only one scholar, the Maulana Muhammad Ja'far Nadwi of the Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, Pakistan, has suggested certain lines of approach to an appraisal of the Qur'anic ideology. The Maulana has already to his credit two important works the Maqam-i-Sunnat, published in the series of his Institute, and Riyaz al-Sunnat. "We have already crossed," he says, "thousands of riwayat as deserving of being expunged from the extant collections of Hadith." He is of opinion that before applying the touchstone of the Qur'an in the examination of the Hadith, several issues have to be settled touching the Qur'an itself. They are:

(1) Is the letter of the Qur'an to be followed or the spirit of it?

(2) Are all the details of the provisions of the Qur'an valid for all times, or are any of them transitory in their application?

(3) Are the stories and parables, etc., in the Qur'an as basic in character, even as the basic values of the Qur'an?

(4) What is the central subject of the Qur'an round which every other revolves?

(5) Should terms such as Mu'lim, Mushrik, \textit{Ahl al-Kitaab}, etc., bear the same concept at all times, or should the concept change from time to time?

(6) Are the teachings of the Qur'an dynamic or susceptible to fresh and fresher interpretation in the context of changing situations, or are they static and local in application both in point of time and space?

Questions Nos. 1 to 5 are more or less covered by No. 6, which in a way is an inclusive question. An answer to the question, whether the teachings of the Qur'an are static or dynamic, might disclose the spirit underlying the social and legal provisions of the Qur'an, but may not raise before our minds' eye a full view of the ideology of the Qur'an or of the Qur'anic way of thought and living. To get at this, a much wider and deeper approach might be necessary. Questions such as the following will call for consideration:

Thirteen questions which call for consideration before an approach to determine the nature of the Qur'an can be made

I. What is man, according to the Qur'an, in relation to the rest of the universe?

II. What is the order of life which the Qur'an aims to provide or evolve for man?

III. What values of life does it project on which it desires this order to rest?

IV. What is the concept of God presented by the Qur'an in His essence, as well as in the context of His attributes considered both separately and cumulatively? What is Sunnah Allah, the way of God, or as differently termed Firaq Allah or Khilaf Allah, which the Qur'an calls al-Din al-Qayyim or the right way which everyone has to observe, if he is to achieve Islam or peace with one's self and peace with his external world? "Believe and act" is the Qur'anic injunction, action to be in consonance with belief. What form then is the belief in God of the Qur'anic conception, observing a Sunnah or a way of his own which the Qur'an says He never alters, to assume when translated into action, or what mode of life does it argue for man (a) as an individual and (b) as a unit of society, so as to promote (i) perfection of man as man and (ii) perfection of society?

V. Item No. IV raises an important issue. The attributes of God which are meant to be displayed by man in his own person or in relation to himself, and in his social relationships, were not brought to view all at once. They were pointed out progressively according to the piecemeal delivery of the Qur'an. Could the process be cut into periods and the attributes distributed into groups in a progressive order? Does each fresh disclosure of the Divine attribute signify a corresponding responsibility assigned to man? Is this gradual assignment reflected in the provision of rules of conduct prescribed by the Qur'an? The Qur'an was intended in the first instance to mould the Arabs of the Prophet's time into a pattern an \textit{Ummatan Wasatan} for the rest of the world. A process of reformation or perfection such as this always marks a preparatory or transitional stage. The question arises: Which of the provisions of the Qur'an may be assigned to the transitional stage, and which to the stage of \textit{Ummatan Wasatan}?

VI. In this context the question arises: What is the criterion by which the Qur'an distinguishes right from wrong, \textit{Hadeeth} from \textit{Haram}, and so on and so forth?

Some considerations relevant to the Prophet Muhammad being a Bashar

VII. Further, the question of 'Usrah Hanana, or good pattern, the example of the Prophet, will next come in for consideration. The Qur'anic way of life was, in the first instance, meant to be observed by the Prophet himself, in his capacity as Bashar, or human being. How and in what spirit he implemented in his person the provisions of the Qur'an, as an individual, as a unit of society, and as head of a State, should furnish the basis for application in analogous situations. But there is one serious impediment in following the pattern. Certain schools of orthodox \textit{Ulama} assert on the basis of certain riwayat and of interpretation of certain passages in the Qur'an that every little thing which the Prophet did was under the direct inspiration of Wahyi from God. This type of Wahyi is called, in the manner of the Judaic scribes, Wahyi Khaliy or Wahyi Ghair Muttah as distinguished from the Wahyi embodied in the Qur'an which is styled Wahyi Jaliy or Wahyi Muttah. Every thought and action of the Prophet is thus looked upon as the result of divine inspiration. This is reducing the Prophet to the position of a mere automaton and denying him a personality of his own as Bashar. How then is one to imitate a being or think or do as he did unless one is a prophet oneself and is dependent for even the slightest movement of thought and action on the direct direction of God. There are further implications in this pose, and unless this concept is liquidated by a straight reference to the Qur'an, and the fact maintained that everything done or said by the Prophet in pursuance of

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16 Literally, a believer.
16c Literally, a polytheist.
16d "The People of the Book," i.e., the Jews and Christians.
17 A phrase used in the Qur'an (2:137) to describe the role of Muslims in the world. It means "a just, good or equitable nation".
18 An Arabic word meaning \textit{lawful}.
19 An Arabic word meaning \textit{unlawful}.
20 A phrase used in the Qur'an to describe the character of the morals of the Prophet Muhammad. It means "an excellent example".
21 Literally, hidden revelation or corrected revelation.
22 Literally, open revelation or recited revelation.
23 A human being — a word used in the Qur'an and put in the mouth of the Prophet to say that he was no more than a human being.

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the Qur’anic message and the purposes underlying it, was said or done on his own personal initiative as a Bashar and strictly within the framework of the Qur’anic thought or message, and that nothing attributed to him in the riwayat could alter or supersede the word or wahi of the Qur’an. Islam will have to proclaim itself as a religion meant for a community of prophets only and not for men and women who cannot command a Wahi at every turn. No investigation into the authenticity of riwayat will be worth undertaking by any board of research if this proposition is not borne in mind and upheld.

Muhkmat and Mutashabihat

VIII. The Qur’anic matter is stated to consist of Muhkmat and Mutashabihat. Is this classification on the basis of peculiarity in expression, the one being in the plain style, the other in the figurative, or does it rest on the type of ideas they severally convey? Whatever the basis of differentiation, it must be admitted that the two will have to subservise a common end, viz., the presentation of the integral message of the Qur’an. The two can therefore convey neither conflicting views nor divergent. A figure of speech, if it has any purpose to serve in literature, has to arouse imagination and through its medium graphically clinch an idea which in plain language might need an elaborate garb for expression. The Mutashabihat are there in the Qur’an only to emphasize and add colour to what is stated through the Muhkmat. It is obviously why the Muhkmat are styled by the Qur’an itself as Huwana Ummul-Kitab, or the mother or core of the Qur’an. It would be unfair to the Qur’an, the Kitab al-Mubin, “the open book,” to take the literal sense of its figurative language, or to read any hidden meaning into it. The Anothal may easily be classed with the Mutashabihat and the same observations applied to them.

IX. A good portion of the Qur’an is occupied by stories mostly touching the life and trials of the prophets of Israel. The question is: What purpose do they serve in the context of the Qur’anic message? The primary purpose was not only to correct certain notions about them prevalent in the Prophet’s time — notions derogatory to their role as prophets — but also to draw lessons from their history so as to reinforce the truth presented by the Qur’an. It should be borne in mind that the Qur’an has a direct responsibility in restoring the perspective, as it claims to present the same message as was delivered to the Prophets of Israel — Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others — and also aims at reviving in its pristine monotheistic purity among their followers, and welding them all into a single federated humanity — a purpose clearly set out in the following verse: “O people of the Book! (Christian and followers of Jewish Scriptures), come to a word fair between us and you that we worship God and associate nothing with Him, and do not take each other as Lords to the exclusion of God” (The Qur’an 3:57). The purpose underlying Qur’anic references to Israelite stories was to clear misunderstandings coming in the way of unity. The Qur’an has no other interest in them as is evident from the restrictions placed by the Caliphs ‘Umar and ‘Uthman on Tamim Dari, a Christian convert companion of the Prophet who was in the habit of beguiling the people of Medina with Israelite legendary lore which has through various channels crept into the riwayat and eventually into the Tafasir,25 even as other lores.

X. Has Tasawwuf26 any organic relation with the Qur’anic plan of life? If so, what is its exact nature or its place therein? Does the Qur’an lend support to its imagery and the practices associated with it?

XI. Should the Qur’anic ideology take any specific interest in subjects such as (a) Fada’il Sahaba27 and Fada’il Qaba’il;28 Fada’il Maqamat,29 and Fada’il ‘Ulama,30 Huffaz,31 and so on, and (b) prophecies about coming events in the life of the Ummar with which the Hadith literature abounds?

XII. Does the Qur’anic ideology recognize the institution of ‘Ulama and the concept of Ilm and Fiqh as developed by them? If the recognition is accorded, Islam in its organizational form becomes a theocracy even as Judaism of the scribes. How will this square with the Islam of the Qur’an which discourteness of priestly? The office of the ‘Ulama who according to a riwayat are the “heritage of Prophets” and the legitimate interpreters of the meaning of the prophetic message corresponds to that of the Judaic scribes who claimed to “sit in the seat of Moses,” and dispense the Divine Mosaic law according to their own interpretation. Does the Qur’anic ideology uphold this position? Be it noted that the four Sunni codes of the Fiqh,23 for instance, were framed not only by the central seat of Islamic Caliphate, but by private individuals who would not even seek prior permission or authority from the centre. How do such codes fit into the Qur’anic ideology? The questionnaire may be lengthened.

XIII. What is the attitude of the Qur’an towards the problems of “good and evil”, the “life hereafter,” and “salvation”?

These are some of the questions which must be examined in order to determine the elements which should enter into the composition of the Qur’anic ideology before it is applied to the Riwayat, as well as to the Fiqh.

VII

Board of Research

Some suggestions about the function and work of the Board of Research

The main issue that calls for immediate attention is the auspices under which the proposed board of research is to be constituted. At bottom, the issue is one of providing requisite finance for the project. Several correspondents have suggested that our Academy itself should undertake the task. A reference to our original memorandum, however, will make it clear that such a purpose was never under our contemplation. The Academy is a registered body composed of scholars who under an agreed programme carry on research, and jointly meet the cost of the Academy’s publications. It has not so far sought any financial aid either from the Government or from the public. The organization has not therefore the requisite resources to undertake a task of this magnitude.

24 Commentaries of the Qur’an.
25 Esoteric side of Islam.
26 The distinctive superior characteristics of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad.
27 The distinctive characteristics of tribes of the days of the Prophet Muhammad that entitle them to respect.
28 The distinctive characteristics of certain spiritual acquisitions.
29 The distinctive characteristics of the learned.
30 The men who learn the Qur’an by heart.
30a Consensus of opinion.
31 Jurisprudence.
Else, the Academy would have deemed it a great honour and privilege to formulate a plan of concentrating on the task the best minds available in the Islamic world, and push it through with the utmost expedition. Its essential aim in raising the question, however, was just to draw the attention of the thoughtful among Muslims everywhere to a crying religious need of the hour. It was to rouse the conscience of our 'Ulama; and feel also the pulse of the community. It is a matter for the utmost satisfaction that those from whom a violent reaction was expected have not only remained discreetly silent, but some of their top-ranking representatives have even come forward openly to bless the movement.

It now rests with Muslim governments and well-established educational systems and trusts with adequate funds at their disposal to join hands and give a concrete shape to the proposal. Several suggestions have been made in this connection. One is to collect funds for the purpose from the general Muslim public. In fact, the Imam of Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyah, Ruhollah, Pakistan, the Maulana Mahmud Bashiruddin Ahmad, has offered on behalf of his Jama'at (Community) to share the expenses of the undertaking. But the collection of funds in this manner is a tedious affair involving wastage of precious time. The task is clearly one of urgency and may best be taken up by Muslim governments, or well-established institutions and educational trusts. Indeed, a suggestion has been made by Mr. Ghulam Muhammad of Nizamabad that His Majesty the King of Saʿudi Arabia be invited to establish an ad hoc Institute of Research at Medina, and meet the cost of running it by collecting a special levy of a few rupees per head from Hajj pilgrims. Another suggestion has been advanced, and this by the Government of Jordan in the Department of Foreign Affairs, that with the financial aid afforded by the Islamic world, the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, might constitute under its auspices the proposed board of research. The emphasis in this suggestion is on the venue of the Board, in respect of which Professor Syed Abid al-Wahhab Bokhari, Professor of Arabic and Islamic History, Presidency College, Madras, India, thinks that under the existing state of affairs a calmer intellectual atmosphere than what may be available elsewhere can be provided for the board in some central place in India — at least for the time being. Should the venue be India, Dr. Muhammad Rahatullah Khan, Curator, Asha fiyath State Library, Hyderabad-Decan, and a member of the Council of our Academy, holds the view that the proposed board of research might appropriately be constituted under the Presidency of that eminent scholar of Islam, the Maulana Abu 'l-Kalam Azad, Minister of Education, Government of India.

A special suggestion has been made by Professor Howard Reed of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, that the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) might be invited to evince an interest in the matter. He says:

"You and your Committee are doubtless aware that the UNESCO has recently indicated support for the late A. J. Wensinck's ambitious project of preparing a concordance of the Hadith literature, and it occurs to me that they too might be able to offer constructive suggestions in connection with your proposals."

All these suggestions are worthy of consideration. The present note is being sent round to the Government of Saʿudi Arabia, al-Azhar University, the UNESCO, as well as to all leading Muslim educational institutions and trusts and governments to see if any of these are willing to take the initiative in the matter. Should the proposal materialize, the Academy would always be found ready to collaborate on the research side with any board that might be constituted under the proper auspices.

Constitution of the Research Board

Whatever the agency or institution under whose auspices research is to be conducted, the constitution of the research machinery will have to receive very careful consideration. Some of the correspondents have emphasized that the Board should be composed of scholars who can rise above all sectarian "isms" in Islam, or as the Maulana Muhammad Ja'far Nadwi puts it, "above every iyyat — Sunniyyat, Shi'iyyat, Dewbandiyyat, Breliyyat and every other iyyat". The Maulana Mahmud Bashiruddin Ahmad, Imam, Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyah, desires the Board to be representative of all sections in Islam, and the Maulana Muhammad Ajmal Khan, New Delhi, suggests the inclusion of European Orientalists and scholars professing other faiths. A few friends have suggested that the 'Ulama should be excluded from representation on the Board. "Perhaps the research work," says one of them, "will reap advantage from their absence. For, if they take part in it, they will do their utmost to water down all our scientific principles of objectivity and impartiality, and they may succeed in doing so." This is not an unlikely contingency. But the world of Islam does possess in its fold 'Ulama of the type represented on our list of supporters who have the talent to rise equal to the occasion and uphold the cause of truth with as much zeal and tenacity as others.

The above suggestions, weighty as they are, will ultimately have to be considered in relation to the character of the work the Board will be called upon to undertake.

Since the Board will have to go mainly by the Mutaw32 or the actual text of the riwayat, its primary function, as I understand, will be to determine which of the riwayat (a) truly fit into the ideology of the Qur'an and the character of the Prophet delineated therein; (b) display distinctly, in one form or another, strands which are stated by the Hadith critics to have proceeded from Judaism, early Christianity, Zoroastrism, Greek and Roman thought, Neo-Platonism, Buddhism, and Indian Pantheism; (c) reflect the partisan rivalries of the first two centuries of Islam — dynastic, tribal, sectional and personal; (d) mark a revival of pre-Islamic Arab beliefs, customs, manners and tastes suppressed or modified in the time of the Prophet; and (e) are contrary to human experience and the laws of nature, or are repugnant to the Qur'anic ideology.

The Prerequisite of the Research Board

Before the research machinery is set to work on the lines indicated above, it will be necessary to form a committee of scholars to formulate the Qur'anic ideology which is to form the criterion of application. Those who work on this committee should be scholars who are trained in research techniques and modern methods and are versed in comparative religion and possess the talent to take an analytical survey of the contents, principles and purposes of the Qur'an and build a comprehensive picture of its ideology, and lay down the lines of criteria to follow in sifting the riwayat bearing the Qur'anic touch from those which do not. The

32 Literally texts.
initial task discharged, this very committee may be constituted into the board of investigation. Its number may be augmented by including in the Board scholars who have a special knowledge of religions other than Islam, the history of the early centuries of Islam and the pre-Islamic social history of the Arabs, as well as those conversant with modern sciences, both social and natural.

These are but tentative suggestions — purely on the academic side — which may be considered by the Board to be. As for the rest — the distribution of work, collaboration, co-ordination, codification and publication of results, as well as the secretarial arrangement and equipment, the Board will, of course, follow a plan of its own as arranged with the institution or agency under whose auspices it will have to carry on its work. The task is truly stupendous; but the Ummat of Islam, if it cares to revise its way of living and march onward as a force for peace, will have to perform the task without loss of time. If the machinery set up functions in full form, I dare say the work of the Board should be completed within five years.

VIII

Conclusion

The policy of drift and the present world of Islam which has lost its moorings as a result of Islam being dominated by riwayat.

One thing, however, I feel I should stress before I close. The trends at work among Muslims at the present hour do not seem to promise very long life to the Islam dominated by the riwayat. As the replies received have revealed, reinforced by the proceedings of the Colloquium held at Princeton University in September 1953, there is no enthusiasm for it particularly noticeable anywhere, at all events among the educated classes. It is being willingly laid aside even at the heart of the Muslim world — the Middle East — and there is no other form of Islam organized already to take its place, and function as a staying force. No doubt a good deal of lip-loyalty to the Qur'anic ideology is expressed and even paraded in easy-going circles everywhere, but the Islam which the Qur'an stands for has yet to emerge and take shape, on an agreed basis. In the meantime, things are left to drift. Even if anything is thought of at all by the ruling or the educated stratum of society, it is to invite Westernism to supplant what is left of traditionalism; and this is done without considering what ultimate effect it will have on Islam itself. The masses will be the worst sufferers under the change. With no talent or material equipment enabling them to fit themselves to Western ways of living, their inherited traditionalism furnishing no stimulus for progress, and with no alternative programme of Islam made available to them resting on the dynamics of the Qur'an, they will soon lapse into a state of unrelieved perplexity with no way out except the road to Moscow. I am afraid this process has already begun. If the Muslim world is to be a force for peace, it can only be through a stable outlook on the part of its masses. And this stability cannot be given or promoted by imposing on them Westernism, but by purifying and energizing the traditional Islam itself to which they are attached. This is the only way to equip it to absorb modernity. This is possible only when it is referred back, as quickly as possible, to the universal norms of the Qur'anic ideology which, as pointed out already, will not come into conflict with anything good that may come from anywhere. We need have no fear of any effective opposition from the orthodox circles, as has been made clear by the attitude taken up by some of the leading minds among them. They will certainly realize that the goal there is in the riwayat will go with the dross that has clung to it in the coming deluge which is sure to overtake traditionalism under the impact of Western technology, and will recognize that it will be serving Islam if that gold is rescued in time to serve as an aid to a revival of the Qur'anic thought and life for the world of today. It is for those who are at the helm of affairs in Muslim lands to put their heads together and make a move, as suggested by the Academy, to usher in a renaissance in Islam. Else, the writing on the wall is clear enough. It is Sunnah Allah — the way of God:

"God does not alter the condition of a people,
   Unless they themselves alter it from within"

(The Qur'an 13:21).

PEN PALS

Mr. Dawood Ebrahim Motals, c/o P.O. Box 119, Durban. Natal, South Africa, aged 22 years, wishes to correspond with friends. Interests: Stamp collecting. Is agent of Africa Club — write for details.

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11
A REGENERATION OF THE MUSLIM WORLD?

A Review of its Periods of Rise and Fall — and its Tomorrow

By Nur Ahmad

Islam’s first period of rise and fall

Today we find that there is a deep discontent with, disaffection towards, and impatience of, the existing régime or the state of affairs all the world over, including the world of Islam. There is a deep stirring visible in the minds of the intelligent section of the Muslims everywhere. It appears that the Muslims, who after their glorious achievements in the world have slumbered for some centuries, are now waking up from their deep lethargy. The American scholar, Mr. Lothrop Stoddard, in his book, New World of Islam, London, 1952, has traced the causes of the rise and progress of Islam. In glowing words he describes the unique development and culmination of the dazzling Islamic civilization and culture. For instance, he says: “By magic, as it were, Islam transformed and metamorphosed the old decrepid world and made its headquarters a centre of trade and commerce, the seat of learning and the focus and nerve centre of a world-wide civilization.” Mr. Lothrop Stoddard, while recounting the glory of Islam, does not tell us why and how a civilization so powerful, an Islamic Empire so closely knit by religion and politics, declined after three centuries of its existence.

The real reasons for the downfall of the Islamic civilization and the Muslim Empire appear to have been twofold — religious and political. But, in Islam, the two are so intertwined and intermingled that they must be considered as one — each acting and reacting on the other. Religion, to which the Muslims at the beginning owed their marvellous and well-sustained lightning success, became, in the course of time, their supreme retardant. The old, austere Islam with its disciplined life and regulated relation of man with man, when tossed in the surging waves of the Omayyad heathenism and Abbaside levity and irreligion, soon lost its unifying and vivifying force, its purifying and ennobling influence and momentum. The moral basis of life was demolished. Islam became an empire, outwardly superficially Islamic, but in reality heathen, un-Islamic, sceptical in spirit and irreligious to the core. Religion became a formal, meaningless, spiritless observance, and ceased as an uplifting, moral and spiritual force.

The essence of Islam, its fundamental principles, were lost sight of in a labyrinth of lifeless, trivial formalities and practices. The essentials were lost sight of and the non-essentials were given preference. This resulted in bigotry, fanaticism, wilful blindness, aversion from progress, and intolerance of enlightenment. Religion became a lifeless formality, hidebound and impervious to light and leading. “The will of God was responsible for all that happened and resistance to that will was impiety, and defiance to God’s will.” Decay in Islam’s revolutionary power set in and continued. The will to resist, the will to go ahead, the will to improve human society and to uplift the degraded masses became extinct. A placid inertia seized the whole Islamic world. Apathetic, callous and indifferent to the world around them, with no ideal, no ambition, no aspiration, no desire for better living — no missionary spirit, the Muslims henceforward lived sunk in degradation or irreligious life or smitten with intellectual paralysis, or they plunged into wild religious ecstasy, in religious factions and feuds. Hushed was the voice of that revolutionary, world-conquering Islam, which with clarion call had summoned the Muslims to the field of death of Jihad in the way of God for making the world better and happier without fear or hesitation. Lost was the martial valour and chivalrous spirit and indomitable Islamic urge which had scattered the Roman legions to the winds and had shattered the mighty power of the proud Chosroes of Persia.

Needless to say that in such a world of Islam and amidst such a people, progress and a higher aim of life had no meaning. To aggravate the situation, the political feuds and factions, which Islam, so long as it was a real, unifying and ennobling force, had kept under control, now broke out in all their unrestrained violence. Even the Islamic fraternity and solidarity gradually disintegrated and vanished. The Caliphs forgot their duties and obligations to the Muslim people. That bilateral contact between the people and their rulers, which is the essence of Islamic sovereignty, that high ideal which animated and guided and regulated the conduct of the first four Caliphs of Islam throughout their careers, that profound religious fervour and devotion which set the early Muslims aglow with unbounded ardour, that supreme sense of unity and universal brotherhood which had welded and cemented together the early Muslims, were now riven by faction and feuds and torn by tribal jealousies. The splendid virtues, which account for the phenomenal success of the early Muslims, all these now waned and vanished. Tribal and party jealousies set religious unity and spirit at naught: political necessity and the scramble for power snapped the bonds of brotherhood. Loyalty, discipline, faith, allegiance, honour, dignity, trust, solemnity, all these perished in the rising tide of gross personal ambition and sordid personal gain. Religion became henceforth a pretence, a handmaiden for personal gain: politics became the happy hunting-ground of unscrupulous adventurers and opportunists. The central authority of the Caliphs gradually became impotent, in fact, too feeble to exercise full control over its provincial governors. New kingdoms and small principalities were carved out of the Caliph’s empire. The once powerful Caliph, the symbol of Muslim unity and brotherhood, was gradually reduced to a shadow, shorn of all his spiritual and temporal power, a phantom, without authority. To all intents and purposes, the Caliph was a prisoner in his own palace, a Caesar without any legion, a Roman Pope without any power except that of pronouncing a benediction upon the crowned heads around him. The decay of the real power of Islam’s unifying and revitalizing force had become a reality.

Islam in 1000 C.E. and its second period of rise and fall

Such was the gloomy picture of the once glorious Caliphathe of Islam in about the year 1000 C.E. Henceforward, the followers of glorious Islam, who were once
pioneers in every field and held up the torch of light and led the then civilized world, entered upon the downward path of stagnation, degradation and decline. While Europe advanced from victory to victory, the Muslim world, wrapped in false security and torn into petty kingdoms, sat self-composed, resigned to the will of God with medieval fetters and religious blinkers, scorning all Western ideas and scoffing at Western progress. The world was then seriously enquiring, “Was Islam sleeping, or dead, or was it merely a temporary moral and intellectual paralysis?” A true Muslim, a sincere believer, cried out, “No, Islam is not dead and cannot die. It is bound to rise again.” Let me describe this also in the words of a Western Orientalist, who makes the following observations on the regeneration of Islam again in the world after the decline and fall of the Caliphate: “Chengiz Khan, the great Mogul prince, burst from Turkestan into the Moslem countries destroying and flooding them with a crimson stream (1218 A.D.). His son, Haluku Khan, continued the conquests, and, with the capture of Baghdad and the execution of the Khalif, extinguished the Khalifate. Islam seemed lost, pressed on the one hand by the crusaders filled with religious fervour and frenzy and on the other by the wild, plundering, marauding and ever adventurous cavalry of the Mogul. But Islam did not perish. In Syria, Islam steadily supplanted the Franks, and in Persia, where a powerful Mogul dynasty had set up a vast empire under the name of Il-Khan, Islam won a brilliant victory when Ghazan, the seventh ruler, accepted Islam and entered into friendly relations with the rest of the Muslim princes. Not by arms but by religious ideas did Islam vanquish the northern conquerors. There must indeed be some tremendous power and force in Islam which enables it not only to weather world-shattering storms but to emerge out of them firmer, stronger and more vigorous than ever. In the war with the Franks extending over a century, Islam passed through a tempering process. The rift that opened closed in fire and blood. Islam shook off its lethargy and gathered fresh strength. The Arab nation which championed Islam now retired, handing over the torch of Islam to a nation, ruder but more powerful, whose Islamic Empire soon embraced the entire Orient and whose political power the old Khalifate had never attained or equalled.”

Europe parcels out the world of Islam

The words of this Orientalist that “Islam has survived many a world-shattering storm and has come out stronger than ever” are borne out by history, which has written in golden characters an ever hopeful message for Islam — a message to hearten and cheer her on her onward march to progress and freedom. This great revival and renaissance of Islam and Islamic power by the dependants and successors of Chengiz Khan and the Turks, this second stage of the rise of Islam, lasted for some centuries, and then again an era of decline set in. It seemed to a casual observer as if all the life of the Muslims was again extinct, all activities again stagnant, all hope again gone, all effort and aspiration again at an end. While Islam was again indifferent to progress, Europe was making wonderful advancement in every field of human knowledge. It was widening its outlook; it was improving its material conditions; it was annexing country after country and was lapsing off Islamic territories, one by one. The decrepit Muslim States fell before the Western attack and the whole Islamic world was divided among the Western powers. England took India and Egypt; Russia crossed the Caucasus and mastered Central Asia. France conquered North Africa, while other European powers grabbed other portions of the Muslim world. It appeared that after this temporary regeneration and renaissance of Islam by the Mongols and Turks the Islamic world was again on the downward trend and that the Muslims all over the world had again fallen into torpor, torn by factions and feuds, bereft of the unifying spirit of Islamic brotherhood and unity. As the great national poet of Islam, Iqbal, has very rightly said, “Islam is reborn and revives after every Karbala”. By the nineteenth century Islam again woke to the menace which threatened its very existence. Europe was bent on effacing and wiping out Islam as a political and spiritual force. There was a great stir among the Muslims of the world. Great Muslim thinkers, statesmen and politicians foresaw the impending danger of the Muslim world and warned the Muslims that they were threatened with extinction as a political and spiritual force in the world. Their watchword to the Muslims was: “Resist the onward march of the European powers to crush Islam — or perish”. The first great war made this position of the Islamic world more clearly palpable, more pitiful than ever. The Turkish Empire had been extinguished and not a single Muslim State retained its real independence. The subjugation of Muslim power was complete.

The third period of the rise of Islam — the rise of the Wahhabi Movement and the Pan-Islam Movement

Once awakened to the peril, Islam again donned armour and gathered strength. The East, that had remained immovable during the last hundred years, shook off its lethargy and began to face the realities of life. To meet the situation, it was imperative to be up and at work, to forge weapons to avert danger. Arabia took the lead. There on its sacred soil came into existence the Wahhabi Movement, which aimed at the reform of Islam. The Wahhabi Movement set out to purify, reform, vitalize and revive Islam, for, it said, without reform no hope was possible, no successful struggle conceivable with great results. Islam, the Wahhabites maintained, had declined because it had fallen from its great and high ideals. Its cry was: “Back to the old ideals. Back to the old tradition. Back to the old stern Islam of the Prophet, free from the accretions of centuries, swept clear of the dust of hateful controversies.” The Wahhabi Movement was a step in the right direction; a step preparatory to yet more liberal, wider and more sweeping reform and large embracing ambition. It was but a prelude to a yet wider Muslim revival, the movement known as Pan-Islamism started by Jamaluddin Afghani and other Muslim thinkers. Concomitant with these religious reforms which were transforming Islam from within, there came in the swelling flood of European influence affecting political, social and economic conditions in Asia and Africa. It is said that these Western influences leavened Asia’s thoughts, kindled Eastern imagination, opened up yeardreams of vistas of political rights and excited visions of political freedom. These surging ideas stirred the East to its depth. They woke fascinating dreams of a future, inspired the Muslims with the belief that it lay within their power to make, mould and shape that future. The Muslim mind with unerring instinct reverted to the Muslim solidarity and brotherhood: so rich in results in Islam’s glorious past, so full of potentialities for the future. It became once more apparent that in the world of Islam lies this instinctive solidarity and unity. Hence the
rise of Pan-Islamism, the new type of religious fraternity working for one purpose and end, namely, to foster and strengthen Muslim unity and universal Islamic brotherhood, to check Western pressure, to resist the advancing tide of Western aggrandisement and inroads on Islamic people.

The Sennusiy Movement in Africa also aimed at the regeneration and reform of the Muslims and to imbue them with the true spirit and faith of Islam with a view to successfully stemming the tide of European ascendency over the Muslims. The Sennusiy believed that the political liberation of Islam from Christian domination must be preceded by the profound spiritual regeneration of the Muslims. They do not believe in needless and aimless shedding of blood or fighting merely for fighting’s sake. Onwards and onwards they proceeded, covering North Africa with their lodges and schools and spreading light and culture and education, fostering a spirit of discipline and self-faith and self-restraint: steadily and slowly pursuing the path of more progress, preparing the struggle for freedom, liberty and independence, which they knew, and knew only too well, if ill-timed, might be disastrous and fatal to themselves. Not only did North Africa yield to their influence, but, in the south, they won over millions of Africans to the faith of Islam by their holy missions. During the last hundred years Islam has not only been reawakened but it has spread wonderfully through no regular missionary organization. During the past century Islam’s triumph in this direction in Africa has been wonderful. Islam has not only fought paganism and Christianity successfully, but tribes which fifty years ago scarcely counted a single Muslim have now entirely become Muslims. Not only in Africa but also in Russia, China, Indonesia and other places, Islam has proved successful in bringing people into its fold. Islam by its simple faith and intrinsic vitality and attractive virtues expects to resist successfully the godless Communism of Russia and China and the Shuddhi and Sangathan movements in India. A Muslim believes in God’s words that God will protect Islam.

The Muslims have now begun to feel the necessity for struggling for their existence and the necessity for religious universal fraternity as enjoined by Islam. The Muslims are now fully awakened to the dangers with which Islam stands threatened in India, Russia and other areas of the world. The Muslim world now realizes that Islam needs a strong organization, a growing Muslim population, and, above all, a strong and powerful religious unity. Hence we find the faith of the Wahhabi and the Sennusiy movements, the Pan-Islamic movement and the movement for closer ties and unity among the Muslim States. The Muslims’ watchword today is “life or death”. The Muslims want to regain their lost position, to reclaim the lost glorious heritage of Islam, by vigorous and concerted determination and deathless resolve, by contempt of threats and by indifference to sufferings and death. We have seen the manifestations of this spirit in Indonesia and Tripoli and now in Tunisia and Morocco. The Muslims stood like a rock as one solid nation in India and, after a hard fight, have won Pakistan against two mighty forces — the British and the Indian National Congress. There was a time when the East used to look upon the West with awe, but now to the Muslim the European claim to superiority is a myth. The defeat of Russia at the hands of an Asiatic power like Japan in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 exploded the theory of the white man’s superiority.

Islam today

Though from 1904 the myth of European superiority was exploded, European aggression continued unabated and the Muslim world, inspired with a new consciousness, began to protest against European aggression with an unwonted moral solidarity.

It has become clear as daylight that the Muslim world was no longer to be ignored and shelved, but was firmly resolved to make its influence felt and its voice heard. The Great World War worsened an already critical situation. The Muslim protest against aggression, subjugation and exploitation became louder and louder. It appeared that Islam was again up in arms and the great Muslim nation banded itself together unto death for its faith, its liberation and its birthright. Islam has once again resumed its onward march and has entered once again upon an upward path with firm determination, and its unequivocal voice, proclaiming the spirit of discontent, is clearly the voice of revolt against European ascendency. The Muslims are using the same weapons as Europeans and have adopted the same methods as Europeans have adopted — the call for self-government, the right to rule, political agitation, political combination, strikes, non-co-operation. They have learnt these methods from the Europeans. It seems to have been too late to apply a reactionary and oppressive policy by the European powers to suppress the rising tide of the Muslim world.

Islam protested with one voice against European policy. Muslim India was foremost in this protest. From one end of the then India to the other, the Muslim cry rose to call a halt to European aggression. The Muslims of the then India were furnished with a splendid organization, with fierce zeal and steadfast purpose and with undismayed spirit and untiring effort to fight against European aggression and exploitation.

The Khilafat Movement — an apt child of Pan-Islamism — conclusively proved that the Muslims were capable of the widest and the most effective organization, and that Muslim solidarity is not a fiction or parable — but a fact and a stark reality. Today in the Muslim world powerful organizations have been set up for bringing about solidarity and unity among the Muslims of the world, not only in the religious sphere but also in the economic, cultural, industrial and other spheres. If any political and economic programme may be thought necessary to vindicate the honour of Islam and to revive her past glory, the specific programme of the Muslim world is: “The wealth of Islam for Muslims — the profits of trade and industry for Muslims and, above all, the breaking of the foreign grip upon Islam’s natural resources by the termination of concessions in land, mines, forests, railways and customs, by which the wealth of Islam is being drained away today to foreign lands. The Muslim world today, united by its imperishable Islamic tie, stands firm, resolutely of one heart and mind and voice. It is not a mere copying of the West that is today going on in the Muslim world but it is an attempt at a new synthesis, an assimilation of Western methods to Eastern ends. It is true no human foresight can peer through the veil of futurity, but amidst circumstances fair and auspicious the work has begun. We reasonably hope that it will close in glory and triumph.”

In the present Muslim world before our very eyes we see and witness a very wonderful phenomenon — undreamt of, unimagined, unhopeed for by the wildest hope of men. We see here Islamic solidarity co-operating without a jarring discordant note for the regeneration of Islam. Is this an impossible dream, a forlorn hope? History, Islam’s past
record, says “No”. Recent events bid fair and augur well for the future. Pakistan, with its great ideal and ideology in face of its grave multifarious problems and in face of grave odds, is playing a noble part in the noble cause of Muslim solidarity and Islam’s universal brotherhood, above all, for the establishment of fraternity, amity, happiness and concord, in a jarring and conflicting world, torn into two warring camps. Islam looks not to the sword, not to the atom bomb, not to military might, not to false promises, not to Machiavellian policy, but to true wisdom, wise statesmanship and peaceful means for the solution of this world-threatening problem, and, above all, to love, honesty, and to lofty resolve for the peaceful and amicable solution of the pressing problems of the present-day world. Truly a Persian poet has said, “The sword perishes but love endures. Those who resort to the sword, perish by the sword.” Today, even in the ever-darkening gloom and despair, in the face of tremendous odds and many stumbling-blocks, the reawakened Islam is marching forward to its cherished goal and the renaissance spirit of Islam stirs the bosoms of Muslim youth. On every side there is hope, there is ambition — the flame of Islam, kindled in the hearts of Muslims, will lead them on to victory, and no earthly power shall be able to resist the onward march of Islam again for the good of the human race.

To sum up

I have depicted the successive stages of the decline and rise of Islam in the world. Let Muslims deeply ponder now over the causes which led to the decline and fall in all spheres of life, religious and temporal. God has said in the Qur’an: “But honour belongs to God and His Messenger and believers.” Let Muslims see what the causes are that led to their general decline and degradation in the past. Was it not the Muslims, who were leaders in the West and the East for about eight or nine centuries and acquired name and fame throughout the world? Let them, therefore, first of all, examine the factors and causes which contributed to their greatness, their progress, before enquiring into the causes of their fall, their decline and degradation. The causes of the spectacular rise of the Islamic power was Islam. The scattered races and the tribes of Arabia became united under the banner of Islam like one nation inspired with a dynamic force. The teachings of the Qur’an infused into the Arab mind a new invincible spirit and enabled the Arabs to become the masters of half the world in the course of half a century. The then world was amazed and bewildered by the series of most brilliant victories won by the Muslims. The great Napoleon, during his days of imprisonment in St. Helena, expressed amazement at the sudden rise of Islam and said: “The Arabs conquered in just half a century.” This great hero of the French who won many mighty battles was dazed and puzzled at the great Arab conquests. Really these conquests remain unsurpassed in history even today. For two or three centuries the Arab Muslims ruled the world and reigned supreme without any challenge and held out the torch of enlightenment, culture and progress. Why did this glorious Muslim rule decline? I have tried to explain the reasons in these few lines. The Muslim rule began to decline only when the Muslim rulers and people strayed from the right path which the Qur’an had clearly laid down for them. As Muslim actions and behaviour began to be governed less by Qur’anic teachings, the Muslims began to lose vitality and valour. They lost power and sovereignty and began to lose even their independence. As God has ordained in the Qur’an: “Verily, never will God change the condition of a people until they change themselves.” So the Muslims changed their condition by their own doings and behaviour. As I have stated elsewhere, the whole Islamic world is again on fire. Islam is again in the ascendant. There is hope; there is expectation; there is a stir: there is an intense desire to progress; there is an undying resolve to revive the glory of Islam in all the corners of the Islamic world today.

Pakistan’s role in the Muslim world today

Pakistan’s ideal and goal is to revive the glory of Islam in the world. Let us at this dawn of a new era for Islam remember and act on God’s great words: “And those who strive in our (cause) We will certainly guide them to our paths. For verily, God is with those who do right.” Let us shake off lethargy and despair! Let us march forward, relying on God, and strive to make the world a better world, a place of peace and happiness! Let us live and die in the spirit of Islam and in the true faith taught us by the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad by his life example! Back to the true teaching of the Qur’an and to the fundamental principles of Islam! At this hour, when the rosy dawn of Islam’s future regeneration is visible before the eyes of every Muslim, we should learn from our past failures and we should keep our eyes on the causes of the decline and fall of the Muslim nation in the past, so that we may not fall again by forgetting to act upon the teachings of Islam, which will be our sure guide and a beacon-light upon our onward march to regeneration and renaissance; and we are sure to progress in the face of tremendous odds. No power on earth can halt the onward march of the Muslims if they remain true to the glorious teachings of Islam and never forget to act upon the same. Islam came into existence with a noble purpose to unite the whole of humanity into a single commonwealth of nations. Today the world is torn into conflicting blocs and there is high tension between the blocs. God’s world is threatened with world war and imminent destruction by the atom and hydrogen bombs. Islam can only save humanity from the impending doom by its peaceful mission. We, the Muslims, as torch bearers of Islam, are morally and religiously bound to bring peace, amity, unity, concord and happiness into the world by practising Islam in true faith and spirit. The watchword of Muslims should be faith, unity and discipline, and their motto should be “to seize the rope of God unitedly and not to be separated,” one from another, even as God has commanded us in the Qur’an.
AN AMERICAN WOMAN’S LIFE AND MARRIAGE IN AN IRAQI MUSLIM FAMILY

By Alice Mehdy

It is about eight years now, that day when my future husband took me to his family’s house in Baghdad. I knew instinctively that the kindly Arab woman who came to the door and looked at me quizically was my future mother-in-law. Salihah said, “Mother, this is Alice,” and she kissed me with that simplicity and sincerity I was to admire so much. We went into the sunny, tiled courtyard of the Near Eastern home, and sat near her while she finished preparing food for us.

Thus a meeting I had looked forward to with uncertainty and even a little dread had passed off with a naturalness which was hard to believe. For I had come a long way for this meeting of strangers — by train, ship, plane, and at last by bus — from California to Baghdad, Iraq. I was conscious of being the “foreigner” seeking to take a place in an established family circle, and not too sure of my welcome.

Of course, my fiancé, whom I had met as a college classmate in America, had described me to his family during the year he had been home before my coming, but in meeting a new person as in eating a new dish, one judges for oneself. I was very reassured by this welcome from one who is regarded as a question mark in marriage: the mother-in-law. The reactions of the rest of the family — father and two sisters — were as friendly as hers had been, and I felt that a first and large hurdle in a strange land had been passed.

At our marriage, which was a simple ceremony held in the family home, my mother-in-law dispensed sherbet, a fruit-juice drink, and candies to the numerous callers and well-wishers who came. She received, in turn, gifts of cake and pastry. She was, like all mothers everywhere, happy and yet sad, between tears and smiles at this, the marriage of her only son.

Up to that time, I had scarcely exchanged a few words with “Umm Salih”. This is a form of address used among the Arabs, where a mother is known as “mother of (one of her children)”: in this case, she was “mother of Salih”. By her children, she was called “Ya Ummi” (O mother!), or more familiarly “Yom”, which corresponds to the “Mom”.

I came to call her “Ya Ummi” also, but it was a while before I could carry on a conversation with her and the others. For I knew only a few conventional phrases in Arabic, and she, unlike her children, knew no English. Of course, others translated for us, but she would urge them to teach me Arabic. Yet it was she who taught me the most in the end. Though we lived fifteen miles from Baghdad at first, visits were exchanged every week or two, and I spent many mornings with my mother-in-law alone, during which time she would point to various articles and tell me their names. I would question her as to other things, having learned the basic phrase — the key, my husband called it — “What is this?”

I had always liked language study, but found it far more interesting to learn in this live classroom, where I heard Arabic all about me. It was curious how we made our few known words stretch to cover many subjects, and by expressive gestures, my mother-in-law would bridge the gap where words were wanting yet. At times, my husband or sister-in-law would come in and find out that neither of us understood what the other was saying, but pretended to in order to make each other happy!

As my knowledge of the language increased, my enjoyment of the companionship of my mother-in-law increased also. She would tell me of her life and youth, which had been so different from mine. I saw through her eyes the old, elaborately trimmed costumes worn by her as a young girl, the feasts which leisurely lives have time to prepare and enjoy, and the shadowy streets of old Baghdad at night, lit by lamps. I would hear of her brief girlhood and early marriage, then of the succession of beloved children who came — and went. She did not tire of telling me nor I of listening.

My mother-in-law could talk with some authority on life — not of a travelled, worldly life, but of the joyful and sorrowful pattern of fifty years’ living. Sorrow was no stranger in her house, for of the nine children she had brought into the world, six had left it, one as an adult, the others in childhood. Her faith that it was so willed had sustained her, and she was thus not embittered by these tragedies, but endowed with great compassion.

Before going to Islam, I had known little about Islam and Muslims: “Mohammedans” most frequently called. This erroneous latter term gives rise to the belief that Muslims worship Muhammad. But, as is stated in the opening part of the Qur’ān, addressing God: “Thee (alone) do we serve and Thee (alone) do we beseech for help (in all matters).”

I found the principles of Islam to be very similar to Christian ones, except for the idea, perhaps, of complete resignation to the will of God — which is the meaning of the word Islam. This was the source of strength and comfort for those in sorrow: the belief that it was God’s will being done. “Yea! whoever submits himself entirely to God and he is the doer of good, he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve.” (The Qur’ān). I liked especially the saying, Insha’ Allah (If God wills), used when speaking of the future.

One spring day I made a memorable excursion with my mother-in-law and Lamia’, my younger sister-in-law. They took me to see the Kadhaim Mosque, just north of Baghdad, which they often visited. For this occasion I had
to wear the black ‘iba’, or cloak, as they would do, being Muslims. I practised wearing it at home first, to be sure that I could keep it resting on my head properly. My mother-in-law was happy to take me to see the mosque at last, a place which meant much to her. We entered the high, tiled building with its guardian minarets, after removing our shoes outside.

There are no aisles or pews, but outer rooms and corridors surrounding the central room, the heart of the mosque, where a beautifully wrought tomb of heavy silver filigree is mounted in the centre. Fine Persian carpets lie on the floor, and the walls bear inscriptions from the Qur’an, and are hung with mirrors and mirrored decorations. People were praying or walking reverently around the tomb. My mother-in-law and Lami’ah began their prayers, while I absorbed the unusual colour and pageantry of the scene.

Later we ate a lunch of delicious kababs — ground meat roasted on skewers over charcoal — while sitting on mats we had brought and spread in the sun on the huge, thronged porch of the mosque. It was very hot; there were many flies; but of such experiences memories are made.

The famous, beautiful gold-domed mausoleum known as al-Kadhimain

In this shrine are interred the remains of the Imam Musa al-Kazim (d. 799 C.E.) and his grandson, the Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (d. 835 C.E.)

This exquisite shrine is a poem of dedication and homage, composed in brick, mortar and timber, to the immortal memory of the two Imams buried there

Since I had enjoyed this visit so much, my mother-in-law promised to take me to Kerbala and Najaf, the two holy cities south of Baghdad.

One day the following spring, we set out: Lami’ah, my mother-in-law and I, in a car which also carried other passengers. Arriving at Kerbala, we went to the house of a friend, a wandering little “house that Jack built”, of many levels, with tortuous, steep stairways where unexpected windows hung over the narrow lane, and sometimes a row of pigeons looked inquiringly back at one from a ledge.

We sat around a large tray on the floor, and ate our dinner; then retired to an upper room with many-coloured panes of glass in the small windows. All of us slept on the floor on mattresses laid in a row.

After visiting the mosques and exploring the covered, maze-like bazaars, the next day we set off for Najaf — the other holy city, located on a desert plateau. We boarded an ancient bus and began the inevitable wait until it should fill up and the driver thus be willing to start.

It was hot, and people climbing aboard jostled and crowded our baskets and belongings with theirs. My mother-in-law remonstrated with the driver at last that it was getting late and time to start. After several such fruitless exchanges, we bundled ourselves out in disgust and some amusement, and found a car about to leave in which we could get places. In Najaf we stayed at a kind of resthouse friends in Baghdad had built for their use on such occasions.

Najaf is complete unto itself, living undisturbed for many centuries its isolated life, dominated by the beautiful gold-domed mosque, to which comes a succession of pilgrims from as far away as India, China, Africa — nationalities with a common religious denominator. One felt at peace and entirely remote from the outside world with its troubles as pigeons flew about the mosque under the clear desert sky, and life flowed busily along the narrow streets.

The following morning we went east to a village on the Euphrates, attractive with its date palms along the wide river. We visited a small, very old shrine with an interesting mural which appeared to be of “Jonah and the Whale”. It was hot and we were tired from walking when a beggar accosted us immediately at the entrance. My mother-in-law was exasperated and said, “What’s this? Go along now when we have just come and are tired and want to rest. Later we will give you something.” Though annoyed, we all laughed at his inopportune timing, and he smiled sheepishly.
himself as he hung about, never far off. We returned to
Baghdad the following day, pleased with our adventure and
companionship.

After a year and a half of living outside Baghdad, we
moved to the city, to the suburb in which my husband's
family lived. We were all glad to be closer, where visits
could be more frequent, though I was working at the time
at the American Embassy. My mother-in-law would invite
us often for one of her good meals, knowing that I had little
time for cooking. Or she would send someone over to our
house with a bulging basket of food, which came at the most
welcome moment.

My mother-in-law prepared food patiently and with
care, in a kitchen where Western labour-saving devices were
as remote as the West itself. Yet she did not grumble, con-
sidering her daily task to be an important part of the
family's continuance, as indeed it was. She liked to cook
new dishes which I had not tasted before, and always waited
with interest for my reaction. Some were strange combina-
tions to me, such as dried apricots cooked with walnuts and
meat to make a sauce or stew served over rice. All had
one thing in common, however: I found the Arab food
delicious. The appearance of the finished dish was stressed,

The beautiful gold-
donned mausoleum of
the fourth Caliph, the
Imam 'Ali (d. 656 C.E.)
at Najaf, Iraq

In her kind of generosity, there was no motive of self-
interest or return: "And they give food out of love for Him
to the poor and the orphan and the captive, and say, we only
feed you for God's sake; we desire from you neither reward
nor thanks". So says the Qur'an, and so she did, from her
heart.

Up and down the street, "Umm Salih" was well known
for this generosity to the poor, and no beggar was ever
turned away from her door without a plate of food being
given him, and perhaps, surreptitiously, a jacket or old
sweater, too. The washer-woman and others were assured
of a good meal and plenty of hot tea before going their
weary ways. Her husband and children sometimes com-
plained when "Ya Ummi" cooked far too much food,
as was her habit. But she would always say, "There will
be someone who needs it," and sure enough, a servant girl
from a neighbouring house, the woman who baked the
delicious Arab bread, or another living a marginal existence,
would come along to fulfil her prophecy and bestow
blessings on her.

for to Arabs, as one of their proverbs has it, "It is the eye
which tastes".

Tolerance and a sense of humour were evident qualities
in my mother-in-law. The former is not always found in one
not having the advantages of education: the latter seldom
retained where misfortune has been such a close companion.
In her acceptance of life as it was, a content was born which
set her free, and her faith kept her from doubts and worries.

When my husband and I had an opportunity to return
to America later on, she did not oppose our going, even
though the separation from her son a second time would be
hard to bear. But she knew how my own parents longed to
see us again. Friends and relatives said of her, when inquiring
how we got along together, "She has a good heart". It
was a simple tribute going deep in its implications: in these
times such old-fashioned, disinterested "goodness" is a
scarce commodity in the world. There was a genuineness
about her and a simplicity which never held any duplicity.
On the day we were to leave Baghdad, my mother-in-law said that she would not weep if we would not, but in the last moments I was not so strong. At such a parting, there is always a feeling of unreality: that one is doing the opposite of what’s really wanted. She wept then, too, but did not attempt to restrain us, and we climbed aboard the big bus bound for Damascus — and beyond. As it pulled out, past the line of people, we saw her, smiling now in the old familiar way, giving us some of her courage, some of her strength.
A note on the illustrations

The ceramic art was first introduced into the Middle East from China and in all probability it has since been practised there for some twelve hundred years.

Pottery

The illustrations on these two pages (with the exception of the one of the “Dome” and its adjacent portico) are specimens of modern Middle Eastern Ceramic Art. The colours are soft but very rich, blending with a most satisfying harmony. This particular pottery, produced in a pottery at Jerusalem, is specially famous for its magnificently lustrous blue. These specific designs are based on pottery produced at Râfîkat, Syria, when there was a large industry in Byzantine times.

The Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem, Jordan, was built during the reign of the Omeyyad Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan in 691 C.E. This is one of the two oldest and most beautiful specimens of Muslim architecture, the other being the Grand Mosque of Damascus, Syria, that have remained intact till today.

The Dome of the Rock is held sacred by Muslims because of its associations with “the Night Journey (Isra)” of the Prophet Muhammad, which
Tiles
A great deal of the ceramic art is devoted to the production of tiles which are used in the internal and external decoration of mosques, palaces and public buildings. Excellent examples of exterior tiling are to be seen at the “Dome of the Rock” and its adjacent portico. The former was restored by the Turks’s Sultan, Sulaiman the Magnificent, in the 16th century, who replaced the then-existing mosaics externally “which time had proved to be incapable of withstanding the fierce winter storms, with the glorious integration of coloured tiles and contrasting marbles which has ever since been given to the Dome its unique and distinctive aspect.


modern

took place on the 27th Rajab. “By daylight the Dome is one of the most beautiful buildings of the world; by moonlight it is so beautiful that it seems not to be of this world at all” (Stewart Perowne in his The One Remains, and quoted by The Reverend E. Gurnier in his article “Jerusalem Ceramics” in Iraq Petroleum, London, for November 1954).

The colour blocks on these two pages are by courtesy of the Editor, Iraq Petroleum, London, for November 1954. The colour photos are by The Reverend E. Gurnier, Topoli, Neno.
A NON-MUSLIM’S TRIBUTE TO THE MUSLIMS OF EAST PAKISTAN

East Bengal: A Citadel of Islamic Culture

By Sunil Kumar Mukhopadhyay

The causes that led Islam to fasten its roots in East Bengal

East Bengal may rightly be called a citadel of Islamic culture in the extreme east of India. In no other part of the Indian sub-continent has Islam struck root more deeply than it has done in East Bengal. Islam came to this part of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent in the wake of the Muslim invasion of the land about seven hundred years ago, although long before this East Bengal had come into contact with Arab merchants and, through them, with Islam. But the process of the Islamization of this land really began with the Muslim conquest of East Bengal. In its fertile soil Islam found a very favourable ground for peaceful settlement and development. East Bengal, with her caste-ridden Hindu society and degenerate Buddhist communities, gave Islam a ready welcome. The new religious idea, full of life and vigour as it was, with its dynamic principles of universal brotherhood and intense human interest, dealt a crushing blow to the indigenous religious structures and paved the way for the rapid growth and development of Islam there. To the suffering millions who had been deprived of all social amenities and human rights for so long, the appeal of the new religion was very great. The control of the administrative machinery of the country, no doubt, helped the cause of Islam. But the real cause of the rapid spread of Islam was the preaching of the great Muslim saints, such as Nur Qub al-‘Alam, Shah Jalal, Baba Adam, Badruldin and others, and their unflinching fidelity to the faith, their charming personalities and untiring efforts. To add to this there were the Muslim rulers who never ceased to uphold the cause of Islam and so helped to speed up the process of Islamization. The weakness of the Hindu and the Buddhist societies was a third factor contributing to the cause of Islam. So now we find that Islam has not only been firmly rooted in the soil of East Bengal, but has also emerged as the dominant religious force there.

East Bengal, hitherto known as the land of the Hindus and the Buddhists, came to be known as the land of the Muslims, thus witnessing the greatest kind of transformation in the life of a people ever recorded in modern history. Islam, now firmly established, set itself the task of purging the souls of the people from all un-Islamic spirit and of purifying them with the indoctrination of a new spirit. This was a slow and gradual process and indeed is not yet completed. The reason for this delay is obvious — the change of the internal is as slow as the change of the external is quick. The East Bengal people embraced Islam as the first spark of it fell upon their dark gloom of mind. They became Muslims in name only. But to become Muslims in spirit and action took them centuries. This great task was accomplished by the Muslim saints, divines, who carried the operation through centuries with the utmost zeal and devotion. The task of
uprooting from the minds of the people the old beliefs, ideas and superstitions ingrained in their very nature was no little matter. So a long period intervened between East Bengal's people embracing Islam and their becoming Muslims. However, this gulf in the Muslim mind was bridged successfully by the time the Muslims lost their freedom to the English. The history of this peaceful transformation of the minds and the souls of the people of East Bengal is at once instructive and absorbing in its interest. But as this does not come within the scope of this essay, I must not yield to the temptation of narrating the whole thing.

The extent to which Islam has become part and parcel of the life of an East Bengali

Islam is the only, so to say, living religion of East Bengal today. So marked is it in the dress, manners, customs, language, religious practices, literature, music and other doings of the people that even a man to whom all these things are quite foreign can easily ascertain the Islamic nature of the people. They may be said to live in Islam, think in Islam, dream in Islam. Their whole existence has been characterized with a deep reverence and love for Islam. In the life of no other people, of no other country, has Islam caused so complete a transformation. If it be true that man’s innermost desires and thoughts, his hidden ideas and wishes, his concealed motives and aspirations form a world within themselves and that that inner world speaks for him, then whatever, and however numerous, may be the pitfalls of the Muslim character in East Bengal, nothing can invalidate its claims to being truly Muslim. It is true that nowadays Western education and ideas have deeply influenced the life of the Muslims and are still serving as a challenge to Islam and the Islamic way of life. But so far it has made very little difference to the picture.

Now, as the surest evidence of culture is the extent to which it is reflected in the practice and spirit of the life itself of a people, we should better try to seek the evidence of Islamic culture in East Bengal in the practice and spirit of their life. The Islamic nature of the people of East Bengal is so apparent that even a casual visitor will not fail to notice it. In the practice of life the average East Bengali Muslim has carefully and with the least shadow of doubt in his mind incorporated Islam into his heart. So, in East Bengal, your eyes will not fail to catch sight of even a blind street beggar reminding you every now and then of the name of the Most High (Allah) and His greatness. Like a born philosopher he will point out to you the transitoriness of worldly gains and life in the course of his begging something of you. The sight of a beggar requesting you to give him alms in the name of God is by no means strange there. Take a walk along the banks of the great rivers of East Bengal and you are sure to hear the songs of the boatmen declaring the glory of God. You will also notice boatmen saying their prayers with all solemnity and devotion. Make your way through an East Bengal village in the morning or in the evening, and you will certainly hear the voice of the Mi’ezin calling upon Muslims all around to assemble for prayer in the mosque. The innumerable mosques scattered throughout East Bengal serve as an index showing the intensity and extent of the religious practices of the people. You will not find a single village in East Bengal without a mosque or prayer-house, no matter whether it is a building, a tin shed or a thatched cottage. Dacca, the capital of East Bengal, has probably the largest number of mosques ever to be found in any one city of the world. They certainly speak for the great sway of Islam over the heart of the people. A deep regard and respect for the religious leaders and saints, known as Pir, is marked in East Bengal even now. There are mausoleums (Dargahs) of saints, such as Shah Jalal, Badruddin, and others, which have developed into religious shrines of the country. The East Bengali Muslims have developed an educational system of their own which has withstood the onslaught of time up to this day. The sort of education they have been imparting to their children for centuries is mostly theological. The institutions built for the purpose are the schools known as Madarshah and Madrasahs, where Muslim boys and girls get their theological teachings along with the knowledge of the three R’s. The Qur’an and the Hadith are studied with great devotion and reverence throughout the length and breadth of the country. The Qur’an, the Book of God, and the Hadith, the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, are guiding Muslim thought and conduct all over the country. As in almost all other Muslim countries, Muslims there strictly adhere to the teachings of these scriptures in their outward and inward behaviour as far as common man can. They hold these scriptures in the highest possible esteem. In every Muslim house where literacy has peeped in, a copy of the Qur’an is found. Arabic, being the language of the Qur’an, is looked upon with great reverence. Not only this, in giving names to their children when born and in speaking, the Muslims very often use Arabic words, even though Bengali happens to be their mother tongue.

Further, the Islamic nature of the people is manifest in their daily conduct of life also. They say their prayers five times a day; attend religious congregations, recite verses from the Qur’an, and observe ceremonial occasions, when they come with all formality. They wear pyjamas, sherwani s and caps (of course, the poorer classes wear lungis and “shirts”) and wear beards and trim their hair short. They are well acquainted with Islamic terms, such as ‘Tahvid, Takaia, Farz, Iman, and so on, and feed at one with the Muslims all over the world on the religious plane. These small things constitute the outward evidence of Islamic culture in East Bengal.

The philosophy of life of East Bengali Muslims rests on Islam

As in practice, so in the spirit of life, the East Bengali Muslims are thorough Muslims. Their Islamic spirit is manifest in their thoughts and ideas and in everything they have done. They believe in the unity of God, His sovereignty over everything and His vicegerency on earth so firmly that they never allow anyone to question “Why?” in this regard. Their whole philosophy of life stands or rests on it. They have a great love for the Prophet Muhammad and, consequently, for his land, Arabia, and everything associated with it. A great sense of respect for Arab culture, the Arabic language, the Arabic character, Arab heroes and scholars is to be found in every Muslim. They follow the laws or rules of conduct as laid down in the scriptures in their truest perspective. “Righteous work,” as enjoined by the Qur’an upon man, is a thing for which every Muslim soul feels a great thirst. In their architecture, literature, music, philosophy, to whichever field they have contributed, the spirit of Islam is manifest everywhere. Muslim architectural skill in East Bengal has been devoted mostly to the making of mosques and buildings. These are characterized by their dome shape everywhere, as is commonly found in all Muslim countries. Besides, the architectural model followed by the Muslims of
East Bengal has been a happy blending of different schools of architecture represented by different Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries. In the philosophical field the East Bengali Muslims, unlike their brethren in other countries, are born philosophers. God has been appraised as the source of all wisdom, all greatness and all strength. Man cannot do anything if there is no divine sanction behind it. This life and everything in life is transitory: only God is eternal. So God only should be adored by men. Men come from Him and return to Him at death.

A simple unquestioning faith in God and His Messenger, the Book of God and the tradition of His Messenger, and their unscrupulous adherence to the tenets of Islam, have moulded their philosophy of life to the greatest possible extent. Hence there is the thirst for a simple, unsophisticated life in every Muslim soul.

Islam has influenced East Bengali Muslim literature

This Islamic bent of mind is not absent in the literature, the music and in their drama of life. In the literature of East Bengal are found frequent references to God, to His prophet Muhammad, the sayings of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Again a profound belief in God's Oneness, an unflinching faith in His greatness, a love for the Prophet and his land, Arabia, and a close interest in Muslim life and history, the spirit of the universal brotherhood of Muslims and a socialistic outlook characterize the literary performances of the people. The Thousand and One Nights, the treasure house of Muslim folklore, is widely read by the people with keen interest. The philanthropy of Abu Bakr and Omar, the chivalry of Ali, Khalid, Tariq and Musa, the episodes of the great Muslim saints, the romance of Sindbad, the sweet recollections of the great love of "Laila" and "Majnun" and others, have influenced the pen of the authors greatly. The books by East Bengal's great authors, ranging from poets Alaol, Amir Hamza and Daulat Kazi to Kaikobad, Akram Khan, Gholam Mustafa, Ibrahim Khan, Ya'qub 'Ali Chowdhury, Jashimuddin and Farrukh Ahmed, are all marked more or less for their great interest in Islam, its Prophet and in the life of the Muslims. In the popular form of literature styled Puthi Sahitya, this spirit of Islam is more marked. These reveal how very deeply Islam has penetrated into the heart of the people.

East Bengal is known to be a land of rivers and rivulets. But it is not known that this is a land of music also. And so affluent is East Bengal in this particular field that anyone neglecting it is sure to lose sight of much of the charm, beauty and romance of its life. The roads and meadows, rivers and rivulets of this land echo and re-echo with a kind of music popularly known as "folk-songs composed centuries ago". They have stood the test of time and have not, in the least, lost their charm for our peasants, herdsmen and boatmen. The composers of these songs were both Hindus and Muslims, as is evident from their character. But their names and antecedents are still shrouded in mystery which will possibly never be unveiled. That does not, however, matter much for the ordinary man. The folk-songs which are supposed to have been composed by Muslims fell into the following main heads: Murshidi, Ma'rifati, or devotional songs, Bhatrii, Jari. Their aesthetic value is very great. A kind of folk-song styled Gunai Bibir Gan (The Songs of Gunai Bibi) is still very popular with the Muslims of the easternmost districts of East Bengal. These songs point to the depth of Islamic influence in East Bengal. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting some lines from these beautiful songs to show how tremendous is the influence of Islam upon ordinary people. Here is a simple but beautiful song sung by a Marifati (devotional songwriter of East Bengal):

God, O Merciful,
To whom else shall I address myself?
Look, O Merciful, where else shall I get a hearing?
As the water of the river frets and rushes out,
O Merciful, my mind also cannot rest
* * *
O God, my Merciful, make me weep for you.

The thirsting soul of a devotee is peeping through this beautiful song. How very simple is the song, yet how very grand the idea behind it. The Islamic spirit of complete submission to God has been epitomized in the folk-songs. These folk-songs also serve as witness to the inherent Islamic virtues of the people as manifest in their daily conduct of life. Here is a beautiful song expressing an East Bengali farmer's anguish and anxieties for a drought and his appeal to the Most High for His help in this matter:

"O God, send clouds, shower rain,
Give shade:
The sky is rent to pieces,
The land is cracked and crevassed:
The King of clouds lying asleep,
Who will send clouds?"

Do these priceless gems not speak for Islam in East Bengal? Even in the modern Muslim music this Islamic spirit is very manifest. Thus Islam has always been the guiding factor in the practical as well as in the spiritual life of the Muslims of East Bengal.

Western material civilization has left little or no impression upon the East Bengali Muslim

The West has in this age reached the climax of material civilization and has deeply influenced the life, economy and character of people all over the world. East Bengal also came within its orbit in the wake of the English conquest of Bengal and felt the tremendous influence of Western culture and education. But, as subsequent history proves, it has left little or no impression upon the minds of the masses, though it has created Muslim civilians, lawyers, officers and clerks, etc. The whirlwind of Western civilization, though it caused havoc in the economic, educational and political life of the people, could not eat into the hearts of millions who fortified their inner selves against all sorts of possible infringements. So in spite of the loss of freedom — economic, political and educational — Islam has survived the tremendous upsurge caused in the mental world of the Muslims by the infiltration of Western ideas. The result has been that once again the spirit of Islam has asserted itself in the life of the people of East Bengal, culminating in the creation of their new homeland, “Pakistan”.

In an age when religion is considered, in almost every part of the globe, to be a factor of second-rate importance, East Bengal Muslims hold on to it as the guiding spirit of the nation and have earned good dividends from it. All these considerations amply justify East Bengal's claim to be recognized as a citadel of Islamic culture.
THE WAY TO A REAL PEACE

COLONIALISM, A HINDRANCE TO PEACE

THE EXAMPLE OF SA'UDI ARABIA

By H. A. Mo'eiz

West-East Tension

True, Asia is restless. Africa is in violent commotion. It is also true that the West is in a state of fear. Asia and Africa are restless, the peoples over there are in revolt against the out-of-date colonial rules, against imperialism. This has created an intense West-East tension. In the independent countries of Asia and Africa we see internal restlessness for want of stabilities. They are backward, economically unstable; the peoples are poor. In addition to a revolt against imperialism there is also rebellion against oppression and poverty.

The West is restless for fear of Communist expansion. All policies of Western democracy are motivated against Communism. Herein lies the tension between the militant Kremlin and Western imperialism. In fact, these show that the two sides of the world, East and West, are restless. If this state of affairs remains, and there comes war, we may expect ruin, total ruin, such as history has never seen.

The human race was never in greater need for peace than today.

To achieve a real peace and to maintain it is today a problem every people is desperately facing. Every nation — especially the nations of Asia and Africa — pays much attention to this problem and devises ways and means of achieving and maintaining peace. Some nations have achieved partial peace; they have only attained political peace, not social peace. They have succeeded only in achieving outer peace, not inner peace.

Men today — the days of the atomic bomb — are fearstricken; they go in fear of war that may flare up all of a sudden. This fear of war and the destruction that will ensue, and the great powers' race for arms, have made one believe that the third world war is inevitable and an all-out destruction inescapable. Because of different ideologies — the two distinct ideologies of Capitalism and Communism — the world has been divided into two opposing camps. One is wondering why high-ranking statesmen of the world cannot adjust themselves and make efforts to efface this fear from the hearts of men by making the possibilities of war impossible. These statesmen "are presumably all wise men, and none can be accused of wanting to invoke on the head of humanity the crack of doom." And no one can say that they have lost the balance of human morals. What, then, is the reason?

The politicians and mankind

We human beings, the noblest of all creatures, are supposed to live up to our standard: to be human. The purpose of human descent on this world is to live and to let others live in it in peace and tranquillity so that human beings may reap the benefit of the blessings bestowed upon them by the Creator; to know Him, and to worship Him. As human beings, we must be ready to give and to take; humanity should not suffer at the expense of greedy motive and avarice. But unfortunately some personal considerations and unjustifiable motives have made politicians think that nothing counts in this world of dichotomy except wealth and power. When there is wealth there is power and there is honour. This conviction has led the politicians and leaders of the world to take the wrong side in administering justice. Thus we find the words "justice" and "humanity" in the dictionary, but so far we have seen little of their practice.

Men know that justice is good, injustice bad. Men know that good work is praiseworthy, bad work blamable. Men know, because of their being the best creatures, that in life's affairs they should be in consonance with human nature. But greed and selfishness have driven them to side-track justice and humanity, to forget that justice is justice, to ignore that humanity is humanity.

European colonizers and French North Africa and West Irian

One is tired of "democracy" — a symbol of justice, a doctrine said to be practised and preached by the Western nations. One is tired not without reason: one is tired because one has seen the treatment of those powerful and justice-preaching nations towards smaller countries, in a way contrary to the meaning of justice: falsifying the cry of democracy. Observing this treatment one is confronted with the difficulty of distinguishing between justice and injustice, between humanity and inhumanity; and one wonders whether these terms have become synonymous. France is said to be the first nation of Europe to recognize equality and fraternity among peoples and nations. But these very noble conceptions are expressed rather than put into practice. But her practices in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Indo-China have contradicted this argument. Britain's practices in Malaya, Kenya, British Guiana and other parts of her colonies; Portugal's treatment of Goa; Malan's racial segregation policies in South Africa; the Netherlands' refusal to settle peacefully the Western Irian (Western New Guinea) problem; the United Nations Organization's actions on Palestine, by creating the so-called State of Israel, "an act which has resulted in years of discord in the Middle East, discord and tension which seem to be increasing rather than decreasing" — all these are eloquent testimonies for us that "justice" has little meaning in the West, and the only thing
that may be relied upon is "might is right". We are not in a position to deny this argument, as it is an open secret, that all policies of the great powers have their aims at exploitation of the smaller nations. If these powers have applied some modifications to their imperialistic policies towards their colonies, it is not without sacrifice of the natives of the colonies concerned.

In order to suppress a national movement the imperialists mark it as a Communist-sponsored uprising, a gang of bandits. To cover their selfish designs the imperialists say that, because a certain place has its strategic importance and is essential to the defence of their country, they are not going to abandon it. In order to remain colonizing a country that struggles for independence, the imperialists say that the populations are not yet ripe enough to govern themselves, so they must remain there.

These hypocritical assertions are climaxed by France's claim that Algeria is a part of metropolitan France. How false this claim is! Algeria is an Arab territory which lies miles away from France. It differs from France naturally, economically, in religion, race, creed, and in every aspect of existence.

It is also stated that the Netherlands has put a similar claim with regard to Western Irian. The Dutch representative in the United Nations Organization said that his country will ignore any decision taken by the Council concerning Western Irian. The Netherlands, in utter disregard of the agreement of the Round Table Conference, said that she will remain in Western Irian by force if Indonesia tries to liberate it. At the same time the Netherlands is not unaware that for Indonesia it is not a question of trying to liberate it. Indeed, Indonesia is going to liberate it, preferably peacefully, for it is a part of her national struggle, and with Western Irian remaining under the heel of colonialism this struggle for independence is incomplete. Whether the Dutch Government wants it or not, Indonesia will move heaven and earth to accomplish this purpose coûte que coûte. The sooner the Dutch recognize this the better, otherwise they will have to go to the wall.

If we can claim the existence of rationality and sincerity on earth, we see that no rational and sincere man will lend his approval to these absurd claims and selfish attitude of France and the Netherlands. Otherwise, one could not help losing faith in this type of "Western democracy".

Another word used by the imperialists to justify their abhorrent policy is "interest". They say that they are not going to quit that place because they have got great "interest" in it, or they are responsible for it. The imperialists, perhaps, thought that only they had an interest in life, only they had to defend their country, only they knew how to rule, only they had the right to live in this world — others had not. What remarkable selfishness!

The harm colonialism has done to the character of the colonized people and colonizers

But now, some colonies have won their independence: some have won it peaceably and some by force of arms. And we are sure that one day those colonies that are still trodden down by colonialism and that are struggling for freedom will also reach their goal. It is an old saying that the hands of the clock cannot be turned back. Though slowly, they are going to march forward. But some imperialists are wise enough to foresee this event: they quit before they are forced to quit, thus preserving their name and prestige. But some are wanting in this vision: they become wise only after the flight, thereby spoiling their name and losing their friends.

This colonialism has dominated the moral sense of the imperialists, so that they have become selfish and greedy: it has corrupted the moral sense of the colonized peoples and led them into an inferiority complex. Thus we see most nations whose independence has recently emerged consider that everything Western is good, imitable, worth copying; what is made in Europe is best, in utter disregard of their educational, cultural and religious, customs and natural surroundings.

The late Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938 C.E.) would not have become a philosopher poet had not the confirmation come from Europe: the late Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (d. 1949 C.E.) would not be called Bidhul-i-Hind (lit. "the Nightingale of India"), thus called because of her excellent poetry; had not this name been given by Europeans; the late Sir Sayyid Ahmad (d. 1898 C.E.) would not be called a "Sir" had not the honour of knighthood been conferred by Westerners! An Eastern country would not legally attain its de facto or de jure independence unless the recognition came from the Western hemisphere!

Above all this colonialism was an unshakable rock in the way of national progress: it had hindered the educational, cultural, economic and scientific development of the colonies.

Now, it is more than clear that one basic reason of uncertainty in life and chaos and suffering in this world is colonialism. And until this colonialism is wiped away from the surface of the earth, there is little hope that there will be a real peace in the world. No one is unwilling to live in peace. Therefore, colonialism must go: it has to go.

Are man-made international organizations capable of bringing peace in the world?

To make our points clearer let us try to trace some historical facts as to how men have made great endeavours in pursuance of achieving lasting peace.

In 1815 at Vienna a conference was held as a result of the increasing power of Napoleon, who was regarded by other Western powers as a menace to the security of Europe. This shows the desire of the various nations to settle international problems peacefully. Other unions like the Universal Post Union and the Universal Telegraph Union sprang up like mushrooms, and these unions have proved of beneficial service all over the world. More important than these was the "the Hague Conference of 1899, which undertook to formulate codes of international law on several subjects: to set up machinery to facilitate the settlement of international disputes".

The horrors of the first world war opened the eyes of the great powers, and the outcome was the formation of the League of Nations. This League of Nations was the first international organization which recognized national sovereignty as one of its basic principles.

These man-made unions and man-made laws could not stand before the sweeping tide of Mussolini's ambitions; they proved valueless before the violent storm of Hitler's
dreams. When the former attacked Ethiopia, the League of Nations could do nothing to put a stop to that wanton aggression; Germany also began to ignore the League, and Japan attacked China. Thus the League was found powerless, if not futile, and its laws unworkable. These are authentic proofs that mere man-made unions and man-made laws cannot be relied upon to maintain peace. Even today, the world has the finest organization ever created — the United Nations Organization, with its various agencies and noble principles — which is regarded as a tangible and a more concrete achievement of the twentieth century. No problem put before it had been satisfactorily settled and no step had been taken by it against any member State which ignored its order. The late Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations’ representative to supervise the truce in Palestine, was brutally murdered by the Zionists. But the United Nations Organization proved powerless to punish the culprit, the “Israeli” Government, a government of its own making. In fact, “the United Nations truce observers have been subjected to numerous ‘Israeli’ aggressions” under the nose of the United Nations Organization.

If one sees the matter from these points of view it seems to one that the United Nations Organization is following the path of the League of Nations to meet its final fate. In spite of this organization no one can say that life is secure, that peace is guaranteed, and that a third world war is impossible.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not say that the United Nations Organization is a mere farce. General Romulo said: “Kill the United Nations, and you kill the last organization where the two sides in the world maintain a daily diplomatic and political contact which itself is a force for peace.” Therefore, in his opinion, and mine, for one, it still has some value. But what I want to emphasize is that man-made unions and man-made laws have not lasted long and will not last long, nor will they prove serviceable in the maintenance of peace unless they are backed by heavenly laws.

To have peace man should be morally and spiritually civilized

It shows that there is something like moral bankruptcy affecting some responsible men of the world today. And in defining “moral bankruptcy,” it cannot be taken for granted that because Mr. So-and-so is a good speaker, a great politician, he is therefore morally and spiritually sound. Nay, he may be a corrupter in disguise or a sugar-coated pill. If human beings want to live as humans, if leaders of the world want to serve humanity, to show that they are not creatures of a lower standard, to show that they are “civilized,” then they must prepare to discard evil designs and greediness, to consider others’ needs their needs, others’ interests their interests, others’ happiness their happiness, others’ pain their pain. Man should be morally and spiritually civilized. Mere materialism will have little value in achieving real peace.

To cite one example, the United States of America and Russia are the two powers said to rely rather on material considerations in steering the ship of life. These two materialistic powers seem to have evoked the possibilities of a third world war. Because of their selfish policies in the West and in the East, they have made the populations of these regions fearful of losing their right to live as they wish, their right to mould their life according to their conscience, and to rule their country for themselves. Their policies have caused fear to prevail on both sides of the world.

Therefore, men’s souls must be purified: they must be free from impurity of thought. Some sort of spiritual teaching must be imparted to them. Unless and until our souls are cleared from greediness, hatred, jealousy and personal considerations, we cannot carry out laws and orders — man-made or heavenly — in a proper manner. “If the Western powers still seek to impose their policies on people who do not want them,” justice cannot be justly administered, and when there is no justice there will be no peace, and it is futile to talk about the United Nations Organization, fundamental rights or the self-determination of small States. The purification of our souls is not the last goal, but it is an immediate necessity. When one’s soul is not affected by wrong thoughts only then can one see that what is beneficial for one is beneficial for others, and vice versa. On the contrary, one will never see things in the right way, one will never perform good work, one will never become a good leader, unless one’s soul is sacred. A sacred task requires a sacred soul.

This is a big gap in human society today, and this is responsible for the uncertainty of human life in these days of turmoil. This is responsible not only for the injustices done by certain powers to other smaller nations, this lack of vision has also made the United Nations Organization a place for propaganda, a place for charging and counter-charging with nothing profitable resulting from it all. And if the third world war is to come — we hope it will not come — this gap will be its main reason.

What can “civilize” man morally and spiritually? Islam can help in this regard

Herein is nothing to surprise politicians and leaders of the world, nothing to worry over, neither will they be put upon a bed of thorns, nor will they be left in the lurch. A little courage on their part will solve this problem for ever: for they have before them Islam, which can promptly and fitly fill this colossal gap. Islam can administer justice without discrimination. Islamic laws are not meant for a section of the people: they are not meant to regulate certain powers, while neglecting others. Islamic laws are adaptable to all mankind, irrespective of race, creed, religion and even the deep and cruel cleavage of colour has ceased to count.” Islam alone is a religion that has “understood how to supplant national feeling by something wider, something which is stronger and more significant, something more universal and none the less of definite character: that of the Mussalman”. No religion except Islam has achieved a universal brotherhood. Islam is an international religion that has stood and can stand the test of time, and can satisfy mankind.

Turning now to another aspect of our problem, let us take the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an example.

Saudi Arabia’s example to the troubled world

To try to describe in a few lines the peace and tranquility prevalent in Saudi Arabia is to do that country a sheer injustice. But I shall not be expected to go into details.
A real peace is presented in Sa‘udi Arabia today. Here we know what peace is, here we feel what tranquility is, and here we see how justice is administered.

His Majesty King Sa‘ud comprises in himself many good qualities: apart from his piousness and broadmindedness, he strengthens the defence of his country and extends friendship to brotherly countries; social problems receive his full attention and the welfare of his people occupies much of his time. . . . In Sa‘udi Arabia today one leaves one’s shop open, goes to one’s distant house and nothing happens. The money-changers put a piece of cloth over the heaps of money — sometimes golden — and without leaving anyone to look after their shops, go anywhere they want and nothing happens.

His Majesty King Sa‘ud

In Sa‘udi Arabia, peace is the order of the day

"His Majesty King Sa‘ud comprises in himself many good qualities . . . social problems receive his full attention and the welfare of his people occupies much of his time. . . . In Sa‘udi Arabia today one leaves one’s shop open, goes to one’s distant house and nothing happens. The money-changers put a piece of cloth over the heaps of money — sometimes golden — and without leaving anyone to look after shops, go anywhere they want and nothing happens."

attention and the welfare of his people occupies much of his time. He encourages learning: the number of schools is increasing; many hospitals are opened; good roads are being constructed; the Haram (the Sacred Mosque at Mecca) is beautified; the Safa-Marwa pathway has been modernized; the lighting arrangements are being generalized, the system of drinking water has been expanded. The Medina-Damascus railway is to be reopened, and a plan is under consideration for extending the railways already existing which communicate with important cities such as Mecca, Djjddah and Riyadh.

Ever since he first sat on the throne the King has been making country-wide tours, visiting all parts of his kingdom. He has talked to his subjects, heard their problems and solved their difficulties on the spot.

Thanks to the products of petroleum, this country has become one of the greatest countries producing this material. And this has made the living conditions of the people much better than ever before. The result of this improvement in life’s affairs, cemented with adherence to religion, is peace. Peace is the order of the day — peace of mind and peace in every walk of life. The people are happy. One leaves one’s shop open, goes to one’s distant house and nothing happens. The money-changers — whose business and riches equal those of bankers here — put a piece of cloth over the heaps of money — sometimes golden — and without leaving anyone to look after their shops, go anywhere they want and nothing happens. If one laden with gold goes on foot along the Mecca-Medina road — a scene of robbery and looting before al-Sa‘ud took over the kingship of the country — one will find one’s way safe: one will never be interrupted. In fact, no such warning will be heard here as that given to an Arab traveller by a hotel-keeper in Rome, who warned him not to walk in the streets outside the hotel early in the morning for fear of pickpockets!

What a complete peace! What more do human beings want? In fact, peace in Sa‘udi Arabia is an oasis in the desert compared with the present situation of the world elsewhere. In this respect we may rejoice, and we are sure that nowhere in the world is a more complete peace.

This five-lettered word seems very hard of accomplishment nowadays, except in a country which strictly follows the teachings of Islam. It is well known that “the general tendency of Islam is to create and perpetuate conditions conducive to the prevalence of peace”. Thus “all the great weapons of destruction that are being forged in the world today” are not solutions to the international problems; this is not the way to attain peace. We can hardly believe in the armed peace idea as a means of maintaining peace. But the solution is Islam, and the way to peace is Islamic laws that deserve a close word by word study. We want Islam studied not only by Muslims but by all and sundry. We want, in the interests of humanity and civilization, all the leading statesmen, politicians and leaders of the world to study Islam: to make it the basis of their policies. Also we want them to outlaw and to destroy completely these destructive weapons, to stop the experiments with the atom and hydrogen bombs. Only then may we hope to live in true and lasting peace.

At the same time we urge the Muslims to set an example of how Islam is well fitted for the guidance of mankind. We urge the Muslims to unite against peace-corrupters and war-mongers. These are not mere words for propaganda. We presume that all the leaders of the world are wise; let them be still wiser. Some of them are great — no one is unwilling to be greater still.
DID THE CONQUERING MUSLIMS DESTROY THE LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA?

By Stephen Petrovay

Who invented the accusation of burning the Library of Alexandria by 'Umar the Great?

Intolerance towards people who profess another religion or belong to another race has accompanied mankind since time immemorial. The ancient Greek city-states even waged fratricidal wars caused by their intolerant attitude towards differing political parties or constitutions. These wars did not spare even the fruits of human spiritual endeavour, and history abounds in deplorable examples of wholesale destruction of books, the latest being that of the German Nazi régime, perpetrated in our own days. It is a common heritage of barbarians to annihilate the spirit, which they fear more than they do the living body. They regard its baneful effect a more potent factor than matter, which may perish. This has always induced conquerors to exterminate the dreaded books. Even civilized nations of the West, as soon as they put on armour and divest themselves of the thin varnish of culture, have mercilessly destroyed the spiritual goods of subdued peoples. Sedillot, a French scholar, states that when his countrymen conquered Constantine in North Africa, they burnt all books and manuscripts which they found in the mosques. When the British army entered the town of Magdala in Abyssinia, it carried off a mass of precious Abyssinian books, but as soon as it met with difficulty in transporting them, it left them in a wayside church, selecting some at random without discrimination. The few rescued specimens betray the immense value of the lost ones.

In the presence of such examples it is easy to believe the story current among Europeans that when the Arabs under the command of 'Amr Ibn al-'Asi victoriously entered Alexandria in 640 C.E. he burned the remnants of its famous library. The story has a romantic charm about it and has found a specious literary expression. It is said that an heretic Coptic priest who befriended the Muslims advised the conqueror to take possession of some books that he might use, although he (the priest) was not interested in them, yet he knew that the books were held in high esteem by the Egyptians. The story says that 'Amr could not decide on his own and asked for instructions from the Caliph 'Umar, who, it is said, replied: "If the books contain what is in the Qur'an, then they are superfluous: if they contain the contrary, they are false: in any case they might be destroyed."

Indeed, this well-known story makes interesting reading, but has as little truth in it as many a similar fable. It seems that the story was invented to justify the sadacity and the ready wit of the Caliph and to blacken the early Muslims with the selfsame crime the barbarians had perpetrated in the course of events. In such cases, it is the task of the historian to analyse the tradition and to proceed objectively and throw light on the reality, disregarding the specious brilliance of rhetoric or gainful partiality. More so when we remember that the event has not been mentioned by any contemporary writer. It only occurs for the first time in the book of Abu l-Faraj, a Christian, who flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century, but he does not quote his authority to corroborate his story. After him, several later historians have continued the allegation, like Abu l-Fida (beginning of the fourteenth century) and Maqrizi (d. 1441) in his Khitat, on the erroneous assumption that Aristotle was teaching in the Serapeum—a colonnade at Alexandria—which had contained a library burned by 'Amr Ibn al-'Asi. 'Abd al-Latif (about the beginning of the thirteenth century) mentions after a traditional hearsay a similar story, but the contemporary Coptic sources are silent about this momentous accusation. This fact alone makes the probability of the story more than dubious. But let us investigate more positive evidence.

The Library of Alexandria and its collection of books

The library of Alexandria was founded by Ptolemy Soter in the third century before Christ. The library, which was placed in the so-called "Museion", collected the original manuscripts of ancient Greek authors, and copied them in large numbers to satisfy the demands of the learned world. The manuscripts produced by the copyists of this library reached the highest perfection in aesthetic and scientific requirements. Its fame was firmly established in the ancient world. The library made it a point to possess rare manuscripts and sent out its agents to acquire whatever they deemed precious enough to find a place in this unique collection. Some rare manuscripts were bought for fabulously high prices. The custodians of the library did not even hesitate to use fraudulent methods if the coveted work was not obtainable by honest means.

The copies of the manuscripts were written on papyrus leaves, which were abundant in Egypt to such an extent that Egypt sold the writing material to Greece, Rome and the East. In this line, Egypt acquired a monopoly in production and could compete with its rivals in the collection of cultural works. The library of Pergamum (anciently a city of Asia Minor) was a dangerous rival for a time, but Egypt soon triumphed over it by putting an embargo on the export of papyrus to Pergamum. The result was the same as it is even today in such cases of commercial competition: the Pergamene started to produce the more expensive but smoother parchment for writing. In any library, until the Arabs introduced paper from China, prepared from rags and silk, these two materials satisfied the needs of writers.

The library of Alexandria developed rapidly to possess manuscripts in the Egyptian, Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages. The rooms in the "Museion" proved too small for the enormous number, and a subsidiary branch had to be established in the colonnaded Serapeum near the Acropolis. According to tradition, the two buildings contained the incredible number of seven hundred thousand scrolls!

The history of this vast collection is varied. The most striking event in its life was the occupation of Egypt by Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. Caesar, being surrounded by the Egyptian army, fired his fleet in the harbour of Alexandria. This destroyed the adjacent edifices, probably also the "Museion" with its books. Caesar himself does not mention this tragic event, but Plutarch in his Comparative Biographies decidedly hints at it when he writes: "When Caesar saw his fleet in the hands of his enemies, he was compelled, in order to escape danger, to set fire to it, and the flames extended from the harbour and destroyed the library". Seneca (d. 46 C.E.) too was of this opinion, and states that during...
the siege of Caesar 'four hundred thousand books were destroyed. Dio Cassius (about 155-230 C.E.) similarly recorded this fire, "which extended beyond the harbour and destroyed the corn stores and the ware-rooms of books". It is, however, uncertain as to what he meant by "ware-rooms". All subsequent authors — Ammianus Marcellinus, Aulus Gallius, etc. — state the number of scrolls between five and seven hundred thousand, which number, although each work was preserved in several copies for sale, is still grossly exaggerated.

Seven or eight years after this deplorable event Marcus Antonius presented Cleopatra with the library of the kings of Pergamus. This collection of supposedly forty thousand scrolls was probably placed partly in the building of Caesareion, established by Cleopatra in honour of Caesar, and partly in the Serapeum—as the Musieon had probably been destroyed. It seems certain that the Musieon was finally razed to the ground by the Emperor Aurelian in 273 C.E. in revenge for the revolt of the Egyptians. The role which the Musieon had hitherto played was supplanted and continued by the Serapeum, which became the great seat of learning to such an extent that popular tradition believed that Aristotle himself was teaching under its colonnades, as he was spuriously believed to have done so in the Musieon.

At the end of the fourth century C.E. the Serapeum met with the same fate as had befallen the Musieon and afterwards the Caesareion, which was destroyed in a religious revolt in 366 C.E. The Serapeum being in the vicinity of the Acropolis served as a refuge for the Christians against the assault of the pagans. The community by the two parties ended with the decision of the Emperor Theodosius, who gave judgment in favour of the Christians, who in revenge destroyed the Serapeum in 391 C.E. It seems pretty certain that the collection of books also perished with some of the buildings, although remnants of the Serapeum or the Acropolis were still there, for they were described in florid language by Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century C.E.

Could the Muslims destroy the Library of Alexandria?

If the libraries of Alexandria did share the fate of the buildings which had been consumed by flames or demolished by religious fanaticism, it is within the realm of probability that some remnants of these collections were extant as possessions of individuals — as was the case with the Arabic and Persian books collected by the Moghuls in India — who preserved the learning, contained in them, or kept them as sacred relics. But no writer of the fifth and seventh centuries makes any mention of "public libraries". Now it remains to investigate the possibility as to whether the Muslims found some "libraries" in existence and burnt their contents. At first sight it seems unimaginable that early Muslims should intentionally destroy books found in a Christian country, like Egypt, when we know something of the respect for books inculcated in their hearts by the Qur'an and by the precept that all peoples who professed a revealed religion enjoyed a privileged position on account of their revealed books, and that those peoples with whom the Muslim Governments had made a covenant were called ahl al-Kitab — the People of the Book. The Caliph ‘Umar, who was noted for his piety, has shown examples of tolerance towards other creeds which are unparalleled in the history of those times.

Here it may interest my readers to know that a book on the subject recently published travels the whole field of research and arrives at the conclusion — mainly based on Coptic tradition — that it was the Arabs who destroyed this unique treasure by burning an incredible number of books in four thousand public baths for a period of six months. Simple mathematics would show up its improbability, yes, its impossibility.

Some facts and figures which disprove the allegation

According to tradition the library or the libraries contained about 700,000 scrolls. The scrolls were placed in urns, each urn containing about 10 scrolls. An average work was written on 17 scrolls. This means that about 41,000 independent works were stocked in the library. If we allow that the library stocked several copies of some works intended for sale to clients, and deduct 20,000 copies on this account, it would leave 21,000 copies. But we must, however, take into consideration that one single author had several works. If we deduct on this account a further 15,000 works, this would give us 6,000 independent works, which would represent the same number of authors. I think we may ask with confidence whether the ancient world could muster 6,000 Greek authors — only Greek authors; for the Latin, Hebrew and Egyptian material was also stored in the Serapeum.

According to another book which excludes from the computation the 200,000 scrolls donated by Antonius to Cleopatra, the Musieon contained 490,000 works, out of which 90,000 works were registered without duplicates, the remaining 400,000 not being catalogued. If we ascribe 20 works on an average to a single author, the above-mentioned 90,000 works would signify 4,500 authors, which number is just as impossible as the above-mentioned number of 6,000.

According to these computations it is incredible, nay, positively impossible that the libraries possessed such a large number of books in the form of scrolls, which were allegedly destined ultimately to heat 4,000 public baths! But if we even admit for the sake of argument that the libraries contained 700,000 scrolls at the time of ‘Amr al-‘Asi, then each bath could have received 175 scrolls, and this amount would have sufficed only for a few days, and not for "six months", as the legend has it.

If we grant that the Muslims did burn the books of the library, which according to Parsons’ view is probable, we must needs point to a circumstance which appeared to Parsons negligible but which is of paramount importance, for it is decisive: the books were written on papyrus and parchment; this material is less combustible than paper and gives such a low heat as would hardly suffice to raise the temperature of water to a lukewarm degree. Besides, the rolled-up scrolls would not burn at all by themselves, as no air-draught could enter between them; only high-pressure cauldrons could ignite such a large amount of scrolls, and the temperature of their own fire would not at all stand in need of such a negligible amount of heat as the sacrificed rolls could have afforded. This consideration of experts on combustion is weightier than the negative speculations based on the silence of contemporaries, or the positive authorities who wrote five centuries after the alleged event had taken place.

We must, therefore, fully endorse the verdict pronounced by Professor Alfred Butler: “The conclusion of the whole matter can no longer be doubtful. The suspicion of Renaudot and the scepticism of Gibbon are more than justified. One must pronounce that ‘Abu l-Faraj’s story is a mere fable, totally destitute of historical foundation.”

3 Fath al-‘Arab Misra, translation by Farid Abu Hadid, Cairo, 1933, pp. 348-370.
DEMOCRACY OF THE MEDINESE PERIOD OF THE CALIPHATE AND MODERN METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION

by Muhammad `Abdur Rahman Khan

Representatives of the people in the Medineese period chosen for their piety, integrity and philanthropy

The Medineese Period of the Caliphate lasted hardly thirty years (632-661 A.C.), but such marvellous deeds were performed by the newly converted Muslim Arabs in this short period that it appears unique in world history. The most characteristic feature of the period was its truly democratic spirit, perfectly sincere and free from any kind of chicaneery and sophistry. Democracy is usually described as a form of government in which political power is distributed among those recognized as having rights of citizenship, but may nevertheless exclude women or subject populations. The Medineese democracy was based on generous human sympathy, heart to heart understanding of the interests of the community and implicit faith in God. Representatives of the people were chosen from among the best-known members of the community for their integrity, piety and philanthropy.

Decisions were arrived at by free discussions and exchange of views unhindered by time limit or arbitrary rights of veto. The methods of election to office or conduct of administration may appear to have been crude or clumsy from modern showy or high-sounding standards, but were based firmly on pure Islamic principles, true and simple, generous and all-convicing.

On the death of the Prophet Muhammad the Ansars (literally helpers — the people of Medina who helped the Prophet Muhammad) and the Muhajirs (literally immigrants — the friends of the Prophet Muhammad) who migrated to Medina, co-operated, and all, in electing the venerable Abu Bakr as the First Caliph of Islam (632-634 C.E.). He confidently applied appropriately bold measures to overcome all mischievous attempts at breaking up the solidarity of Islam. Through his zeal and firmness Islam took possession of the whole of Arabia and began to penetrate into the surrounding regions also.

After his brief but thoroughly successful régime of two years, 'Umar, the unswerving champion of justice, was elected successor with the unanimous consent of the whole Muslim community.

The tribal spirit vanished under the leadership of the Quraysh, as it was through one of them — the Prophet himself — that the true faith was revealed to mankind: but there was not the slightest attempt on their part to dominate over others. The State was communal (not Communist). Every member of the community was imbued with the genuine spirit of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. All the functions of life were based on Islam and Islam itself was life and soul. All members of the community, men, women and children, whether rich or poor, free or slave, identified themselves with Islam and co-operated for the one object of living according to the precepts of Islam. There was no thought of one's own aggrandizement or monopolization of power.

Dhimmis — non-Muslims in a Muslim country

Islam, the precious gift of God, was meant to be shared with all human beings. It was not to be reserved for the select few — as in some other religions. If people voluntarily joined the ranks of Islam, they were welcome as brothers. If they preferred to remain aloof, they were offered friendly terms of peaceful life — reserved for Dhimmis (literally the protected — non-Muslim subjects in Muslim territory), on payment of a small poll-tax for exemption from military duties, and were at liberty to follow their own laws under Islam's benevolent protection. This tax was insignificant compared with what the Muslims had to pay as zakat, and nothing compared with the taxes levied by modern civilized governments. The Muslims were in honour bound to protect the Dhimmis against foreign foes. If they were unable to do so, they were peremptorily enjoined to return the poll-tax, as was done by Abu 'Ubayd Ibn al-Jarrah on a well-known occasion.

The status of the Dhimmis was by no means undignified. Apart from freedom to follow the tenets of their own religions unmolested (in contrast with their co-religionists under their own sovereigns, if they differed ever so little from
the "Orthodox" State religion), they were given every facility to acquire wealth and prosperity, so long as they did not intrigue against Islam. There was always the possibility of their voluntary conversion to Islam and joining the general Muslim community, so no wonder that Christians and Jews (and later, Zoroastrians and Sabians as well) rose to the highest positions under State service in the same way as true Muslims. Their places of worship — churches and synagogues, etc. — were as scrupulously protected as the Muslim mosques.

The democratic spirit of Islam reached its zenith during the regime of the second Caliph. His election also was simple and based on genuine wholehearted consent of Muslims from all tribes and classes.

As all Muslims were regarded as members of the same family or fraternity, elaborate present-day schemes of voting, polling-stations and other perplexing paraphernalia were not felt necessary. It would seem, in fact, that the resolutions adopted were so clearly thought out and so scrupulously judged beforehand that there was scarcely any room for difference of opinion or vote of dissent. It was this unanimous consent and universal co-operation that gave such weight and importance to early Muslim decisions.

**How monarchy was introduced into Islam**

But ever-increasing wealth and power (as was feared by the far-sighted Caliph 'Umar) brought about a change in the mentality and way of life of many of the Arabs. The tribal proclivities of the pre-Muslim period and family pretensions that had been banned and suppressed by the Prophet Muhammad began to creep in and undermined the noble edifice of Muslim solidarity. Intrigues, subtle and insidious, resulted suddenly in the murder of 'Umar the Great by a Persian slave — a calamity of irreparable loss to the entire Muslim world.

To safeguard against future disruptions and discords, 'Umar on his deathbed appointed a select body of the surviving members of 'Ash'adh Mubashsharit (to elect his successor after consulting all the eminent Muslims that had gathered in Medina at the time. One of these ten, Abu 'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah (who had explicitly withdrawn his candidature for Caliphate) was unanimously entrusted with the work of collecting the votes. After ceaseless toil he announced the result of his enquiries and declared the election of the benevolent 'Uthman to the vacant Caliphate. The announcement was unanimously accepted and all went well for a time.

After some years, however, his selfish relations began to take undue advantage of his magnificent nature and paved the way for a revival of the old pre-Islamic feud between the Banu Umayyah and the Banu Hashim. Nepotism, indiscriminate patronage, and misappropriation of public money by avaricious partisans of officers in power led to general discontent in the provinces, which resulted eventually in open revolts against the Caliph himself. Finally, poor unsuspecting 'Uthman was ruthlessly put to death by his unscrupulous antagonists. Chaos prevailed in Medina and in the entire Muslim world for a number of days, until at last peace-loving leaders of the community entreated the chivalrous 'Ali to take up the reins of government and restore law and order once more. He yielded to this appeal very reluctantly after repeated refusals, as a matter of dangerous responsibility, solely in the interests of Muslim solidarity.

He did his utmost (according to his own unprejudiced personal judgment and the advice of his trusted supporters) to restore discipline among the various exponents of Muslim interests. But discord and disintegration in the body politic of Islam had gone too far and too deep, and the loyalty of Islam of the first decade of the Caliph had vanished altogether.

Muslim leaders began to arrange themselves into a number of antagonistic parties (evidently each party judging itself to be exclusively in the right), which terminated eventually in terrible civil wars and the assassination of brave 'Ali himself. It is estimated that these civil wars caused more bloodshed than all the previous wars of Islam against the infidels put together. In this chaos the fine democracy of the Medinise Caliphate came to an end and a Banu Umayyah Imarat (the Umayyad monarchy) was established at Damascus in 661 C.E.

**Present-day State administration, as always, needs careful watching — the example of the Medinise Caliphate period can help in this respect**

Sound State administration is by no means easy. The best brains of approved honesty must be employed to provide for it. History shows that even in countries generally regarded as most advanced, the confidence, happiness and security of the early days of the Medinise Caliphate are wanting, simply owing to lack of real sincerity and faith in God. Our most enlightened administrations must, at best, be regarded as caricatures, not true pictures of sound and judicious governments. Democracy has prevailed in the world before and after the advent of Islam, for different periods and with various degrees of success. When wealth multiplies and power infatuates the lucky, the State drifts to oligarchy, autocracy, monarchy, empire or even dictatorship (Fascism).

All modes of administration need careful watching so as not to let power fall into the hands of unscrupulous politicians or ambitious militarists. The best and perhaps the longest example of limited monarchy or empire, that of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, shows clearly how difficult it is to manage the affairs of the people when the possessions and responsibilities of the State spread out more and more. Queer as it appears, Great Britain acquired her unique success in administration through the chance offer of her royal crown to a distant relation holding a petty overlordship in a foreign domain, thus giving a free hand to the British intelligentsia to manage their public affairs in the best manner possible.

The United States of America is generally considered to be the most successful example of modern democracy. But her success is due really to a number of complicated causes. More or less well-educated well-to-do people of mercantile mentality, seeking freedom of worship and fair treatment by the sovereign State, migrated in instalments to the "New World", then inhabited by people of still very primitive civilization, and took possession of their undeveloped and unprotected lands. With modern facilities of advanced civilization they conquered the New World, obliterating all the traces of their puerile culture and raising herself eventually to a position of pre-eminence over the entire earth.

Here, too, democracy has had its ups and downs and had to differentiate between Immediate Democracy, Representative Democracy, Republicanism, Federalism, Socialism, etc., stumbling against employment of slave
labour, high tariffs,7 spoils system8 and boss rule.9 The
world is now faced with the gigantic struggle for overlord-
ship between Capitalism and Communism. Heaven alone
knows what the ultimate result will be. It would be in the
best interests of the human race if unprejudiced truth-loving
scholars of all countries were to study critically the con-
ditions that led to the marvellous success of the Medinese
Caliphate with its meteoric flight to splendour, and learn
useful lessons from that brief but unsurpassed régime.

1 ‘Asrāh Mahashshurah. The ten companions of the Prophet,
assured of Divine favour in the Hereafter.
2 Immediate Democracy: Government by whole people reaching
its own decisions. Impossible except where governing unit is
small enough for all to attend meetings. Found in ancient city
States, survives in the United States in town meetings.
3 Representative Democracy: Government by representative elected
by a body comprising large proportion of population. Governing
body small compared to number of voters, but responsible to
electorate.

4 Republic: State without hereditary head in which supreme power
vests in group of persons, sometimes small, sometimes the whole
population.

Republican Party in the United States formed originally to favour
centralization, associated with high tariffs and manufacturing
interest.

5 Federalism: Political system in which several States, each
preserving internal independence, are united under one legislative
body as far as foreign affairs and other subjects of common
interest are concerned.

6 Socialism: Political economic theory, advocating total or partial
abolition of privately owned capital and competitive industry in
favour of ownership by central democratic authority, or by the
workers, of all instruments of production (land and capital).

7 Tariff: List of duties or customs to be paid on imports or exports.

8 Spolosys: Political system (especially in the United States) by
which successful party dispose of paid appointments, public
contracts, etc.

9 Boss Rule, associated with an organ of the Democratic Party of
the United States, formed originally to favour decentralization as
against centralization of Federal Government. Under the most
famous boss, Tweed (1867), amount corruptly plundered from the
city of New York is estimated at two hundred million dollars.

THE ANGLO-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT OVER
THE FUTURE OF THE SUEZ CANAL ZONE

The text of the speech of the Prime
Minister of Egypt, Col. J. ‘Abd al-Nasir
after this historical occasion

The importance of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement

The signing on 20th October 1954 of an Agreement
between Britain and Egypt for the evacuation of British
troops from the Suez Canal Zone was a momentous event for
Egypt, and for the whole of the Middle East, Africa and the
Asian-African bloc in the United Nations. Its importance for
the Middle East is clear, because Egypt occupies in this
region a prominent economic, political and spiritual position.
The agreement should lead to other agreements on other
problems troubling the Arab East, such as the Treaty of 1930
in Iraq, and the Palestine question. It may tempt France to
follow the course taken by Britain and help Tunisia, Algeria
and Morocco to attain their national aspirations. The agreement’s effect is also to strengthen the Asian-African bloc in
the United Nations and create the equilibrium necessary to
preserve peace. Egypt’s policy will naturally be more inclined
to support every trend toward conciliation and middle-way
solutions without deviating to the right or to the left.

The Egyptian Premier’s views on the Agreement

Colonel Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir, the Prime Minister of
Egypt, who was the main architect of this Agreement, made
an important speech to the jubilant crowds who assembled
outside his office in Cairo. We give here the translation

FEBRUARY 1955
of the text of his speech, because we believe that the message which he preached will benefit not only the people of Egypt but the people of many Muslim countries in their endeavour to create a better future for themselves.

The great and noble aims of the revolution . . .

Citizens: The revolution was carried out to achieve the great objectives we all wished for. When the revolution occurred, some people believed that its only aim was to eliminate corruption; but, as you have seen, this was not its only aim: it came to create a great Egypt in which all could enjoy freedom, justice and equality. Citizens, the revolution began its work by driving out Farouk. Was Farouk the revolution's major target? No. The revolution's objectives were greater and more noble: after Farouk, we eliminated the monarchy and set up for the first time in Egypt a republican régime in the name of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Citizens: The Republic was set up so that every one of you could feel that he was governing himself and was not ruled by a group of foreigners or usurpers. The Republic has a great meaning: the Republic means that you should govern yourselves, that the country will be ruled by your brothers, not that a single person should rule the country continuously. This is its greatest and sublime meaning. Thus Egypt is to be ruled by its own sons for ever.

“So that this land may remain free, strong, and dignified . . .”

Now, brethren, we have achieved another objective of the revolution. In the past this objective was considered the greatest one; we, however, consider it an objective leading to the fulfilment of our other objectives. God willing, within twenty months from yesterday, all British soldiers will leave the land of Egypt, and Egypt will remain free, strong and dignified through your unity, collaboration and strength. For this reason, brethren, we must undertake together from today — rather, we must take an oath — that no foreign soldier shall set foot in our land in the future, so that this land may remain free, strong and dignified. God willing, we shall ensure, after getting rid of these occupiers, that no foreign troops shall set foot in our country under any pretext whatsoever. This, brethren, will be achieved through power; and only through power. Weakness does not further independence or freedom; hesitation and laxity never helped a nation to protect her dignity and prestige. If we wish to safeguard our prestige, dignity, freedom and independence we must seek power, so that this, our homeland, may become strong and dignified.

“The revolution is not over yet”

Citizens: Some people may say that now that the British have approved evacuation the revolution is over; but I tell them the revolution is not over and will never be over until it makes all citizens strong, dignified and honourable, until it creates work for all the unemployed, until it educates every illiterate, until it defeats disease, and until it brings about full prosperity, thus causing us to possess true dignity and all citizens to enjoy equal opportunities.

“The evacuation of weakness, slackness, hesitation, defeatism and hateful partisanship is just as important . . .”

Citizens: This revolution has not ended, and it will never end until it has fulfilled the great objectives for which it was started. I declare that today, while we have demanded the evacuation of British forces from Egypt, the evacuation of weakness, slackness, hesitation, defeatism and hateful partisanship is just as important as the evacuation of imperialism. Imperialism in our country depended precisely on the forces of defeatism, weakness and hateful partisanship. If we wish to march ahead on our difficult road until we have built up a strong homeland, we must evacuate the British, and evacuate weakness, hesitation, defeatism, hateful partisanship: we must evacuate tyranny and exploitation, and set up social justice and political freedom. Thus we will attain dignity and our homeland’s great objectives.

The aims and the objectives

Citizens: These are your aspirations and objectives: to establish freedom, justice, dignity and prestige; to create work for all the unemployed; to build up a strong homeland where there will be equal opportunities for all; to raise production; and to make every citizen feel that he belongs to the homeland and that the homeland belongs to him. These are great objectives: pledge yourselves to further them. Unite, and stay united. In this the revolution will march on. The revolution will never end, no matter who leads it. This is your revolution: it is not the revolution of Jamal; it is not the revolution of Salah; and it is not the revolution of ‘Abd al-Hakeem. It will be driven on by you — a strong people which has tasted prestige, dignity and strength does not forget them. Thus, citizens, we shall march forward to strength, to greatness, to the making of a strong Egypt. May God’s peace and mercy be with you!

1 Colonel Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir, the Prime Minister of Egypt.
2 Major Salah Salim, the Minister of National Guidance and Sudan Affairs.

TRADE EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE ARAB COUNTRIES

By Shukri Salih

The importance of the economic factor

It has become evident in modern times that the strength of nations and countries depends first and foremost on the strength of their economic structure. No nation can hope for healthy development in the social or cultural fields unless it has a sound and healthy economy. And unity and solidarity between nations cannot be established solely on cultural, religious, racial or historical grounds. There must be strong economic ties between nations before their friendship and solidarity can be set on a healthy and permanent basis.

Free trade exchange between the Arab countries is the sole basis upon which useful economic co-operation between
them can be founded. The economic and geographical situation of the Arab countries makes it extremely necessary for them to expand mutual trade between themselves and to find amongst themselves the markets needed for their respective products.

The Arab world now depends on foreign imports

The Arab world at present purchases from foreign countries goods to the value of £500,000,000 a year, in addition to appreciable quantities of “invisible” exports. But the value of capital exchanged between the various Arab countries amounts at present to a mere 10 per cent of this figure—that is, £50,000,000 a year.

An examination of the statistics of the foreign trade of the various Arab countries shows that most of these countries’ imports from outside the Arab world (from both the soft and hard currency areas) could quite well be replaced by locally produced goods or bought from other countries inside the Arab world at equivalent, and often lower, prices. The ailments of most of the Arab countries with regard to the low value of their exports to the outside world as compared to their imports therefrom can be remedied at least partially by the liberalization of the systems of trade exchange between them. In fact, the industrial development which is now taking place in many Arab countries, particularly in Egypt, Syria, North Africa and Iraq, and the steady increase in the productive capacities of these countries in the agricultural, dairy and mineral fields, make it imperative that the Arab countries as a whole should immediately set about reorganizing the pattern of trade between them.

The obstacles now in the way of wider trade exchange between the Arab countries

There are certain obstacles at present in the way of the expansion of the systems of trade exchange between the Arab countries. One of the many obstacles is the absence of any effective trade liaison between these countries, and the lack of any efficient advertising campaigns to bring the goods and products of each Arab country to the notice of buyers and consumers in the other. Another great obstacle is the fact that the trade agreements concluded between the various Arab countries do not materially encourage the exchange of trade and its expansion.

The Arab countries must learn more about each other

In order to surmount the first obstacle, serious efforts must be made by the economic, commercial and financial organizations in each of the Arab countries to acquaint themselves with the economic position of their Arab neighbours. Trade missions should be sent out frequently for this purpose, tourist trade should be encouraged, and conferences should be held regularly to study the economic problems of the various Arab countries from both the local and pan-Arab angles. This is the only way that can lead to the establishment of a strong foundation for trade exchange and wide economic co-operation between the Arab world. Poster advertisements, and advertisements in the Press and radio, of the Arab countries would also not go amiss in this respect.

Markets for Arab products in the Arab world

It must be pointed out here that there are at present tremendous opportunities for the development of excellent markets in many of the Arab countries for the products of the other Arab countries. These opportunities have so far been practically unexploited by reason only of the weakness or lack of commercial liaison between the various Arab countries. Exporters outside the Arab world have not been slow in exploiting this fact. It is indeed surprising that trade delegations from far off countries pay frequent visits to the various parts of the Arab world and apply themselves diligently to the study of the economic problems of these countries and the potentialities of trade exchange and capital investment in them, while economic and commercial sources in the Arab world, both private and governmental, take little or no trouble to do likewise.

Insufficient trade agreements between the Arab countries

With regard to the other obstacles standing in the way of the expansion of the system of trade exchange between the Arab countries, one must unfortunately admit that the trade agreements so far concluded between the various Arab countries are not in themselves sufficient to lead to the creation of stronger commercial ties. These agreements, at best, are on an equal footing with agreements concluded with foreign countries in the matter of according “most favoured nation” treatment with regard to tariffs and the formalities of export and import.

Reduction of customs duties and enforcement of inter-Arab purchases and barter agreements

Trade agreements between the Arab countries, in order to achieve the purpose of widening the system of trade exchange in the Arab world inter se, must be devised on the following lines:

1) They must exempt completely from the payment of customs duties, or reduce appreciably such duties, on a wide variety of the goods and materials which are the subject of exchange. At present the system of reduced tariffs applies only to a small variety of unimportant goods produced in the Arab countries. It is necessary for this purpose that each Arab country should exempt from customs duties all those goods which it at present imports from outside the Arab world and which can be obtained from an Arab country at similar prices.

2) The system of “most favoured nation” treatment should be applied in such a way as to make it difficult for importers in any Arab country to import from outside the Arab world goods or materials which can be obtained at competitive prices in any other Arab country. The compilation of the list of goods and materials which can in this way be earmarked for exchange in the Arab world would need a serious and meticulous study of the economic potentialities and needs of the various Arab countries. In the light of such a study, the present trade agreements between the Arab countries should be replaced by a comprehensive economic treaty binding all the Arab countries. Matters of detail and of only limited interest between one Arab country and another can be left to the countries concerned to regulate.

3) The principle of barter and proportional importation inside the Arab world should be applied, and each Arab country should be left to determine the ramifications of agreements it concludes with other Arab countries in this respect.

4) The regulation of the system of payments between the Arab countries for purchases made from each other. This problem would be a difficult one to solve. But it must be solved if trade exchange between the Arab countries on a scale is to become a reality. The acceptance by the Arab countries of the principle of barter between them, and the establishment of a central Arab bank with a large capital contributed by all the Arab countries would help very much
to regulate and solve the problems of the balance of payment between the Arab countries, and thus help to expand the system of trade exchange between them.

It is natural that the Arab countries should establish closer ties.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize the fact that many countries not bound together by natural ties of religious, racial, linguistic or historical friendship such as those existing between the Arab countries have found it possible to co-operate wholeheartedly and establish a united and harmonious economy which has proved to their mutual benefit. The Arabs have lagged very far behind in this respect. They must wake up to this fact if they are to win the battle of survival and freedom which today is waged mainly on the economic front.

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**ISLAM IN ENGLAND**

**THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION AND LITERARY TRUST**

Lectures at the London Meeting Place of the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Woking

On Saturday afternoons at 4.30 p.m., lectures are regularly held at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, under the auspices of the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Woking. The following lectures were delivered during the month of November, 1954.

On Saturday 6th November 1954 Mr. Abd al-Majid, the Editor of The Islamic Review, spoke on the life and personality of the Prophet Muhammad. Besides giving a brief sketch of the life of the Prophet, he specially pointed out the fact that Muslims should celebrate the Prophet's Birthday by trying to remove the misunderstandings and misinterpretations which were prevalent especially in the non-Muslim world by producing authentic books and pamphlets giving a true picture of the Prophet Muhammad, and that simple recitation of the words, "God! shower Thy blessings on Muhammad" in pursuance of the command in the famous verse of the Qur'an which required of Muslims to invoke Divine Blessings on the Prophet Muhammad would definitely not help. He was of opinion that Muslims did not understand the real import of this command.

On Saturday 13th November 1954 Mr. M. Ismael, of the Indonesian Embassy in London, gave a very interesting and thought-provoking talk on "The Republic of Indonesia Today".

The meeting was preceded by the conversion of a Danish lady, Miss Birthe Johanne Svendsen, to Islam, whose marriage tie to an Indian Muslim, Mr. Tyebji Ahmad, was later solemnized by Dr. Syed M. 'Abdullah, Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque.

The meeting was opened with a recitation from the Qur'an by a Yugoslav Muslim, Mr. Hazim Satric. The learned speaker dealt with the political, social, educational and religious problems of Indonesia. At the end of the meeting Dr. Syed M. 'Abdullah, who was in the chair, asked the audience to recite al-Fatiha in memory of the great leader of Indonesia, the late Haji Agus Salim, who passed away on the 4th November 1954.

At an informal gathering on Saturday 20th November 1954, an English Muslim, Mr. Moran, who had embraced Islam a few days before, explained why he accepted the faith of Islam. He said that his contact with Muslims of North Africa had made him realize the simplicity of Islamic teachings. When Mr. M. A. Ali, of the Mosque of Woking, asked him what particular teachings had struck him most, he replied, "The institution of prayer and fasting".

On Saturday 27th November 1954 Major Farag J. W. B. Farmer, an English Muslim, gave an interesting talk on "Islam in the West—with Special Reference to its Interpretation in a Non-Muslim Country". Al-Haj Dawood Cowan, M.A., a British Muslim, took the chair, and the meeting was opened with a recitation from the Qur'an by Mr. Hazim Satric. The learned speaker mentioned some of the misrepresentations which are very common in the West about the religion of Islam and laid very great emphasis upon the Muslims presenting a true picture of Islam in the West, not only through lectures and preachings but through their conduct and behaviour.

Lectures at non-Muslim platforms

St. John's Forum, Woking, arranged a debate on Wednesday 10th November 1954 at 8 p.m. in their Memorial Hall. The subject of the debate was: "This house believes that the teachings of science and religion are not opposed".

Dr. H. C. Watts, in favour of the motion, was supported by the Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Dr. M. 'Abdullah. Mr. F. Colbrook, who opposed the motion, was supported by Mrs. B. Curen-Jones.

Dr. Watts, opening the debate, first of all gave the definition of science as a search for truth in the material world by way of observation and experimentation, etc., and defined religion as a search for truth in the spiritual world by way of instinct, inspiration and revelation. Dr. M. 'Abdullah, supporting the motion, stated that man consisted of soul and body, and for a harmonious development of man it was essential that the laws governing the soul, that is, religion, which governs the body; that is, science, must go hand in hand, otherwise there would be chaos and no life worth the name. Furthermore, he added that although among the Christians there had been a good deal of conflict between so-called teachers of religion and scientists, resulting even in the persecution or execution of some scientists through inquisition courts, there was never any conflict of that kind between the religious teachers of Islam and the Muslim scientists. History could not, he said, quote one example of any such clash between leaders of Muslim thought and the Muslim scientists, who have undoubtedly contributed a lot to the scientific world especially in the domain of chemistry, mathematics and astronomy.

Prophet's birthday at Bristol

Mr. Ibqal Ahmad, of the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Woking, delivered a speech on the occasion of the Prophet's Birthday under the auspices of the Islamic Society of the Bristol Union on Monday 8th November 1954, with Dr. S. Murtaza 'Ali Zaidi, of Pakistan, in the chair. Mr. Ibqal Ahmad gave a talk on "Some Glimpses of the Life of the Prophet Muhammad". The function was attended by more than sixty people, in spite of bad weather. A large number of questions were put, especially by the students of the Clifton Theological College, Bristol, which the speaker dealt with very ably.

Lecture at St. Columba's Youth Fellowship

Mr. 'Abd al-Majid, Editor of The Islamic Review, gave a talk to the St. Columba's Youth Fellowship in London on Sunday 28th November 1954 at 7.45 p.m. The subject of the talk was "Islam in Relation to the Problems of Today". The audience was responsive and showed much interest in the decided and clear attitude which Islam adopted towards such problems as those of race and colour.

Young Conservatives invited to the Mosque

On Sunday 28th November 1954 about ten members of the Woking Branch of the Young Conservatives Association were welcomed at the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, by Dr. M. 'Abdullah, who also gave a very interesting and clear account of Islam. His talk was followed by a lively discussion during which the young Conservatives asked many questions about the various aspects of Islam. Afterwards a general discussion on Islam was continued over a cup of tea.
FRENCH IMPERIALISM IN ALGERIA

Sa'udi Arabia raises the Question of Algeria to the International Plane

"Sa'udi Arabia announced on Wednesday 5th January 1955 that it intended to bring the "grave situation" in Algeria before the United Nations Security Council because, it alleges, French military operations against Algerian nationalists were "likely to endanger international peace and security".

Sa'udi Arabia's permanent representative to the United Nations, Mr. Asad al-Faqih, told a Press conference that his government wanted an end to hostilities in Algeria and considered the Security Council competent to order a cease-fire.

The Sa'udi Arabian Delegation also sent a letter and explanatory note to the United Nations headquarters concerning the situation in Algeria, and asked that these documents be sent to all members of the Council as well as to all other members of the United Nations.

Mr. al-Faqih said his government was acting in response to "repeated pleas" from the leaders of the Algerian nationalist movement and in accordance with a decision taken by the Arab League at a meeting in Cairo early in December 1954.

The Sa'udi Arabian note sent to the United Nations headquarters reads as follows:

"During the first week of November 1954, the Nationalist uprising expressed itself once more against the repressive and unjust French administration in Algeria. It was characterized this time by its co-ordination and wide scope. The New York Times described it as one of the gravest insurrections that France had faced in thirty years. The French Government and authorities at once sought to quell out this nationalist surge by all means at their disposal. They likewise sought to dispel the aims of the Nationalists and to tighten the censorship of news emanating from the area. In spite of these measures they were unable to conceal their great surprise at the magnitude of this uprising. When they discovered that the entire military and police power within the country, vast as this power was, was still entirely inadequate to cope with the situation, several hundred heavily equipped troops were at once dispatched from France by air. On the first day the French Premier sent in addition three battalions of parachutists. Completely equipped French reinforcements continued to arrive in Algeria in ever larger quantities. Premier Mendès-France announced in the National Assembly on 11th December 1954 that he had sent to Algeria by that date some 40,000 troops, that a comparable number was sent to neighbouring Tunisia, and the Government was further seeking to strengthen their equipment and organization. Five days earlier, the Minister of the Interior, M. Mitterand, had announced in the French National Assembly that France had more than 70,000 troops in Algeria and that that number was not too great to assert France's intention to hold Algeria. The French Premier declared openly that the only method to affirm France's presence in North Africa was by a show of force. This French military might was charged with the liquidation of the Nationalist forces. The French daily, Le Monde, estimated the number of the participants in the early attacks to be some 4,000 Nationalists and stated that they were in uniform and armed with guns and operating from headquarters in the region of Aurès. Simultaneously with these extensive military operations the French have been launching their customary brutal colonial oppressive measures. Arrests throughout the country are being made by the hundreds. Nationalist parties have been outlawed and Nationalist newspapers banned. Public and private liberties have been restricted and thousands of people have been ordered to leave their homes as French troops occupied entire towns in the areas surrounding the Nationalist concentrations. The French Minister of the Interior has stated that the French Government would not entertain Nationalist demands in Algeria. The situation has become so grave that he stated before the Interior Committee of the National Assembly that the only negotiation with the Algerian Nationalists was war. Meagre as Press dispatches have been on the Algerian situation, they nevertheless continue to bring alarming news of the approaching bloody operations. Le Monde, in speaking of the little war, says it is gaining each day in intensity and cruelty. A New York Times dispatch dated 19th December 1954 states that the military operations against the Nationalists have begun in earnest and have gained momentum since the French Minister of the Interior had gone so far as to say that steps had already been taken to bring in troops from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to Algeria should that become indispensable.

The Government and people of Sa'udi Arabia view the present situation in Algeria with great alarm and deep concern. Nor in our opinion can this situation fail to arouse the alarm and concern of the Arab and Muslim worlds as well we recall with horror and disgust the massacre of 1945 when French troops and bombers swept through scores of villages of the Constantine province of Algeria, slaughtering over 40,000 men, women and children without any cause or justification. It is the view of my government that the situation in Algeria is one which might lead to international friction and is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. The government and people of my country have for long watched with profound anxiety the French attempt to obliterate the national cultural and religious characteristics of Algeria. The French Government sought to accomplish this loathsome effacement of a Muslim country under the guise of the status which it imposed on it. Under that fictitious status it is now justifying the present and planned ruthless military operations to liquidate the Nationalist uprising against French colonial rule in Algeria."

Mr. al-Faqih explained his Government only wanted the Security Council "to deal with the situation as it exists". It was not raising the question of self-determination, which was the issue involved in the Moroccan and Tunisian disputes. However, he said it was "very possible" that the question of self-determination in Algeria might be brought before the General Assembly at a later date.

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Book Reviews

THE ROAD TO MECCA, by Muhammad Asad. Published by Max Reinhardt, London, 1954. Price 21/-

The author, born Leopold Weiss, an Austrian Jew, became over a course of years Eastern in name, concept and outlook. His name now, Muhammad Asad, has no doubt been known to many Pakistani readers, for he has been Pakistan's Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Nations.

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In this book Muhammad Asad narrates the change he underwent in his innermost thoughts, not so much a change as a gradual awakening, awareness and appreciation of the deeper spiritual qualities which had lain dormant in his mind.

It was his desire to seek and know his destiny, but although this cannot really be known until one reaches the end of the road of life, the reader feels that the author has found the path he was intended to follow.

To the Muslim reader, the author’s interpretation of the Qur’an, and his conception of life and its relation to God, will be recognized as his or her own deep thinking.

The reader who has also experienced conversion to Islam will recognize the author’s narrative as putting into words some of the thoughts he or she may have experienced before embracing Islam.

To the non-Muslim, the Qur’an and Islam is shown as it really is, and leaves little room for misconception to occur.

To most, the book should be of profound interest, and whether one is in unity with the writer or not, his sincerity and frankness in revealing his innermost thoughts cannot be denied.


This is not an historical novel; it is the story of Justinian and his wife based on a background of accurate facts set in the spectacular sixth-century Constantinople.

Justinian’s name has become proverbial; he is remembered by all for his code or law and by some for his majestic church, but most of us know little of his life. Mr. Lamb tells us how Justinian, an ignorant Macedonian peasant, travelled to the new Rome — Constantinopolis — to study and was adopted by his uncle, Justin. He tells us how Theodora, the daughter of a bear-keeper who “acted” in the Hippodrome, married Justinian, and how they became Emperor and Empress.

Justinian, who undertook to restore classical Rome and was vain enough to name twenty cities after himself, lived abstemiously and worked harder than a slave. He was deeply religious and he felt to the full his obligation to carry out the work of God on earth.

Theodora was really a woman from a brothel — the stage being synonymous with a house of prostitutes. She belonged to men and followed one to Africa, where she had an illegitimate daughter before she met Justinian. She gave up that life entirely when she married; she was very ambitious and had great influence over Justinian. She longed for the imperial purple and had it for a shroud in the church designed for her. In the eyes of Western clergy she was a destructive schemer; the Eastern clergy claimed her as a revered protectress. Theodora was probably the first feminist of the modern world. She died of cancer in 548, leaving Justinian alone at the age of sixty-six.

This book is not entirely concerned with the pattern of Justinian’s conquests, reconquests and the revolts, but also with plagues, famine and the social and economic life of the people.

Although Mr. Lamb’s book covers purely a Christian era, Muslim readers will nevertheless find it of great interest, for it deals with the period immediately before the spread of Islam. Christianity then was of a different kind to that known today, as can be seen from the art of this early Christian renaissance, which took its imagery from the East. Jesus Christ was a shepherd, and the darker imagery of crucifixion, martyrdom and the torments of hell were to develop later in the West. Perhaps Muslim readers should bear in mind that in Gibbon’s view Eastern Christianity was one of the causes of the decline and fall of ancient Rome. Muslim readers will enjoy the book, for after all, Justinian’s handiwork remains today in many forms — the great cistern built by Justinian still serves Istanbul (it was known as the Church Cistern and is now called Yere Batan Sarai).

There is the following reference to Islam at the end of the book: “The new faith of Muhammad the Prophet created an Islam (Submission) that, more than the fanatical armies of nomadic horsemen, overcome resistance. The Eastern people, wearied by the long wars and taxation of the two empires, had no will to resist the thongs of Islam. Muhammad’s faith in a single God had drawn much from the Magi, and was close to Nestorian Christianity. It offered kinship and refuge to the dissenting Christians of the East, such as the Nestorians and Jacobites. In Egypt and Syria — Theodora’s chosen lands — it was welcomed as bringing security and peace, rather than resisted.

“The Arab armies led by the Companions of Muhammad defeated Byzantine forces in Palestine and Sassanian chivalry in the Tigris Valley almost simultaneously. Incredibly Jerusalem fell to them; they rode through Armenia and all of Persia. Alexandria yielded to them in 643. They thrust outward along the African coast, taking to the sea, and accomplished the unbelievable by defeating a Byzantine fleet.”


Last year saw the publication of yet more books praising and condemning Lawrence of Arabia: Mr. Aldridge has now given us a novel whose main character, Gordon, is made both to emulate and disparage Lawrence.

The greater part of the story takes place in the desert of the Arab nomad, where Gordon leads a tribal revolt. There are some excellent descriptions of the desert and of the outlook and intellect of the nomadic Arab: “God made the Arab. Then He made the desert. Then He thought a little and made the camel. Ali cupped his hands to express his perfection of the trilogy. ‘This thing (a car) is not for the Arab,’ he growled. ‘It is not for the desert.’” Indeed, the atmosphere is so realistic that the reader has to remind himself continually that he is after all only reading a novel.

There are also some intelligent discussions on religion. “What hope have we here if we allow ourselves belief outside true freedom. My country right or wrong: there’s the deathbed of half the world’s hopes for liberty. My God above all others: look what the scum of the Crusades did in the name of their exclusive Christian God.”

“‘Look what the Moslems did in the name of the Prophet,’ said Smyth.

“Nothing to our savagery. Nothing! Before the Crusades, Jews and Christians were tolerated by a highly-cultured Moslem world. Along came the land-hungry brutes of Christendom and sacked Jerusalem and Antioch with a
savagery that the Moslems never equalled. Are you a Christian, Smyth?"

And: "Asiq was a Sufi, the sect which had given Islam its best philosophy, synthesizing Mohammed's dogma into a workable compromise with Arab life and custom, the moral key to accepting the desperate business of tribal life. Asiq would boast how the great Sufi philosopher, el Ghazali, had taken a little Platonism, Buddhism, even Zoroastrianism, and brought forth the Sufi doctrine of gnosia. Truth, it said, was achieved by inner light of the individual soul. God-loving was the essence of it, and soul-searching was the means to it."

When Gordon returns to England, the result of the failure of the revolt, he becomes a prig. He is made to say: "I want the world beneath my axe, so that when I strike my blow, the truth and the revelation of action is cut to the core for all to see. How to act on the world, that's the choice. And I will act on nothing less; and nothing less will satisfy me. And if I fail to find it, then I'll willingly blow out my brains for my failure and a world's failure."

He finds his Calvinist mother distressed because his sister is becoming a Roman Catholic, his scholarly brother failing in business; he acquires a motor-cycle and meets the Arabs he knew in the desert and renews an old decisive relationship with Tess, his girl friend, and is offered a seat in Parliament. Finally he returns to stir up another revolt in Arabia.

It is an interesting novel spoilt a little by Gordon becoming too much of an imitation Lawrence.


This book, which is published under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, discusses at length the story of the discovery and development of the immense oil industry in the Middle East. It is a useful and interesting book, and its author, Colonel Longrigg, should be congratulated on such a thorough analysis of this industry.

The progress of the oil industry in the Middle East has been quite outstanding. In 1938, the output of crude oil in the Middle East was about 15,000,000 tons a year. Most of this output came from fields in Iran and Iraq. In 1946, only eight years later, total output rose to nearly 35,500,000 tons. At that time Sa'udi Arabian fields had begun to produce appreciable quantities of oil, but Kuwait had not yet come into the picture. In 1953, total output of oil from the Middle East as a whole was 122,000,000 tons, despite the fact that Iran had temporarily suspended production as a result of the dispute with the Anglo-American Oil Company following the nationalization of the oil industry. And production figures continue to rise.

The progress of the oil industry in the Middle East has brought in its train tremendous changes in the economy of the countries concerned. Development projects using revenue reaped from oil royalties are going ahead vigorously in Iraq, Sa'udi Arabia and Kuwait. But the oil which flowed from Middle Eastern fields did not always bring the Governments and peoples of the countries concerned a handsome or just reward. The royalties paid by the foreign oil companies which held the concessions for the exploitation of the oil were at first very meagre. Only recently, after the people of the Middle East had awakened to the truth about the oil industry and begun to make menacing threats of nationalization, that the oil companies saw fit to enter into more equitable agreements with the Middle Eastern Governments according to which the profits were shared on a fifty-fifty basis. Until the Middle Eastern States can provide the capital and skill needed to operate the oil industries in their countries, it seems that they will have to be content with this half share of the profits of an asset which is, in theory, theirs in its entirety, but which they have not so far been able to exploit fully.

The author says that the world demand for oil will continue to increase, and that world markets will be able to absorb all that the oil fields in the Middle East can produce. In the Middle East, he says, lies about half the world's reserves of oil. But he wisely points out that oil is a "wasting asset", i.e., that once extracted it cannot be replaced. And on the basis of the present rate of extraction, the reserves of oil in the Middle East are expected to last for another ninety years, while those in America, for example, will last for only twelve more years. But with the continuous rise in the rate of extraction, the oil reserves in the Middle East might not last that long.

At present, the Middle Eastern States are basking in the sunshine of large royalties from the oil. This situation will not last for ever. They must prepare for the time when there will be no more royalties. And the only way they can do this is by making proper use of the royalties they now get, by investing them in capital projects which will make a lasting improvement in the economy of their countries.

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**What our Readers say . . .**

**WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ALGERIA?**

14th January 1955.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to call your attention to the deterioration of the situation in North Africa.

In Algeria, the French authorities admit arresting 1,500 people, while about 100 Algerians have been killed in the eastern province of Constantine including the Aures Mountains. The revolt is now said to be the work of three to five thousand members of a revolutionary committee who seek to re-unite the MTLD party of Haj Messali, from which the central committee was expelled last year.

Messali is prevented from contact with the outside world and is living in forced residence in Western France. All the MTLD and dissident MTLD papers have been suppressed and the Messalist Deputy-Mayor of Algiers is under arrest, as is also the dissident Messalist MTLD leader, the lawyer 'Abderrahmane Kiwane. A former deputy of the MTLD, Ahmad Mezerna, has escaped to Egypt, as has also Mr. Hosine Lahwel, the dissident MTLD co-founder. Apparently some 80,000 French troops are engaged in military operations in the Aures Mountains and the Kabyle country. Two hundred Algerians were recently arrested outside the Paris Metro station near the French Chamber of
Deputies when demonstrating against the repression, and 4,000 French troops are carrying out a vast mopping-up operation in the Kabyle country. The clandestine French paper of the Messalists, _La Voix du Peuple Algérien_, says that 1,200 members of the party were in jail on 1st December 1954, and that Mr. Moulay Merbah was tortured in Algeria and that he and other prisoners have been detained for periods of five days before being cross-examined in order to give time for the police-inflicted wounds on their persons to heal. A very moderate speech by that fine orator, the moderate leader of the TDM party, Ferhat ‘Abbas, was stopped by the French officials at the Algerian Assembly. It is reported that Algerian patriots were smoked out or suffocated in the galleries of mines in south-east Algeria where they were taking refuge. Yet the Algerian people, united by this repression, are fighting with renewed resistance, and the fact that Sa‘udi Arabia has espoused their cause at the United Nations will hearten them in their resistance.

In Algeria the Ministry of the Interior has been goaded into asking the Algerian Government officials to investigate the treatment of Algerian national prisoners. Maître Stibbe, the lawyer representing Moulay Merbah, the tortured Secretary of the MFLD, and all the Algerians, wish that the inquiry should be carried out by independent Frenchmen with no connection with Algerian colonialism. The French Ministry of Justice has not apparently received the complaints lodged by Maître Stibbe and others. The Parisian French weekly, _France-Observateur_, mentions that seventy-one Algerian patriots are confined in a space of 100 square metres in Tizi-Ouzou, the capital of the Kabyle country. The moderate French daily, _Le Figaro_, for 15th-16th January, points out that the law clearly lays down that the police cannot detain an individual for more than twenty-four hours without bringing him before a magistrate. These laws apply to Algeria. They apply to “the French departments of Algeria.” Messali has shown that if Algeria had proportional representation in the French Parliament she would send 110 (not 30) deputies to the French Parliament.

In Morocco at Oujda it was recently admitted that fourteen Moroccans were suffocated to death in prison while awaiting trial. Over forty prisoners were living in a prison meant for only three. Mass arrests and killings by French colonialists of moderate Moroccan nationalists persist. No Frenchman has so far been detained for these crimes. The Moroccans are hitting back.

In the first fortnight of 1955 at least fifteen people were killed and fifty wounded, including six Europeans (vive _France-Observateur_). Huge crowds attended the funeral of the Moroccan business man Mr. Tahar Sebi. French Press reporters state that the richer Moroccans are taking refuge in the International Zone of Morocco at Tangiers as they are prey to French counter-terrorists (as well as to Moroccans if they betray the national cause). _Maroc Presse_, a colonialist paper, admits that the nationalist movement is widespread and not merely confined to the rich bourgeoisie and students. Recently the colonials of Oujda tried to Lynch a French lawyer who in defending some Moroccans attacked the police methods. It is realized that the French police in Morocco are in some cases the accomplices, if not the leaders, of the terrorist movement. In the second week of January 6,000 people were searched for arms in Casablanca, as well as 1,500 cars, 1,000 lorries and 2,000 buses (autocars). It is true that some Europeans were also searched, but most of the 6,000 were Moroccans.

In Tunisia the French wish to retain control of the police for two to eight years. Such is their interpretation of home rule for Tunisia. They wish to have Frenchmen tried by separate courts, to have a separate educational system in the French language, and to maintain the status of French officials as well as retain control of the army and the security and frontier police and foreign diplomatic relations. No wonder things have resulted in a stalemate and the Tunisian syndicalists, whose patriot leader, Lazar Sheraiti, recently accepted a pardon (alhamdulillah), condemn Fellaghis are violently protesting. The French are, however, being pushed out of the Fezzan in Libya by popular pressure.

Yours truly,

G. H. NEVILLE-BAGOT.

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**RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY**

Institut für Biologische Heilweisen,
Postdamer Strasse 35,
Berlin-Lichterfelde-West.
14th December 1954.

Dear Sir,

Allow me to send to you for publication these few lines concerning personal hygiene of Muslims as seen by Christians during the fifteenth century, when the Spaniards were struggling to oust the Moors from Spain. The Spanish monk, Fray Antonio Agapida, who has very meticulously described the events of the wars between the Muslims and Christians, tells us that when King Ferdinand decided to take the stronghold of Baza before encircling and storming Granada, the main fortress and capital of the Moorish kingdom of Spain, he cut off the supply of water from the city, “for water,” to use the words of Agapida, “is more necessary to these infidels than bread; as they make use of it in repeated ablutions, enjoined by their infamous religion, and employ it in their baths and in a thousand other idle and extravagant ways, of which we Spaniards and Christians make but little account” (Quoted from Washington Irving’s _The Conquest of Granada_, p. 251).

Reconciliation between Islam and Christianity should be the aim of everyone who has the will to follow the voice of his conscience and the commandments of God. But in the execution of this task, it must not be forgotten that we Muslims have as yet to combat many misconceptions and calumnies which originated in the Middle Ages, one example of which is given above. The Christians also have yet to realize, the spiritual and moral values of Islam apart, that there does exist a bridge for a rapprochement in the recognition of the debt which the Western world owes to Muslims for saving for the world the heritage of the ancient world.

1. As Director of the Institute of Biocultural Health Methods, I cannot over-emphasize the indebtedness of the bathing culture to the Arabs which the Christians of the fifteenth century not only could not understand but also regarded as something reprehensible.

Yours sincerely,

W. DERVIENT (M.D.).

**THE ISLAMIC REVIEW**
One of the most fascinating spectacles in the world of nature is a colony of bees working at a hive. The colony in converting the nectar of flowers into honey, exhibits instinctive skill, practical wisdom and co-ordinated efforts.

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