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Between Ourselves

THE COVER

The picture on the cover is that of the Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking, built in 1609 by Dr. G. W. Leitner, a well-known Orientalist of his time. The Mosques were contributed by H.H. the Raja of Bhopal, India. The Shah Jahan Mosque became a Muslim centre in 1912 when the late al-Haj Khwaja Karimuddin P.C. founded the Woking Muslim Mission and Librarry Trust. Ever since it has remained the most important centre of Islam in the West.

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THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
ISLAM THE FUTURE WAVE OF THE WORLD

by ARNOLD TOYNBEE

A great majority of the human race at the present moment nominally adheres to one or other of four old religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. A large part of the minority adheres to other religions of the same age and kind: for instance, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Taoism. But mankind’s real religion today is none of these: it is Nationalism, and this means the collective self-worship of some fraction of the human race.

For the time being, at any rate, Nationalism has supplanted the nominal religions in fact, though not avowedly. Only Communism has been able to stand up to Nationalism, and this only in non-Communist countries. In Russia and China, Communism has become Nationalism’s tool. Trotsky wanted to put Russia to work for international Communism, but Trotsky was defeated by Stalin — and the irony of Stalin’s victory was that Stalin was not a Russian by origin. Of course, Georgian Stalin was not the first foreigner to become the leader of a national movement. Corsican Napoleon anticipated him in France, and Austrian Hitler followed him in Germany.

Antidotes of Nationalism

Nationalism in Africa is determined to be “modern.” But modern nationalism cherishes a nation’s national heritage from the past. The more peculiar the heritage the better. So long as this national heritage is distinctive it is to be treasured, whether intrinsically good or bad. Nationalist Africa seems inclined to treasure its pre-Christian and pre-Islamic past. It is not easy to make a national religion of Christianity or Islam. The appeal of these two missionary religions is not local but universal. They address themselves to each individual human being that is born into the world. The objective of each of them is to convert the entire human race, and to make a reality of the brotherhood of man. Neither religion has achieved their identical ideal. Their destiny looks as it would be co-existence. But both their universalism and their individualism are genuine, and this puts them at loggerheads with Nationalism, since Nationalism is some particular fraction of the human race.

Wave of the future

For this reason, Nationalism in Africa tends to look back behind those two world religions to a specifically African past of its own. But which of the competing religions is “the wave of the future?” It is possible that neither Nationalism nor a resuscitated African magic and nature-worship will prove satisfying to human hearts and minds. These have the same spiritual needs in Africa as elsewhere.

The weakness of Islam and Christianity is one that they share with the other “higher religions.” In their long journey through time and space they have picked up a mass
of accessories that are not only irrelevant but are, in some cases, contradictory to their original messages. This is one of the reasons why they have been losing their hold in recent times.

On the other hand they have a strong point that is lacking in all the post-Christian ideologies — Nationalism, Communism and the rest. The historic higher religions have help and comfort to give to the individual on his way through this life. The way is hard, so the help is precious: and people who have once had it will not find it easy to do without it. They may be put off by the outer shell that each of the higher religions has acquired: but probably they will still yearn for the spiritual reality within. And, if they can break through the letter and recover the spirit they may yet return to the old religions in some new form.

Respective prospects

If the higher religions do, in truth, have something in them that meets the human soul’s permanent spiritual needs, then their expectation of life will be longer than that of either the current ideologies or the primitive forms of religion and magic. In fact, we may expect to see the historic higher religions revive, and revive inwardly intact, however great may be the changes in their outer appearance. If Islam and Christianity were to revive in Africa, what would be their respective prospects?

One may perhaps guess that in Africa the winning religion will be one that has the spiritual power to overcome the divisions between nations and races: and in this point Islam has an advantage which it has already profited. The sense of fraternity is strong enough in Islam to make Muslims of different races willing to inter-marry; and inter-marriage is the touchstone of genuine brotherhood. When Asian or North African Muslim missionaries convert Africans in the great region south of the Sahara, what emerges is a single Muslim community. When Western Christian missionaries convert Africans, what emerges is, all too often, a couple of separate communities, each Christian, but one white and the other black.

This is, unfortunately, the rule in Christendom, and the one outstanding exception to it proves its validity. The Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Christian peoples seem to be as free from race-feeling as the Muslims are. In Mexico and in Brazil there are many races but a single nation, and it is probably no accident that the Spanish and Portuguese Christians should display this Muslim virtue. It looks as if it were a heritage from their Muslim past. Spain and Portugal were under Muslim rule for many centuries.

So long as this virtue is the monopoly of Islam in the greater part of Tropical Africa, Islam is going to increase there and Christianity is going to decrease. The moral for Christianity is that it should reform its practice to bring this into accord with its principles. For, in principle, Christianity, no less than Islam, is a religion for all mankind — a religion that makes no distinction either of persons or of races.

The future lies with whatever religion or religions can create the spiritual brotherhood that is mankind’s need today. Communism claims to be a sovereign unifier: Islam has been proving itself to be a unifier in Africa: Christianity could play the same role if it could bring itself to live up to its principles. Nationalism, however, stands for division, not for unity, so nationalism really has no future. It may destroy mankind and bury itself in the ruins, but it can do no more than that.

In the Atomic Age we have to choose between two extremes. If we are not to destroy ourselves we have to learn to live as a single united human family embracing all mankind without exception. In Africa we can see mankind in epitome. Of all the continents Africa may be the first that will give us a clue to our destiny.

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**AFFAIRS RETURNED**

A Muslim once
So earnestly
(When I was young and old was he)
Took my hand
On his death bed
And said to me:

"Read you this book
The Prophet took
From God in times past:

Though all you say
May well come first
Let God’s word be last."

Good Muslim friend:
I still remember you
And am in this concerned
That my last word, ascribed
Herewith must be:
"To God are all affairs returned."

Alan C. Reidpath.
THE CALL OF MUHAMMAD

by S. MUHAMMAD TUFAIL

A page from the early history of Islam

Some of the leading men of Mecca went to Abu Talib, the aged uncle of Muhammad, and said: "O Abu Talib, your nephew has insulted our gods and religion, mocked our way of life, and accused our forefathers of error: either you must stop him or you must let us get at him, for you yourself are in the same position as we are in opposition to him and we will rid you of him."

Muhammad's father had died before Muhammad was born and his mother when he was four years of age, and his grandfather, who took charge of him, two years later. Thereafter it was Abu Talib who looked after him and became fond of him just like his own son. At the age of forty Muhammad received a message from God to rise and warn his people. He was known and respected as trust-worthy and righteous among his countrymen. But they refused to accept his call. They only ridiculed him in the beginning but became rather concerned about his activities as he gained a number of disciples. When the Meccans came to Abu Talib complaining about his nephew he gave them a conciliatory answer and sent them back.

Muhammad, in the meantime, carried on with his mission. So they went to his uncle again. "Unless you rid us of him," they threatened, "we will fight the pair of you until one side perishes."

This set Abu Talib thinking. He feared for the safety of his nephew. He called for him and explained to him what he had been told.

"Spare me and yourself," he said. "Do not place on me a burden greater than I can bear."

Muhammad did not have many helpers among his people, and those who had accepted him were weak and defenseless. And now, he thought for a moment, he was going to lose the support of his beloved uncle as well.

"O my uncle," he said after he had heard his story, "if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I abandoned this cause, I would not abandon it until God has made it victorious, or I perish therein." Then he broke into tears and got up.

His uncle was deeply moved at the faith and determination of his nephew. "All right, go and say what you please," he said, "for, by God! I will never give you up on any account."

A third attempt of the Meccans to give another young man to Abu Talib in exchange for Muhammad — so that they might kill Muhammad and be spared of the tribal retaliation at the same time — also failed. The situation worsened, the quarrel became heated and the people were sharply divided.

On certain days of the year fairs were held at Mecca and visitors came from far off places. At the next fair the Meccans had to do something to prevent the influence of Muhammad from growing. Should they denounce him as a kihin (soothsayer), a sorcerer, a poet or one possessed? It was hard to come to a conclusion because they knew all these charges were false. But they agreed at last to warn everyone about Muhammad that he was a sorcerer who had brought a message by which he separated a man from his father, from his mother, from his wife, or from his family. Thus the Meccans tried to stir up hostility against the Prophet. They succeeded, however, after the fair was over, in making the whole of Arabia talk about Muhammad.

Emigration to Abyssinia

Even at the fifth year of the call, when there was no sign of relief from the ruthless tortures of his townsfolk, and Muhammad was unable to protect the life and honour of the new members of his faith, he sent some of them to Abyssinia. When the Quraysh, the tribesmen of Muhammad, came to know that some Muslims had found refuge in that far-off land, two of their determined men went to the Negus, the King of Abyssinia, to incite him against the Muslims and to get them returned to Mecca. After hearing their version the Negus asked the Muslims what was the religion for which they had forsaken their land and people. The answer of Ja’far Ibn Abi Talib, one of the Muslims, was:

"O King, we were an ignorant people, given to idolatry. We used to eat corpses even of dead animals, and to do all kinds of disgraceful things. We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and we ill-treated our neighbours. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak till, at last, God raised a prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his piety are all well-known to us. He called us to the worship of God, and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone worship. He enjoined us to speak the truth, to make good our trusts, to respect ties of kinship, and to do good to our neighbours. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all manner of indecent things, telling lies, misappropriating orphans’ belongings, and bringing false accusations against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him, and

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1 Text of a talk given to a youth group at the Mosque, Woking.
acted upon his teachings. Thereupon our people began to do us wrong, to subject us to tortures, thinking that we might thus abjure our faith and revert to idolatry. When, however; their cruelties exceeded all bounds, we came out to seek an asylum in your country, where we hope we shall come to no harm.”

This was the message of Islam the Prophet had brought. It was a simple message indeed, but his people would not accept it. Their customs, habits, blood-feuds, practices of idolatry, etc., which they called their way of life or civilization, upon which they found their forefathers and upon which they had built a structure that kept them together in their ways of evil and wickedness, were breaking down under the pressure of the Prophet's message. This is what they called insulting their gods, separating man from his father and mother, or creating dissensions among them. They failed to understand that Islam had come to bring them out of darkness into light, to give them a new life after they were morally and spiritually dead. But the Prophet had to meet the fate of those who had passed before him, for instance, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. “Do men think,” says the Qur'an, “that they will be left alone, on saying, We believe, and not be tried?” (29:2). It is only by suffering and trials that the best, or worst, in human nature comes up. The coming years were to decide the fate of Muhammad and his companions. The only hope they had was their belief and faith in God. Who had sent them a guidance in the form of the Qur'an.

Some of the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the book which was given to Muhammad. He knew it by heart, as did many of his companions. It was recited in prayers five times a day and the same practice is still being carried on in all parts of the Muslim world. It is thus the most extensively read book in the world. The Qur'an is the basis of the religion of Islam, professed by 400 million people inhabiting this earth. It was revealed piecemeal, during the twenty-three years of Muhammad's ministry, so that it might comfort and strengthen the heart of the Prophet in the ups and downs of his life. It talked of the history of the previous nations and Divinely raised messengers. It talked of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Jesus and many others. According to the Qur'an every nation had a warner, and Muslims are expected to believe in them all. With the belief in the Unity of God and all the messengers of God, Islam has laid the foundation for the doctrine of the unity of mankind. There are many things mentioned in the Qur'an which are also found in the Bible, but at times it differs in details and at times it contradicts the biblical version. It holds that all prophets were sinless — thus nothing evil is mentioned about them in the Qur'an. It has again cleared the charges which were laid against the fair names of, for instance, Abraham, Solomon and Jesus.

Muhammad was an unlettered person. He could not have edited the previous scriptures to form a book of his own. The Qur'an was revealed to him through the agency of Gabriel, and, if there are similarities between the Qur'an and the Bible it is because the latter was also originally revealed to the Israelite prophets. The unity and majesty of God is the oft-recurring theme of the Qur'an. Faith in One God should be the pivot of human life. There are no associates with God. One should turn only to Him and serve none else beside Him. But to achieve this end needs constant struggle. The human mind has often been misled to seek easier ways to reach God. The result has been that self-made standards of moral and spiritual life have come into existence, and they have become so deep-rooted that the voice of a man of God sounds jarring to the ears. That is what had happened to the Arabian peninsula in the 6th century. It was not only in Arabia, but "corruption had appeared on land and sea." (30:41). Moral and spiritual values had broken down everywhere. It was at that time that a man rose to give a message of hope to the whole world. But as has been the case with all the other God-sent reformers, his own people rejected him.

The Prophet's visit to Tā'if

When the hostility of the Quraysh grew the Prophet turned his attention to a nearby place called Tā'if. He went there alone with great hopes and met the three chiefs and invited them to Islam. One of them said: "I would tear up the covering of the Kaabah, if God had sent you.”

The second chief remarked: "Could not God have found someone better than you to send?"

The third said: "By God! don't let me ever speak to you. If you are a messenger from God as you say you are, you are far too important for me to reply to, and if you

A view of Mount Uhud

The part enclosed in a circle shows the cavern where the Prophet Muhammad rested after having been wounded in the Battle of Uhud in 624 C.E. In the engagement the Prophet Muhammad received injuries to his teeth
are lying against God, it is not right that I should speak to you!"

When the Prophet returned from Tā'īf after staying there for a few days he returned a much sadder man than before. He was followed by the hooligans of the town and his legs were pelted with stones. For three long miles he was not allowed to rest anywhere. The louts and the slaves of Tā'īf shouted against him and insulted him. At last his persecutors left and he found a place of safety in a vineyard.

The Prophet had expected better treatment from the people of Tā'īf, but he was sadly mistaken in his expectations. He felt tired, in despair and afflicted. He found his strength failing. He opened his heart to the Lord thus:

"O my Lord! To You do I complain of the feebleness of my strength, of my lack of resourcefulness and of my insignificance in the eyes of the people. You are the most Merciful of all the merciful. You are the Lord of the weak. To whom are You to entrust me, to an unsympathetic foe, who would sullenly frown at me, or to a close friend, whom You have given control over my affairs? Not in the least do I care for anything except that I may have Your protection for me. In the light of Your face do I seek shelter — the light which illumines the heaven and dispels all sorts of darkness, and which controls all affairs in this world, as well as in the hereafter. May it never be that I should incur Your wrath! Or that You should be angry with me! There is no strength, nor power, but through You."

The owners of the orchard took pity on him and sent a bunch of grapes by their Christian slave ‘Addas. When ‘Addas heard the message of the Prophet he accepted it, and bent over him, kissed his head, his hands and his feet. "You rascal," his master asked him when ‘Addas returned, "why were you kissing that man's head, hands and feet?"

"He is the finest man in the country," the slave replied, "who has told me things that only a prophet could know."

"You rascal," the master said again, "don't let him seduce you from your religion, for it is better than his."

The flight to Medina

After his return from Tā'īf the life at Mecca became more difficult for Muhammad. Someone assured him of protection before he could enter Mecca again. There did not seem to be any future for Islam in this town. When he met some pilgrims from Medina who were visiting Mecca, he preached the message of Islam to them and they immediately embraced the new faith. These new disciples helped to bring more people to the fold of Islam in Medina. The next year a dozen of them went to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and they swore allegiance to the Prophet that they would follow him in anything that was right. Next year more people who had accepted Islam at Medina came to Mecca. They invited the Prophet to go to Medina and took an oath to defend him as they defended their wives and children. The Medinite Muslims thus came to be known as Ansar, or Helpers in the history of Islam.

The plant which was being stifled at Mecca took a new lease of life at Medina. The Muslims gradually emigrated to this new post of Islam, and the last of all was Muhammad himself.

"Verily, He that has enjoined the Qur'an upon you,"
so came the revelation of God to the Prophet, "shall bring you back to Mecca" (28: 85). If those who disbelieved did not aid him, God certainly did. The prosperity of Islam was indeed bound with this Flight or Hijra, after which the Muslim calendar is named. When the helplessness of the Prophet reached its climax there shone a new light out of darkness. Islam was born again, never to die as long as the world existed.

Islam, essentially a religion of peace

The meaning of Islam is "to enter into peace"). A Muslim (a follower of Islam, wrongly called a Muhammadan in Christendom) is he who makes his peace with God and man. Peace with God means a voluntary surrender or submission to God's will and command and peace with man signifies an active attitude of brotherliness towards one's fellow beings. "Whosoever submits (tawba) himself entirely," declares the Qur'an, "to God and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve" (2: 112). At another place the ultimate goal to which Islam leads is called the abode of peace (10: 25).

Muslims greet each other with assalamu 'alaikum, which means "peace be upon you". According to the Qur'an Islam is not a new religion. It was the religion of Abraham and Jacob and the prophets who were raised among their descendants (2: 132); it was the religion of the Israelite prophets, who judged the Jews by the Torah which contained guidance and light (5: 44). Entire submission to the will of God was the religion of Jesus Christ and of all the prophets of God who were raised among different nations.

And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them "(35: 24). The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) was not the founder of Islam but its last exponent. Muslims are those who believe in the revelation which was given to the Prophet and that which was given before him (2: 4). At another place the Qur'an says:

"Say: We believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed
to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.” (2:136).

The Muslims at Medina invaded

The enmity of the Meccans to the Prophet had blinded them and they had lost all sense of justice and fairness. They could not find anything good in Islam. They opposed the Prophet tooth and nail when he was at Mecca and now they could not endure to see the small band of Muslims living peacefully and flourishing at Medina. They had tried their best to get the emigrants returned from Abyssinia. How could the Quraysh sit idle when the man whom they wanted to kill had slipped from their hands? Three major attempts were made by them to invade Medina and destroy the growing community of Muslims over there.

The first was at the place of Badr, close to Medina. Numerically the number of the opponents of Islam was three times greater than the Muslims, and they were also superior in every respect. The Prophet became extremely concerned about this state of affairs. “A party of the believers were surely averse... As if they were being driven to death” (The Qur’an, 8:5-6). Islam does not believe in aggressive wars but when Muslims were attacked they had to defend themselves whether they liked it or not. In what precarious situations Muslims were could be judged by the prayer of the Prophet when he prostrated himself for a long time beseeching the help of God, saying:

“O God! Should You allow this small band of believers to perish this day, no one will be left on earth to worship You and carry Your message to the world.”

As if his prayers were accepted he came out of his hut smiling, reciting loudly the following verse of the Qur’an:

“Soon shall the hosts be routed and they shall turn their back” (54:45).

The Quraysh were defeated. For the first time in their prolonged trials the Muslims saw the promise of God come true that the opposition to Islam would break down.

The Quraysh again prepared an expedition of revenge, and in the third year after the Flight, they marched towards Medina, this time 3,000 in number. The forces met at Uhud, a hill three miles north of Medina. This battle remained rather indecisive. The Muslims suffered heavy casualties, but in the end the Quraysh had to turn back disappointed.

The third main attempt which the Quraysh made is known as the Battle of the Confederates in the history of Islam. It occurred in the fifth year of the Flight when a huge army (estimated between ten to twenty-four thousand) surrounded Medina. Many other tribes of Arabia had joined hands with the Quraysh this time. A greater part of Medina was protected by rocks and stone walls of houses. On the open side a broad and deep trench was dug by the Prophet and his Companions. The enemy had come from all directions and the eyes of the believers had turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, this is how the Qur’an describes the whole situation (33:10-11). But, even at that time of dread and terror, they knew in their hearts: “This is what God and His Messenger has promised us, and God and His Messenger spoke the truth; and it only increased them in faith and submission” (33:22).

The siege lasted for about a month, which in itself exhausted the patience of the besiegers. The final blow was given by a violent storm, which the Quraysh and their confederates took as an evil portent, and they withdrew from the battlefield the same night. Never again could they muster such a huge force against Islam.

The Prophet’s return to Mecca

On the 10th of Ramadhan in the eighth year of the Flight the Prophet marched on Mecca with ten thousand of his righteous followers. The Meccans were taken by surprise and surrendered without resistance. A general amnesty was announced even to those who had been inveterate and implacable enemies of Muhammad and his teachings. “This day there is no reproof against any one of you,” said the Prophet. Change of faith was no condition for forgiveness. The Qur’an does not believe in compulsion in religion (2:256).

“The truth is from your Lord, so let him who wishes believe and let him who wishes disbelieve” (The Qur’an, 18:29).

It was this gesture of kindness, and not the sword, which won for Islam at the end thousands of new adherents.

Muhammad was an orphan and he became the ruler of a State. He saw life in its manifold phases and lived it. He has thus become an ideal example for humanity. He was weak and defenceless but he saw Islam victorious before he breathed his last at the age of sixty-three. May his soul rest in peace, the ultimate goal towards which Islam leads!
PORTRAIT OF A MUSLIM FAMILY

by MARGARET MARCUS

The story takes place in Ahmad Khalil's house in Medina. It is Ramadhan. Isma'il has just written home that he will arrive very late after wonderful news to tell his family and how he cannot wait to see them after an absence of ten years. Since Isma'il mentioned nothing about Rafik's recent suicide, his father assumes that all is well with him. Meanwhile in his letters, Ahmad Khalil has given his son the impression that his health has improved somewhat, so Isma'il has no idea how gravely ill he really is. For several years Ahmad Khalil has been afflicted with tuberculosis, which progressed rapidly to the point where, beyond medical aid, he realizes he has only a short time left to live. Since Ahmad Khalil considers the journey from the oil town of Daharan to Medina a long and arduous journey, he does not expect his son to arrive for several days. Abd al-Rahman and Immanullah have spent the entire day visiting him. Asmahan is meanwhile quiet and unseen behind the curtain which partitions the room because she would not think of mingling with her husband's friends.

The sun is now beginning to set. Surrounded by his friends and relatives, Ahmad Khalil is lying on his mat on the floor covered over with a quilt. They sit in absolute silence awaiting the blast of the cannon to announce the breaking of the fast.

Suddenly Ahmad Khalil turns to 'Abd al-Raziq and asks: “Recite the Surah about the night when the Qur'ān was first revealed.”

“But you yourself know it by heart,” he objects.

But Ahmad Khalil insists: “I would like to hear you recite.”

And they all sit in rapt attention while 'Abd al-Raziq chants:

“Lo! We revealed it on the Night of Power.
Ah, what shall convey unto thee (O Muhmmad) what the Night of Power is!
The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

The angels and the Holy Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord with all decrees.
That Night is Peace, until the rising of the dawn…”

Just at that moment they are all startled by a knock at the door. Rashid jumps up to open it and there stands Isma'il, wearing a smartly-tailored grey flannel business suit. He is clean-shaven and is carrying a brown leather suitcase.

“I am sorry I was so late,” he gasped breathlessly. “My plane was delayed four hours and I had to wait another hour for the bus.”

For several moments of painfully awkward silence Rashid and Isma'il stand staring open-mouthed at each other like complete strangers until Isma'il finally asks, “Where is my father?”

“Please come in,” urges Rashid, and Isma'il follows him. All eyes are upon Isma'il, shocked because he does not have the decency to take off his shoes indoors. With the help of 'Abd al-Rahman and Immanullah, Ahmad Khalil painfully rises to his feet, steadying himself with the aid of a cane. Stunned by his father's appearance, Isma'il rushes to him with tears in his eyes. “Father!” he gasps. Ahmad Khalil is convulsed by a fit of coughing, but as soon as he manages to overcome it, reaches out both arms to embrace his son. Isma'il pulls away. Seeing the deeply hurt expression on his father's face, he pleads anxiously, “Please understand, father. It is only because what you have is catching.” Isma'il, realizing that his father had not the slightest understanding of what he meant, broke the moment of excruciatingly painful silence. “Where is mother? I want to see her.” Rashid points and Isma'il promptly runs behind the curtain to find his mother squatting on the floor cooking the evening meal. He is shocked to find how much she has aged. Her face is deeply lined and her long black hair streaked with grey. He throws his arms around her and kisses her, but to Asmahan he is like a stranger and his kiss has no real warmth in it. At that moment the cannon booms and Asmahan says, “It is time for the breaking of the fast. You have had a long journey my son, and you must be very hungry.” Putting an arm affectionately around his shoulder she said in a voice she would use to a child: “Look, Isma'il! We have lamb and rice tonight as a special treat, and I prepared it just for you exactly as you always like it.”

Isma'il watches her wrap her headcloth across the lower part of her face, lift the steaming pot off the fireplace and set it before the menfolk, who are awaiting expectantly. Acutely self-conscious, Isma'il joins them, but he sits so awkwardly on the floor that they cannot help but stare at him because he is unable to squat as they do.

Zaid raises his gnarled hands to bless the food:

“All praise is due to God who gives us to eat and to drink and has made us Muslims.”

Ignoring Isma'il, they all plunge their hands into the common dish, devouring the chunks of lamb and rice with great relish.
But Asmahan turns anxiously to her son. “Ismail, why don’t you eat? Tonight we eat meat in honour of your homecoming.”

Ismail shakes his head. “Never mind, mother. I am not the least bit hungry.”

“Even if you are not hungry,” pleads Asmahan, “you must eat something.”

All eyes stare at him, wondering why he refuses to partake of this delicious food prepared especially for him.

Suddenly Ismail bursts into tears, and instinctively turning to his mother for consolation, cries out. “In Daharan we sit on chairs and eat at a table with plates, knives, forks and spoons. Oh mother! I can no longer bear to eat in this disgusting fashion!” He looks wildly around the little room, bare save for scattered mats on the floor, a few folded quilts and several water jars standing against the wall.

“Father! What have you done with all the money I sent you?”

“For a long time, my son, I used it to buy the medicine the doctor at the hospital prescribed for me, but when I found it was not doing me any good, we bought extra food and these quilts. The remainder we gave to Zakat . . .”

Ismail stared at his parents open-mouthed, a mixture of indignation and disbelief shining in his eyes. “Give it away?” he gasped. “How could you afford to give it away?”

“Many the time we have been given Zakat,” explained Asmahan quietly, “and now you have made us very happy to be able to give to those less fortunate than ourselves.” Seeing that her menfolk were satisfied, Asmahan quietly picked up the pot and disappeared behind the partition to eat the leftovers.

Ahmad Khalil turns to his son. “You wrote me that you have been going to school at night after work. That was two years ago. By now you must be a learned man. You must have learned of all the great poets and be able to recite beautiful poetry. Do you know it was our Holy Prophet who said, ‘Verily there is wisdom in poetry,’ and the truest words ever uttered by a poet were those of Labid, ‘Behold! Everything but God is void’. Oh my son, Ismail, do you not remember when Labid said:

‘Yea, the righteous shall keep the way of the righteous, And to God ye must return.
In His Book of Knowledge all is reckoned and before Him revealed all that is hidden,
And the day when avails the sin-spotted only prayer for pardon and grace to lead him to mercy,
And the good deeds he wrought to witness before him
And the pity of He who is compassion,
Yea a place in His shade to abide in and a heart steadfast, straight-walking and honest . . .’

“I cannot recall the rest of the poem. You must have learned it in school. Recite it for me.”

In a strange way, Ismail looked up at his father and replied in a cool even voice which seemed absolutely expressionless. “In my classes we did not study poetry.”

“Then you must have learned more of the Qur’an and its commentaries.”

“I did not go to night school to learn the Qur’an either.”

“Then, my son, what else was left for you to study?”

“Everything! I learned English, mechanics, welding, chemistry, electronics . . .” Ismail takes one look at his father’s puzzled, bewildered face. “Don’t you understand what I am talking about?”

“No Qur’an? No philosophy? No poetry? Then how can you learn of your faith?”

Exasperated, Ismail clenches his fists. “The past is dead, father. When will you ever understand that the past is dead? What use have we for the thoughts and words of men dead for thousands of years? You try to live by rigid laws fit only for a primitive society. They have no relevance for the problems of today.”

Ismail’s body straightened and he spoke in a voice filled with pride. “You ask me of faith. Yes, father, I do have faith. I believe that men by their own efforts can raise themselves to ever higher and higher standards of living. When our people are enslaved by oppressive rulers, by outmoded traditions, by poverty, illiteracy and hunger, when little children are dying of disease and starvation, we do not need theologians, poets or philosophers. What we need are more doctors, technicians and scientists. What we need are dams, factories, industries, tractors and machines of all kinds. We need more and more schools and hospitals. You don’t understand. We are building a new world—a new and more wonderful world than your wildest dreams. And what is most thrilling of all is that I have a vital part to play in it.”

“But what of your wife? You mentioned in your letter that she is a Christian. Why did you not choose a woman of your own faith?”

“It really doesn’t matter, father, because she is a Christian in name only. Our common belief in absolute freedom of the individual from rigid laws and dogmas makes us of one mind. I could not bear to marry the old type of woman who is so submissive and ignorant of her rights. Today women are completely free and equal with men. My wife graduated from the university in Lebanon with honours and I love her more than I have ever loved anyone. She is the most wonderful woman in the world and I wish you could meet her. She is expecting a child and I will have to make arrangements for her to go to the hospital soon.”

Ahmad Khalil was bewildered. “But why should she go to the hospital? She is not sick.”

Ismail cast his father a defiant look. “My children shall not be born as I was born. All my sons and daughters shall live and grow strong. They shall be reared in the modern way. I will not lose seven out of eight of my children as you did!”

Ahmad Khalil’s voice rose in anger. “You dare accuse me of killing my own children?”

“Not deliberately, of course. I only say that you were too ignorant and stubborn to learn better. You simply don’t understand. My children will belong to a different life. Oh father, come with me to Daharan. That is the reason I came home—to take you and mother to where you can live for the rest of your days in comfort and security. Oh, come with me and you shall catch the vision of the great future that lies in store for our people!”

Suddenly Ahmad Khalil thinks of something which made him change the subject. “How is your cousin, Rafik?”

Ismail shuddered and cast his eyes down upon the floor. “He is well enough,” he lied.
But Ahmad Khalil catches the uncertainty in his voice and his own voice rises. “My son, something is wrong. I can see it on your face. I can hear it in your voice. Tell me, has anything happened to Rafik? Do not be afraid to tell the truth to your own father.”

Once more Isma’il stares down at the floor, but this time makes no effort to control himself. His whole body is trembling. “Didn’t you know? He is dead.”

All the colour drains from Ahmad Khalil’s face and he collapsed in a fit of coughing. “Dead?” he gasped. “Isma’il, why did you not write and tell me before?”

“He killed himself. He slashed his wrists with a razor. I found him lying in a pool of blood. I called the doctor at once but before they could get him to the hospital, he died. Father, why do you look at me that way? You know it was not my fault!”

“Isma’il! Look at me! Tell me the whole truth. What really happened?”

“Believe me, father,” cried out Isma’il, his voice verging on hysteria, “I had nothing to do with it! The company offered us both the most wonderful job, a job as an executive in a brand new air-conditioned office—a job which meant more than anything else had ever meant. But there was only one position. It was either Rafik or me. When Rafik was chosen, I knew he couldn’t do it. After all, his father died insane, the way he used to run about naked, soiling himself, and having to be fed like a baby because he imagined all those enemies who had poisoned his food. It’s so disgusting. Every time I think about my uncle I feel like vomiting…”

“Isma’il! You forget he was my own brother! He was very sick. He couldn’t help it. And you dare talk of him as if he were a criminal!”

“Well, it wasn’t just his father. Rafik was beginning to get the same way. Sometimes he would just burst out crying for no reason at all. So I told the employer that he would be a bad risk. That’s the truth, isn’t it? I mean the competition, the pressure. I knew he would never have been able to take it.”

Ahmad Khalil gripped him by the shoulders and shook him back and forth, crying, “You would turn against your first cousin, your own flesh and blood? What has happened to my son?”

“Please, father! I am not to blame! I did only what I had to do! There was no choice.”

“You could have chosen a different kind of work. Isma’il, listen to me. You must confess everything you have done. You must make all the amends you can. You must pray day and night and beg the forgiveness of God. May He have mercy upon you.”

“Father! I can’t do that. I can’t afford to lose my job, my wife, my children, and destroy all my hopes and dreams for the future. Do you expect me to do as you have done, dig the dirt and weed the garden of the mosque for the rest of my life? You never knew what it means to earn a decent living. You couldn’t even feed your own children. I will never forget that night when I cried and cried from hunger. I must have been no more than five years old, but I still remember. You couldn’t feed me. You had nothing. I am finished with this starvation. I am determined that never again will I endure it nor will my wife or my children.”

“Isma’il, my son, do you think you are independent? You think you can live without God, but God is the very breath you breathe. If He wills, He could snatch away the life from your body this very moment. To Him must you return and before Him must you stand on Judgment Day.”

Isma’il laughed nervously. “I am not worried about that. I am only twenty-eight years old. I have a long life ahead of me.”

Isma’il looked deep into his father’s emaciated face dominated by those brilliant black eyes glittering with fever. “Oh father,” he cried out in desperation. “Are you not terrified of death?”

Ahmad Khalil’s voice was calm but firm. “I am a Muslim. A Muslim fears only evil. Oh Isma’il, repent and beg the forgiveness of God or else far worse things than death will happen to you!”

Isma’il fidgeted nervously with his necktie. “Father, I must go. If I do not leave right away, I will miss the next bus. They only run from Medina to Jiddah every two hours.”

Ahmad Khalil gripped him by the shoulders with surprising strength. “Let me go, father. I have to hurry.” He tried to twist away but his father held him firm.

“Isma’il, look at me. Look straight into my eyes.” Isma’il twisted his head away, but Ahmad Khalil forced it into such a position that he had no choice. “Listen, Isma’il, these are not my words. They are the eternal truth revealed directly to our Prophet by God!” Isma’il shuddered as his father’s intense black eyes pierced his very soul. “Listen, Isma’il:

“Rivalry in worldly increase distracteth you,
Until ye come to your graves.
Nay but ye shall come to know,
Nay but ye knew now with sure knowledge:
For ye shall behold Hell fire!
Aye, ye shall behold it with pure vision . . . .”

“Let me go, father. I must hurry.” He wrangled himself free from his father’s grip, picked up his leather suitcase and walked out the door without a word. Ahmad Khalil followed him to the entrance and watched him hurry down the street until he was lost to sight. Never once did he look back. Ahmad Khalil convulsed in another fit of coughing and leaned against the wall for support. Asthaman went up to him. She put her arm around him and said, “Come, you must lie down. You need some sleep.” Rashid came up to him, and leaning heavily upon his wife and his cousin, he walked painfully to his mat and lay down. With great gentleness, Abd al-Rahman and Immanullah covered him with all the quilts they could find. Ahmad Khalil took the hands of Immanullah and Abd al-Rahman, gazing up at the bushy black beard of one and the slits of slanting eyes of the other. Taking both their hands into his he said, “You are dearer to me than was even my own brother.” Then he turned in the opposite direction. “Abd al-Raziq, where are you? I cannot see. It is so dark.”

“I am here, father, right beside you. Is there anything I can do?”

“Abd al-Raziq, recite for me the very last Surah. Have you your braille Qur’an with you?”

“No, father. I left it at al-Azhar. But I don’t need it. I know it by heart. Listen:

“Say, I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,
The King of mankind,
The God of mankind,
From the evil of the sneaking whisperer
Who whispers in the hearts of mankind,
Of the Djinn and mankind . . . .”

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ISLAM, SCIENCE AND THE FREEDOM CALL

by DAWOOD O. KAjee

The principle of harmony found in nature

Scientist, philosopher, theologian and politician have all alike in the course of time spared themselves much hard and tiresome thought and act in the orphaning of some or other idea, event, person or situation into two, three or even more distinct compartments, which, in turn and in tune with personal desire, have assumed within the mind of man a tempo of variation, of difference, and even of antagonism, conflict or struggle within the context of its original setting. This has been the multipotent source of origin to the major follicles of our time. It has provided a venue and a logical antecedent to our manifold causes for subsequent regret.

Yet strangely and fortunately enough, the element of harmony in nature’s unfolding has at all times been of attraction and appeal to mankind through the beam of its wholeness of expression, through the inter-relatedness of its parts, and — even in the event of analytic disintegration — through the known fact of the necessary healing of a stab inflicted by the piercing dagger before organic life may be normally reassumed and maintained.

The principle of harmony gained a firm footing within the sciences: "It is the concept of wholeness that must be introduced into the field of physics as well as into the field of biology, in order to enable us to understand and formulate the laws of nature."1,2

The humanitarian ideal has throughout freely yielded of its essence in the search for significant relationship in the harmony between man and man; between man and nature; between all the manifold phenomena of the existing universe. The Qur’an bears testimony to such an outlook in numerous verses: “Glory the name of thy Lord Most High, Who hath created and, further, given order and proportion; Who hath ordained laws and granted guidance” (87 : 1-3).

“God Most Gracious: it is He Who has taught the Qur’an. He has created man: He has taught him speech (with intelligence). The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed and the herbs and the trees do adore (Him). And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance, in order that ye may not transgress the Balance” (55 : 1-8).

In the words of the Maulana Ansari,3 “... the entire Islamic system of faith and practice ensures ‘social service based on religious concepts’ by assimilating all the three basic concepts, namely Man, Society, God, into a harmonious Whole.”

This is a setting of enkindled pity and regret for mankind’s frequency of childlike stumbling in the blindness of her disruptive, disconnected strivings. It is also the spirit of “the wholly appreciative” in its consideration for delight and ecstasy no less than for the misery and pathos of human experience.

Khalil Gibran,4 in his exposition on “A Tear and a Smile”, struck a touching note of depth in the simplicity of his thought: I would rather let my life be a tear and a smile than merely to let it be a smile throughout. That “tear and a smile” does verily depict the epitome of superb living, the ideal mode of existence. It is thus at times remarked to the effect that the one who is truly capable of

laughing and laughing with that vivid, vital feeling of innermost illumined joy is the one who has in his own lifetime been exposed to the rigorous and thorny pathways of strife, struggle, misery and tears.

Out of the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” was born many a glowing and exquisite monument to the ideal of human achievement. The peak of union and oneness of such apparently conflicting and opposite counterparts, as expressed in nature’s unfolding, is well symbolised in the simultaneity or alternation of tears and laughter during certain rare, exquisite moments of ecstatic joy. It is thus remarked to the effect that “it is curious to observe, and it is certainly true, that the extremes of contrary passions are, with very little variation, expressed by the same action.”2

Charles Darwin,5 furthermore, assures us that during excessive laughter “tears are freely shed, and hence it is scarcely possible to point out any difference between the tear-stained face of a person after a paroxysm of excessive laughter and after a bitter crying”. The Dyaks of Borneo are said to have commonly used the expression: “We nearly made tears from laughter”.6

In the humdrum of daily routine, one quality seems to be the mutual, necessary and balancing counterpart of its opposite. Such an apparent duality of phenomena is evident everywhere, but in truth constitutes a conflicting duality only to the superficial mind of man, since the one is inseparably bound and intertwined in function to its allegedly contradicting counterpart in the setting of nature as a whole.

The holistic stream of flow is all-pervading, as though even the temporary nature of mankind’s disintegrating intellectual network of analysis needs of necessity, and in time, always again to permit its freedom of byflow lest its normal flux and life-pulse be seriously impaired, or, in the event of any considerable or permanent stagnation and interference, be critically stifled by a cul-de-sac to nature’s laws; to the vital and intrinsic pattern of the true philosophy, the great science, or the honest code of human conduct; to the aspiring zeal and zest of the devoted missionary, in whichever realm of academic pursuit he may find himself.

The theory of contradiction within things analyzed

“Development is the struggle of opposites” and “Dialectics is the study of the contradiction within the very essence of things.” This was the gist to the outtry of Lenin. Stalin further asserts “that internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature” and “that the process of development from the lower to the higher takes place not as a harmonious unfolding of phenomena, but as a disclosure of the contradiction inherent in things and phenomena, as a struggle of opposite tendencies which operate on the basis of these contradictions.”

This so-called “struggle” merely denotes content out of context, as well as being teleological* and anthropomorphic** in terms of the conventional tools of science, and is used, moreover, by the Marxian “rational kernel”, which is supposed to have cast aside the “idealistic shell” of Hegelian dialectics with a view to attaining a modern and scientific form. It should most certainly be difficult for the

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materialist scientist to regard the elements of nature as actually "struggling" as though in a state of suffocation!

To the resonance of nature's call of harmony — in a world of fragments battered apart and out of context to the whole by the specialist and the systematist in thought and action — blossomed forth a cradle to many a stroke of genius: an upward lift of the elan vital in Bergson's philosophy, the theoretical extensions of Alexander on to a scale of cosmic evolution, an emergent evolution of Morgan,6,8 the holism of Smuts,9 the magnificent Darwinian attempt10 at unifying and integrating all natural phenomena into a coherent, harmonic whole, and, finally, but most transcendent of all, the unity of God as a primordial pillar of Islamic faith (The Qur'an, 4:171; 5:73), which symbolizes and characterizes the true essence of relationship throughout the entire animate and inanimate universe.

These systems of thought are all rife in their message of inter-relationship, of concord, and not of contradistinction, conflict, disunity and separation. They are vibrant with the scholar's echo for harmony and co-existence. And yet even the simple, well-familiar schoolboy apogee of "adversity leads to success", like so many other simple guiding rules of daily life, carries a message no less different in the present regard, to that of the pen of the scholar; is as much, too, as the practical, holy, sacrificial spirit of Ramadhaan, of abstinence, is the seed of prosperity born only through the morale of its so-called opposing counterparts of self-negation, restriction and hunger. It is a fact, therefore, as an Islamic article of faith, that "The Good and Evil are from God" (The Qur'an, 10:107; 39:36-38), which thereby by no means detracts from God's goodness, but rather brings us to a higher level of realization of His virtue. A like doctrine is expounded in Christianity (Isaiah, 45:1-7),11 when God declares to Cyrus, whom He refers to as His anointed, that there is no god but God, and states: "I am the fashioner of the light, and the creator of the darkness; the maker of peace, and creator of evil; I am the Lord Who does all these".

Let us continue, then, to pluck from the gems of thought in a further understanding of this so-called conflict of the opposites, in our efforts towards the cultivation of a saner attitude of mind, in our desire to assimilate the holistic, harmonic, conceptual experience of the past and the present and to relate it to our current, painful bleeding parts: for, whereas they, the materialists, tend to accentuate a struggle of opposites, we, religiousists, believe in the principle of harmony.

"Thine enemy is thy friend" is a pertinent guiding rule by Muhammad Iqbal12 in his lucid philosophic expose of "The secrets of the self". In like and in concord manner the Freudian17,15 assures us that the one who is persistently aggressive, domineering and overruling in habit of mind may well be the very one who, deep down, is the gentle lamb at heart, the submissive, the meek and weak. The Qur'an says:

"Then even after that, your hearts were hardened and became as rocks or worse than rocks, for hardness. For indeed there are rocks from out which rivers gush, and indeed, there are rocks which split asunder so that water floweth from them. And indeed there are rocks which fall down for the fear of God. God is not unaware of what ye do" (2:74).

Man's outward nature may thereby be reflected in a pattern of traits which may stand in contrast — by description but not in function — to his inward, inherent being.

This is a lesson wherefrom behavioural activity needs always to be assessed in its holistic framework: it is a pointer to those who will not concede to the kindly and understanding context of humanism in their dealings with other men of a more petty and less acceptable nature than their own; it is an archway to the spirit of human tolerance.

How often in life does it not occur that at a time when the clouds are darkest, when days are gloomiest, when life's ebb is at its lowest, that the silvery caresses of the all-glistening sun and the glory of abundance is not far at hand and does soon unfold to the thirst and cravings of the setting?

Love and death in Hinduism1 are likewise depicted as representative of two sides of the same deity. Shiva, the god of creation, is also the god of destruction, murder and violent death, whilst his wife Parvati, the goddess of love, beauty and happiness, is no less the goddess of evil, misfortune, sickness and death.

Concrete, physical particles, according to Einsteinian1 thought, are interspersed within a field, on which the bodies exert their movement, which carries an effect on the next concrete body. The field is therefore an active dynamic process in constant and unified interaction with the "material particles". There is accordingly no empty space.

The apparent, opposing duality of "empty" and "full" is thereby reconciled and synthesized in a general and unified concept of the universe: inasmuch as the recognized fact of selfhood, or Khudee (The Qur'an, 5:32), must at all times contend with the rest of mankind (The Qur'an, 59:7) in the social trend of harmony and order. "It is when the perfected individual works for the world," says Radhakrishnan,6 that "he is the channel through which the divine influence flows. He is only the instrument (nimittamātram). He works in the spirit of the words "I, yet not I" (Kartaram akartaram)."

Is it not merely apparently conflicting, too, that the "weeping" willow tree should have aroused the poet's moods of mourning, of wailing, of mystical sadness in the face of its refreshing and luxurious life-green rhythm being nourished and sustained by the life-blood of soil in saturation of abundant moisture, in a spirit almost akin to the oft-cited acts of human ingratitude in response to "the milk of human kindness"; which is so comparable to the quintessential contrast pictured by the scene of the desert oasis in its setting of the water-stricken, rolling sand dunes of the camel-trod den lands?

To reflect on the biotic potential, but for rain, of those desolate, desert acres of "wind-curved sandhills", is like a call unto us as though from the echoes of a mighty soul, ever present, but never entirely expressive of petty pragmatic detail. ... So very reminiscent even of the daily, living tradition of certain of our own simple African tribal folk, to whom the great one is seldom peculiarized by an aspiration towards ordinary administrative position, and yet whereby such a form of abstinence is flavoured to his people as the greatness of a man, as a father to his folk, as a prophet of good deed and thought. Remember Browning: "That low man seeks a little thing to do — sees it and does it; that high man, with a great thing to pursue, dies ere he knows it".

Recount the truth of "many a flower is born to blush unseen and to waste its fragrant sweetness on the desert air". Religious prophets, we know too, through the scriptures, were most ordinary men like unto ourselves, imbued with the spirit of Divine revelation through God, whose beauty and magnificence is reflected through us only as much

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as a grain of sand does add to the volume of oceans. A like proportion to the Almighty would hold with respect to any other great scholarly claim, which would thereby relatively only elevate, and never diminish, the supremeness of His being. Let us for a moment pause to a message of charm and striking beauty in the following Qur'anic verse:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. This lamp is kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth of itself though no fire touched it. Light upon light.

"God guideth unto His light whom He will. And God speaketh to mankind in allegories, for God is Knower of all things" (24:35).

Compare herewith the voice of the Bhagavad-Gita: "The light that lives in the sun, Lighting all the world, The light of the moon, Know that light to be mine." Omar Khayyam thus wrongfully sounds a note of despair in his monumental Ruhaiyat in sensing what merely reflects a superficial paradox in the fact of a dual element in human existence:

"Oh thou, who didst With Pitfall and with Gin Beset the Road I was to wander in, Though will not with Predestination round Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin?"

The intellectual submission of the man is none the less striking as a form of academic humility characteristic of every fine scholar on the nature of ultimate reality, as though the height of their achievement must needs always be mirrored in the humility of their claims:

"There was a Door to which I found no key: There was a veil past which I could not see: Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee There seemed — and then no more of Thee and Me."

And so one may at leisure continue, with respect to diverse situations, to enrich the flow of rhythm, the symmetry of unison, and the perfection of detail in our orchestral composition of nature's melody of harmony, wherein the manifold and varying musical tones are patterned in order of sequence and time in the creation of musical expression. This is the keynote to Goethe's Im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren resolut zu leben, to live steadfastly in the Whole, the Good, the True. Herein is embodied an enkindled spark of hope, in times of philosophic despair, in the knowledge of the wisdom that this universe was thereby never created in injustice to the widespread panorama of existence in its entirety, nor even to man as a single being, and neither and even less so to one human being or group in respect of another.

Within the precepts of Qur'anic teaching is embodied our "holistic" approach and our solitary foundation to a modern and consistent defender religiosis en route the much-aspired-to goal of a truly non-racial system of democracy as symbolized in the living, practical, all-embracing, Islamic brotherhood of man. What finer basis, what greater co-ordinating and synthesizing force could there be for a league of faith and action to the "family of man" than the divine injunction conclusively and finally laid down (The Qur'an, 5:3; 33:40) 1400 years ago:

"Say we (Muslims) believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us and (in) that which has been revealed to Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord: we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him we submit" (The Qur'an, 2:136).

"Think not," says Jesus, "that I come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Nor is His ascent unto heaven a seal to the glory of His having come, for "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). His own promise is, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again..." (John 14:3).

A similar conceptual message is extolled in Hinduism, which thereby acknowledges the belief in subsequent Divine incarnations:

"In every age I come back To deliver the holy, To destroy the sin of the sinner, To establish righteousness."

This is the cornerstone to the solid rock in outlook we may all live by and hold on to in the whirling stream of flux in academic and socio-politic trend and event.

This is the monument on to whose gateways are inscribed the guiding code of von Goethe's Im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren resolut zu leben... Orientate your minds, therefore, to the current problems of growth and development — to the concept of change — in terms of your "holistic" framework; in terms of the religious philosophy or faith which you Muslims claim to profess. The Qur'an commands "And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of God. and do not separate..." (3:103). Science enjoins you to assess the normal growth, differentiation and development of all tissues within an organism in the setting of its so-called "individuation field" of occurrence, in terms of the functioning of its body as a whole.10

It is a well-established fact in biology today that when an organism regenerates tissue in response to the loss of existing tissue from a part of its body, it does so in extent only of completing and restoring to normal the injured organ or part of an organ. Regeneration is always a function of the system's complete final form in its totality. Living tissue may well regenerate in response to injury, but in so doing it does not merely grow, it does not only change, but changes within a certain physiological context, in a particular manner, towards a definite goal, if the life-pulse — in lieu of stagnancy and decay — is at all to obtain and to be maintained.

Revolts against the conception of fixity and finality of the world

For two thousand years, the conceptions that assumed fixity and finality of worldly phenomena held sway over the
minds of philosophers; change and origin were symptomatic of defect and unreality.

Physical science of the 16th and 17th centuries ushered in a definite and marked rebellion against the classic, static philosophy of nature and of knowledge. The newer climate of thought was firmly expressed by Galileo and Descartes, respectively, when they said:21

"It is my opinion that the earth is very noble and admirable by reason of so many and so different alterations and generations which are incessantly made therein.

"The nature of physical things is much more easily conceived when they are beheld coming gradually into existence, than when they are only considered as produced at once in a finished and perfect state."

Darwin rendered a major extension and impetus to this conceptual trend through his scientific renderings of the "Origin of Species". He laid hands "upon the sacred ark of absolute permanency, in treating the forms that had been regarded as types of fixity and perfection as originating and passing away", thereby having introduced "a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge, and hence the treatment of morals, politics and religion".22

Not only did the term species — so translated by the scholastics from its use by Aristotle — signify change as mere, aimless flux, but also observed the principle of order in flux, of change towards, and the realization of, a certain end within the organism: of the origin and development of natural species on a background of manifold factors of variation.

Thus, unlike inorganic change, as with the burning of wood, changes within living organisms are orderly: "they are cumulative; they tend constantly in one direction; they do not, like other changes, destroy or consume, or pass fruitless into wandering flux, they realize and fulfill."23

So too, in the realm of social phenomena, is the hallmark of organized change — in order to realize and fulfill — at all times to be observed. It is not sufficient that we be moved by a call for socio-political change. It is necessary and vital that change be conceived and executed in the proper context of our faith, lest our efforts stand to pursue the course of a vicious circle, or be channeled into the element of prior or of further dread.

Let us, therefore, in our clarion call of change for the better, in our onward surge along the newer and the brighter course, in our diverse strivings towards an ultimately common ideal, appeal to the guiding context of Islam.

"Systems have passed away before you. Do but travel in the land and see the nature of the consequences for those who did deny (the messengers)."

"This is a declaration for mankind's guidance and admonition unto those who ward off (evil)" (The Qur'an, 3:137-138).

REFERENCES

* Ascribing an element of purpose to things and phenomena.
** Interpreting God in the likeness of man; and in the present case, applying a term of purely human connotation to non-human and even to inorganic phenomena.
† Compare Matthew 13:30. "Let both grow together until the harvest..."
‡ ‡ These terms are used, respectively, in preference to the terms "normality" and "pathogenesis". Refer Kajee (1960), 21.

1 Planck, M. Nature, 18th April 1931.
24 The Bible, Isaiah, 45:1-7; Matthew, 13:30; Matthew, 5:17; Acts, 1:9-11; John, 14:3.

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MARCH 1961
Belovéd, unto Thee we sing,
In our hearts Thy praises ring.
For Thou art the Lord and King
Of life and death, of man and animal, of everything.
Unto Thee we bow, to Thee our worship bring,
To Thee our thoughts in humble adoration wing.
Thou art our Lord. Thou art the One Supreme.
On Thee we do rely, to Thee we do submit. Nothing, I deem.
Can us dismay or break that peace, deeper than dream,
Where in they dwell who love the One Supreme.
For love brings deep devotion and a joy, I deem.
That wakes and watches, acts, till the passing moments seem
Transcendent bliss. Love lights their radiant stream
And brings that peace, deeper than dream,
On those who ever seek His Will.
Obey His voice, His high Commands fulfil.
Know He is God and in their hearts are still.

Thou art our Lord. Thou art the Truth.
The Lord of mercy and the Lord of ruth.
The One Compassionate.
So now I fain would state:
"Unto each heart Thou still shouldst be
The Belovéd, Lord of Eternity."
Why should this be?
Mistake not, look deep down into reality.
What dost thou see?
The One Belovéd, Perishless, Lord of Eternity.
Cheat not thyself with fancies vain and idle, fleeting.
But base thy life on Truth, Reality and thy Lord's meeting.
So shall all fears be fled.
All anguish dead,
And nought but fadeless flow's around thy head. Love-led.
Thy feet shall walk the paths of peace
In an unassailable serenity.
That shall not cease.
For the One Belovéd is thy Lord,
Ever to be adored.
The Merciful, the Mighty. One Supreme. Lord of Eternity.

William Bashyr Pickard.
MUSLIMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

"Since the end of the war and the introduction of the Colombo Plan, a great number of Muslim students have entered Australia to study at the various universities and technical colleges. They have proved themselves not only to be ambassadors of goodwill between Australia and her northern neighbours, but also emissaries of Islam, in which all men are brothers."

by C. HALLS

Australia was discovered by Europeans when, in 1606, the Dutch yacht "Duyfken" sailed into the Gulf of Carpentaria. But what is often overlooked by historians is that Australia had been discovered some time earlier, probably in the 15th century, by Muslim Indonesian seamen, who visited the north-western coast regularly every year in search for pearl shell, trepang and turtle-shell. Arriving with the north-west monsoon in October and November, the seamen remained on Australian soil for some time before returning to their Indonesian homeland. When the "praus" (Indonesian two-masted sailing ships) departed on their return voyage, a party of men, to act as caretakers, were generally left at the settlements they had established.

Thus it appears from all available evidence that there were semi-permanent Muslim communities established on the Australian north-western coast for a period of probably three hundred years. These Indonesian seamen explored and named many bays, rivers and headlands in the area of north-eastern Arnhemland, and they called the whole area by the name of "Marega". Many aborigines took Indonesian names in addition to their own tribal ones, but there does not seem to have been any active proselytizing for Islam on the part of the Indonesians.

During the early period of their contact with the aborigines of the north-west coastal districts, the Indonesians acquired a particularly fine reputation for fair dealing and morality. The aborigines learnt much from their Muslim visitors: for instance, they learnt how to weave baskets, use iron, and make pottery. They also learnt the rudiments of boat-building and seamanship.

An interesting aspect of this Muslim contact with the Stone Age aborigines is that the latter adopted many of the pre-Islamic ceremonies and customs that were still practised by the Indonesians: some of these have become integrated in the tribal life as corroborees, or ceremonial dances.

In 1907 the great fleets of prauis were stopped from trading to the north-west of the continent, and thus Muslim-Indonesian influence came to an end.

What may be termed the second phase of Muslim contact with Western Australia was ushered in by the era of Dutch exploration (1606-1707), and while this period is included chronologically in the first period of contact, it virtually forms a separate epoch. Many Dutch and Portuguese shipowners and masters were only too willing to employ Muslim Indonesians in their crews, for these men were good cartographers and linguists and excellent seamen. It is almost certain that many of the early European maps showing Australia were based on Muslim Indonesian maps and charts. Unfortunately, there is very little known concerning these Indonesians who served aboard the ships of the Dutch, but it is known that when Willem de Vlamingh explored the south-west coast of Western Australia in 1696 he had with him three Indonesian Muslims who acted as interpreters. Also, Pelsart in the yacht "Saadam" had two Muslims in the crew.

The results of these European voyages to the "Southland" further increased the knowledge the Muslims so far had of this continent.

Then, in 1826, the vast land lying to the west of 129° longitude was formally annexed to the British Crown. Settlement followed at the Swan River in 1829, and over the years the young State suffered much from the vicissitudes
of fortune, but after the discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie the economic condition was greatly improved.

With the discovery of gold began the third phase of Muslim contact with Australia. This phase was destined to prove in many ways the most interesting, and although its significance is often overlooked, it was a period of great historical importance to Australia.

The area in which gold had been discovered was hundreds of miles inland, and the problem faced the local authorities and merchants of getting supplies to the miners. This problem could only be solved by the use of camels. Accordingly, some camels together with Afghan cameleers were landed at Fremantle in c. 1890. By 1893 there were 673 of these animals in service throughout the colony, and by 1895 their number had been increased to 3,456. They, with their Afghan teamsters, were of inestimable value in carrying supplies and enabling prospectors and explorers to penetrate the arid lands of the interior. Also, the Afghans played an important part in the development of trade, for they pioneered trade routes which were soon to be followed by the European settlers.

From a religious viewpoint, the Afghans had no effect on the people with whom they came into contact, and apparently there was no proselytizing for Islam. Yet these men remained strong in their faith, often in the face of what might be termed as want of a better word “passive hostility”, for by 1901 the Australian Government, alarmed at the increasing number of migrants entering the country who were of non-European stock, passed restrictive legislation on such immigration.

However, in 1904 there was a Muslim population of approximately 400 in Western Australia, and this community, though widely scattered throughout the State, decided that there should be a mosque built at Perth, the State capital. A number of prominent Muslim citizens formed themselves into a committee, and plans were drawn up for the projected mosque.

Provision was made in the original plans for a library, reading room and committee rooms to adjoin the mosque, also it was recommended that a residence should be built for an Imam and a house provided for use as a hostel. There was a need for a hostel at the time because a number of Muslims had been refused admittance to certain hotels in Perth. Fortunately, this discrimination was not of long duration.

The mosque was to be built from subscriptions raised from members of the Muslim community, but it is heartening to notice in the contemporary records that a number of Christians and Chinese Buddhists also contributed to the building fund. Unfortunately, the original plans were financially too ambitious, and for many years the whole project remained in debt, and various aspects of the plan had to be modified.

The mosque was, however, built, and the foundation stone was laid on the 15th day of Ramadhan 1323 A.H. (Monday 13th November 1905 C.E.).

Jemadar Faiz Mohamet, an Indian Muslim, was the foremost member of the committee responsible for the project and the collecting of subscriptions. In the course of fulfilling this latter task he travelled many miles over some of the roughest country in the State, to contact members of the community. With the building of the mosque he had accomplished a great task despite the many difficulties that presented themselves. After spending over thirty years in Australia he returned to India in 1905.

For many years the mosque provided a focal point for the dwindling Muslim community in Western Australia. Many Muslims left the State and returned to their homelands, after the racial riots on the gold-fields in 1909, while those of Turkish origin returned to Turkey on the outbreak of the First World War. But over the years from 1905 to the 1940’s there was a steady exodus of Muslims from all the States of Australia. However, a number of Afghan camel teamsters remained, and although their numbers probably never exceeded a thousand, the existence of the mosque undoubtedly gave them spiritual satisfaction.

During the years of the Second World War there was an influx of Muslims into Australia. These were mainly Indonesian soldiers and sailors, at that time serving in the Dutch Armed Forces. But since the end of the war and the introduction of the Colombo Plan, a great number of Muslim students have entered Australia to study at the various universities and technical colleges. They have proved themselves not only to be ambassadors of goodwill between Australia and her northern neighbours, but also emissaries of Islam, in which all men are brothers.

1 According to Berndt, the Indonesian settlements in Arnhemland date from approximately the late 15th century. Thus it appears that these settlements antedate British colonization of the eastern seabord of Australia by about 300 years. This estimate, of course, is subject to revision when further archaeological work has been carried out in the area under consideration.

Battye, *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Melbourne 1912, 2 vols.

**WANTED**

New or secondhand copy of "Essays on the life of Mohamed" by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Please communicate with U. M. M. Mohideen, "Myreside", Bagatelle Road, Comobo, Ceylon.

MUSLIMS OF BRITISH GUIANA ON THE MARCH

Left — Halimah-Salimah Mosque, popularly known as Hal-Sal Mosque, Georgetown, British Guiana. The old mosque was demolished and the construction of the present one started on 18th September 1959. It was officially opened on 19th February 1960. The mosque was built entirely by the donations from Mr. Badruddin Khan and his wife Justina Khan. It has been named after their two daughters, Halimah and Salimah.

Right — The Muslim Youth Organization, Georgetown, British Guiana, for the first time in its history, elected a woman as their leader. There was canvassing and counter-canvassing, and dispute went on for a considerable time whether a woman could be the leader of the Muslim Youth. The result of the election went in favour of Mrs. Justina Khan. In the top half of the picture she is seen addressing the gathering after her election. In the lower half is a scene of the election where men and women raise their hands to give Mrs. Khan an overwhelming majority over her opponent, thus inaugurating a new chapter in the history of the Muslim Youth of British Guiana.

Left — At the opening ceremony, with Mr. Badruddin Khan handing over the key of the mosque to Al-Hajj Maulawi Sh. Muhammad Zakir, Imam of the Mosque. Mrs. Khan, Halimah and Salimah are standing behind Mr. Khan.
When Brothers Arrive
Glimpses of Field-Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan

Field-Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan embracing President Sukarno on his arrival at Jakarta on 4th December 1960.

Photo taken at Rangoon, Burma, on 3rd December 1960. Field-Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, to Emperor of India, Abu Zafar Sirajuddin Mohammed Ali.

Left - During his visit, Field-Marshal Muhammad Khan held a press conference in New Delhi on 7th December 1960. In the photograph the President is seen speaking to the members of the press.

Right - Field-Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan was given a royal welcome on 7th December 1960. He is seen passing in procession.

Below - Field-Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan is seen attending a function in Indonesia on 6th December 1960.
Field-Marshal President Ayub Khan and President Sukarno at Djakarta Airport on 4th December 1960.

Ayub Khan held a press conference in Indonesia on 10th December and President Sukarno was addressing the conference.

President Sukarno was given a roaring reception on his arrival in Bandung on 4th December, and is seen attending a cultural show held in his honour at Bogor on 6th December 1960.
AGRARIAN REFORMS IN IRAQ

Before the Agrarian Reform of 30th September, 1958, out of a total of cultivable freehold area of 5,500,000 acres, 4,500,000 acres was owned by 3,619 landlords, whose estates ranged in size from several hundred to tens of thousands of acres! Of these 3,619 landlords, 272 landlords owned 1,250,000 acres!

When it is remembered that the total area of freehold land fit for cultivation in Iraq was 5,500,000 acres, it will be seen that only 1,000,000 acres, or less than one-fifth of the total, was not owned by large and often feudal proprietors, many of whom had acquired their estates by questionable means.

Before the Revolution of 14th July, 1958, 1,400,000 peasants worked as wage-earning agricultural labourers without owning any of the land which they cultivated and on which they lived.

In addition, there were more than 3,000,000 living an unstable life in rural areas.

Introduction

One of the most glaring causes of the poverty, inequality and instability in Iraq before the Revolution — and indeed in many other Arab countries — was the system of land tenure which allowed a small, largely hereditary class of landlords to own most of the cultivable land in the country, in the shape of enormous estates, while the bulk of the peasant population — the people who lived on the land and worked it — remained landless and either worked for the landlord under conditions of near-serfdom, or were driven into the towns to swell the ranks of the large unemployed proletariat. This state of things not only perpetuated an intolerable economic injustice; it also had undesirable political consequences in that it made the peasant population subject to the will of the landlords and afraid to vote independently even when elections were held. In these circumstances it was impossible for anything like real democracy to work, whatever theoretical rights were granted by the constitution, whatever representation was given to the peasants, whatever blueprint parliaments were set up.

Land reform was, therefore — had to be — a basic part of the social revolution of the Arab world. The big estates had to be broken up, a limit set to the landed property which any one individual might own, and smallholdings created for the peasants. This, in preponderantly agricultural countries, was the principal way towards a more equitable distribution of wealth and the establishment of the basic conditions of social justice. It was also a necessary step towards creating the preconditions of political democracy. For these reasons, and also because many other deep-rooted and difficult problems in the complex of Iraqi life could only be solved through agrarian reform, the Government of the Republic placed this question in the forefront of its revolutionary programme, and indeed made agrarian reform an integral part of the Constitution. But before we discuss the provisions and effects of the Agrarian Reform Law, and in order to understand its far-reaching nature, it is necessary to cast a look at the conditions that existed before the Revolution.

Conditions before agrarian reform

Before the Revolution 1,400,000 Iraqi peasants worked as wage-earning agricultural labourers without owning any of the land which they cultivated and on which they lived. In addition, there were more than 3,000,000 Iraqis living an unstable life in rural areas. They were unable to own land, and even as labourers they had no guarantee of permanent work; often many of them were unemployed.

And if this was the condition of the peasants, the other side of the picture was equally shocking: 4,500,000 acres were owned by 3,619 landlords in estates which ranged in size from several hundred to tens of thousands of acres. A small minority of 272 landlords owned a total of 125,000 acres. When it is remembered that the total area of freehold land fit for cultivation in Iraq was 5,500,000 acres, it will be seen that only 1,000,000 acres, or less than one-fifth
of the total, was not owned by large and often feudal proprietors, many of whom had acquired their estates by questionable means under the old dispensation. For the pre-Revolutionary government was more interested in securing the support and increasing the power and wealth of the feudal class than in ensuring social justice or the welfare of the peasants.

The Reform: limiting the size of the estates

This feudal or semi-feudal system was ended by the Agrarian Reform Law enacted by the Government of the Republic on 30th September 1958, that is to say, before the Revolution was three months old. By this Law the maximum amount of land that could be owned by any one person (save in a few specified exceptional cases) was fixed at 250 acres irrigated by flow or lift, or 500 acres of rain-watered land. In the case of individuals owning both kinds of land, the Law provided that one acre of the first kind should be counted as equal to two acres of the second. Every owner of agricultural land exceeding the fixed maximum was required to submit a detailed statement on his land holdings to the Agrarian Reform High Committee especially set up under this Law: and it was laid down that the High Committee should publish in the Government Gazette the names of those who should come under the provisions of this Law in accordance with the statement submitted, or in accordance with the results of the investigations made about this statement.

The Law provided for compensation to be paid, at certain rates or according to specified methods of assessment, in respect of all lands taken from their owners in accordance with the provisions of this Law. This compensation was to be payable in Governmental bonds carrying a 3 per cent interest to be amortized within a period not exceeding twenty years.

The Law also required that the Government should, within the five years following its enforcement, lay its hands on all lands exceeding the maximum limits fixed: and it was laid down that the expropriation should commence with the largest agricultural areas and that the landowners should retain the crops growing on the land until the end of the agricultural season during which the expropriation was effected.

Creation of small peasant holdings

The second part of the Law dealt with the creation of small peasant holdings made up either of the expropriated land or of muri sird land, that is to say, land fully owned by the Government. The distribution of land to the peasants was to be in holdings of not less than 7½ acres and not more than 15 acres of artificially irrigated land; or in holdings not exceeding 30 acres of rain-watered land, the exact area in each case to be determined according to the fertility of the land.

In order to qualify for receiving the distributed land a person must fulfil the following three conditions:

(a) He must be an Iraqi who has attained his majority (eighteen years):
(b) he must be a person occupied in agriculture; and,
(c) his present ownership of agricultural land, if any, must be less than the maximum limit mentioned in the foregoing paragraph.

The Law laid down that first priority should be given to those who had actually cultivated the land, whether as tenants, as crop-sharees, or as farmers; that second priority should be given to persons with a large number of dependants; and that priority should be given to the inhabitants of the district in which the land was situated.

The price of the land thus distributed was to be fixed by an assessment Committee according to the price obtain-
**Agricultural co-operative societies**

It was recognized by the Republican Government that the creation of agricultural co-operative societies was an essential condition for the success of the Agrarian Reform Law, since the new class of small peasant proprietors would not be in a position to work the land successfully and replace the old class of large land-owners without serious economic setbacks unless it was organized into economically efficient groups by means of co-operative societies.

The Agrarian Reform Law, therefore, provided that co-operative societies should be set up, whose members should be the peasants among whom land was distributed as well as any peasant proprietors whose holdings did not exceed the maximum limit fixed for the distributed holdings, if they wished to belong to the society.

The functions and duties of the co-operative societies thus formed were to be the following:

1. Obtaining agricultural advances in proportion to the areas of land owned by the members:
2. Supplying the farmers with the necessary seed, manure, cattle, pumps, agricultural machinery of various kinds, and facilities for the storage and transportation of crops:
3. Regulating the cultivation of the land and its exploitation in the best possible manner, including the selection of seed, classification of crops, the combating of agricultural pests, and the construction of canals and drains:
4. Selling the main crops for the account of its members and deducting from it the instalments of the price of the land, the agricultural advances given, and any other debts owed by the members of the co-operative society or to the Government:
5. Providing all the agricultural, as well as the necessary social, services required by its members.

Each co-operative society was to conduct its activities under a supervisor appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Law also provided that the co-operative societies should jointly establish a general co-operative society or syndicate.

**Agricultural relations**

Another important question dealt with by the Agrarian Reform Law was that of agricultural relations, that is to say, the relations between the land-owner, the owner of the means of irrigation, and the peasant. In the first place, the Law laid down that the duration of established agricultural relations after the coming into force of the Law should be for three agricultural years unless it had been previously agreed that the period should be longer; and that the duration of agricultural relations to be agreed upon by contract in the future between the land-owner or the owner of the means of irrigation and the peasant should not be less than three years. Next, the Law laid down that it was illegal to evict a peasant from the land or to remove or stop the means of irrigation during this three-year period except for the breach of a basic obligation under the contract according to the Law or to usage.

With respect to agricultural relations coming into effect after the enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law, the land-owner was required to provide his farmer with the following:

a. Agricultural land to be utilized according to the terms agreed upon:

b. Irrigation water to reach the limits of the area provided, if the land depended on water flow: or pumps and other means of land irrigation by lift if there was no third person to furnish the peasant with water.

In return the peasant was made responsible for the following:

(i) Tilling the land in accordance with the necessary agricultural standards for each crop, if the land-owner or pump-owner did not possess mechanical implements for this purpose):

(ii) Harvesting and collecting the crops and transporting them to the threshing floor: and there, threshing, cleaning, winnowing, and preparing the crop generally for consumption, if the land-owner or pump-owner did not have the machinery required: and,

(iii) All the agricultural work required for crop production from sowing to harvesting, especially the preparation of the land after ploughing, the planting of seed, the laying of manure, the distribution of water inside the farm, and the cleaning of ditches and inner drains, weeding, and the manual control of agricultural pests.

The Law allowed that any of the above obligations could be transferred from one party to the other by agreement, or that both parties could be jointly bound by the same obligation. The land-owner was made responsible for the management of the land if it was irrigated by flow: or by lift, if he owned the lift, while the management of the land was made the responsibility of the lift or pump-owner if he was not the same person as the landlord. If it was rain-watered land the peasant was made responsible for its management.

**Rights of agricultural labourers**

The Agrarian Reform Law also sought to guarantee the rights of agricultural labourers by ensuring that they should receive adequate and equitable wages. To this end the Law provided for the setting up of a committee by the Minister of Agriculture composed of two representatives of the owners of agricultural land and of two representatives of the agricultural labourers themselves, to fix the wages in all agricultural areas every year: no agricultural labourer was to be employed at a wage below that fixed in this manner. The Law also gave agricultural labourers the right to form unions for the safeguarding of their common interests.

**Administrative machinery for implementing the Law**

As for the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law, a Committee known as the High Committee for Agrarian Reform was set up, attached to the Council of Ministers and under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister himself. This Committee was charged with the task of expropriating the land in excess of the fixed maximums, distributing it among the cultivators and administering it until the distribution was completed. Another function of the Committee was to help in forming and guiding the co-operative societies provided for in the Law. Later a Ministry of Agrarian Reform was also formed to implement the Law in all its details under the supervision of the High Committee. The Ministry, with a directorate for Agrarian Reform in every Province, is now carrying out the vast and multifarious tasks involved.
in the implementation of the Law, including the drawing up of topographical and cadastral maps, the conducting of an inquiry into irrigation regulations, and into the eligibility of peasants for owning the expropriated and Government lands to be distributed. The magnitude of the Ministry’s work can be seen from the fact that it now employs 5,289 workers, officials, technicians and experts of all kinds and has a budget of £2,799,900.

The results up to date

By July 1960 all landowners whose property exceeded the maximum limit fixed by the Agrarian Reform Law had submitted the requisite information and admissions regarding their lands to the authorities concerned. Their number amounted to 3,253 persons, of whom 942 were from the northern region, 1,164 from the central, and 1,147 from the south.

After studying these admissions the High Committee for Agrarian Reform announced that during the two years that had passed since the Revolution 1,147 persons owning a total area of 1,895,053 acres had become subject to the operation of the Law. The amount of land actually requisitioned by that date had reached 576,904 acres belonging to 256 persons.

The Ministry of Agrarian Reform was also administering vast areas of Government land amounting to 1,162,677 acres which were scheduled for distribution among the peasants. The distribution of this land and of the requisitioned lands could have been accelerated but the Iraqi Government decided that it would not be in the interest of the country’s economy or of the peasants themselves to distribute the land unless the agricultural units into which it had been divided were ready in every respect for cultivation, and until the co-operative societies had been formed, so that the peasants could start production at once and avoid all difficulties, whether technical or financial. The distribution of land among the peasants began exactly a year after the Revolu-

Combating agriculture pests in Iraq

At the first distribution ceremony, which was attended by Major-General ‘Abd al-Qasim, the initiator of the entire scheme, 2,206 peasant families received deeds of ownership for an area of over 111,000 acres. Later, a general plan for distribution was drawn up, the first stage of which ended in April 1960 with the distribution of 3,077 holdings totalling 56,200 acres in the districts of Dagharah, Khanaqin, Singasar, Swairah and Husseiniyah. Before July 1958 another 189,639 acres had been distributed among 2,500 families, and 195,857 were scheduled for distribution before the end of October 1960.
Financial help for the peasants

In order to enable the peasants to reap the full benefit of this agrarian reform, the Government allocated £3,000,000 for advances to them. It also amended the Law of the Agricultural Bank and its regulations so that they should meet the requirements of the agrarian reform. The Bank, which was placed directly under the Agrarian Reform Ministry, decided to postpone for suitable periods the instalments due from the peasants on loans. Of the sum of £3,000,000 allocated by the Government for this purpose, cash advances amounting to £2,000,000 have actually been made to the peasants, who have also received great quantities of seed.

Conclusion

It will be seen from the above facts and figures that the Agrarian Reform Law is not a mere piece of window-dressing but a great and effective instrument of peaceful social revolution intended to transform the entire social and economic complex of the country. For this very reason it was not to be expected that the Agrarian Reform Law would be implemented with immediate and universal success. So many basic social, administrative and technical problems were involved in carrying out the vast social revolution aimed at by the Law that many difficulties were bound to be encountered and many setbacks suffered in the first stages of implementation. This indeed has been the case and there is today a lively discussion in Iraq, characterized by much positive criticism, of how the theoretical principles laid down in the Law can best be translated into fruitful realities; and the Government is taking these criticisms into account and learning from the experience of the first two years how to overcome the difficulties in the way and to rectify the mistakes made. On the soundness of the Law, on the desirability of the ends it seeks to obtain, on the fundamental importance of Agrarian Reform to the Iraqi Revolution, enlightened Iraqi public opinion is firmly agreed and entirely behind the Government. Where there are differences or criticisms it is only on questions of method and details of execution. For although much has been accomplished already, much more still remains to be done before the Agrarian Reform Law succeeds in building up a new Iraqi economy and a new system of social relations in Iraqi agriculture. The transitional difficulties and dislocation of the last two years has been aggravated by a serious drought which has contributed to a drop in the country's agricultural production. But above all it is necessary to bear in mind the magnitude and ramifications of the task which the Iraqi Republican Government has undertaken in enacting the Agrarian Reform Law and setting about the task of putting it into execution. This task must inevitably take many years to accomplish, particularly in a country which is short of technical experts in the various fields involved in the application of this Law. And it is only by trial and error and by the gaining of more and more experience and securing the services of greater and greater numbers of trained experts that the goal will be finally reached. For the moment the most important thing is that the goal has been defined, that it has been enshrined in the Constitution, and that all the energies of the new Iraq will be exerted towards its attainment.

A Story for Children

IDRIS AND HIS SON'S ASSASSIN

by MUHAMMAD YA'KUB KHAN

Long ago, there lived in the Spanish town of Cordova a man, Idris by name. This was the time when Spain was under the rule of the Caliph of Islam with Bagdad as his capital. Spain was something like a colony of the Arab countries, and enterprising men from those lands often came there in search of fame and fortune. Idris was one of such immigrants. In his native town of Basra he had a hard life. He was very poor, and with the little money that he earned as a common labourer he could hardly make two ends meet. So he made up his mind to sail for Spain and try his luck there.

On board the ship with him sailed another Arab, Kassim by name. Kassim had long been settled in Cordova, and was doing flourishing business there. After a visit to his native town of Basra he was now going back to Spain.

Idris was a young man of handsome appearance and strong bodily build. This was just the kind of man Kassim was looking for to take along with him as his personal attendant and bodyguard. So from that very day he took Idris in his employ.

On the way while the ship was sailing through the Mediterranean, it was attacked by sea-pirates. They wounded and killed several men, and plundered merchandise. Idris defended his master with much bravery and saved his life.

This made him a very trusted friend of Kassim. And when the two reached Cordova, Kassim put him in charge of the whole of his business. And when, after a few years, he died, he willed a large fortune in his name.

Idris was now one of the richest men of the town. He married a girl of charming beauty and noble descent. He was a most God-fearing man,
and spent much of wealth on helping the poor. Years rolled by, and he basked in the sunshine of good fortune. There was but one thing which worried him. He was already in his forties but he had no issue. At last at the age of 50 a son was born to him. There was great rejoicing and feasting in his house. The child was given the name Ishaq.

Ishaq grew up to be a handsome youth — just the image of his father. Idris took good care to give him a good education, and training in archery and horsemanship. This was an age when manly sports and chivalry were held in high esteem. And every year tournaments were held in which young men, Muslims, Christians as well as Jews, participated.

One such tournament was announced for the Eid day, which is a festival of rejoicing for Muslims. People of all classes, men and women, young and old, flocked to the stadium to watch the contests. The King’s courtiers and noblemen took their seats in the pavilion. The King’s arrival was announced with a fanfare of drums. As soon as he took his seat on the raised platform, specially erected for him, he declared the tournament open.

The athletes marched in a procession in front of the dais, saluting the King and courtiers. They were all young men of finest build and handsome features. But Ishaq attracted the loudest cheers as he entered the arena. He had been the champion in archery for the last two consecutive years. When he came to the dais, the King gave him a special smile. “Well, Ishaq,” he said, “I hope you will bag the trophy this year as well.” “With the help of God, your Majesty,” replied Ishaq, with a graceful bow.

A drum beat announced that the first round in the archery was to start. It was a hard contest and many were knocked out in the first two rounds. Ishaq was one of the ten who qualified for the third round. Now the contest was made all the more stiff. At the top of a pole was pinned a bird made of silk. A strong wind made it spin round and round. Each competitor was to bring down this bird in three arrow shots. Five of them tried their hand, one after another, but sent their arrow wide of the mark. The four others who followed did better. Some put one, some two shots into the bird, but they could not bring it down. Last of all was announced the name of Ishaq, and as he stepped forward, bow and arrow in hand, there was a loud peal of cheers from the crowd.

Ishaq smartly took his position, raised his bow to the elbow and taking aim, sent his arrow whizzing through the air with such accuracy that it pierced through the wings of the spinning bird. But it was not brought down. Another shot, and it settled into the bird’s chest, but without bringing it down. At this loud applause went up from the crowd, with shouts of, “Well done, Ishaq!” “Buck up, Ishaq!” He had now but one chance left. He screwed up his eyes to make his aim as accurate as he could, and stretching his bow, sent his last arrow with such force that it cut through the thin iron wire on which the bird was perched, and down it came to the ground.

This was greeted with frantic shouts and jubilations from the crowd. Once more Ishaq won the day. And in the midst of scenes of wild enthusiasm he was once more awarded the gold cup by the King. Once more Ishaq was the hero of the crowds.

As the tournament was over, the crowds dispersed. Ishaq mounted on his steed that was waiting for him outside the stadium, and wended his way towards his home, a magnificent villa in the suburbs of the town. His servant, handing over the horse to him, followed on foot. As he was galloping along all alone, a pedestrian who was carrying a load on his head suddenly crossed his path, and was slightly knocked off along with his load. Ishaq held up his reins, dismounted and apologized to the man.

The fallen man, who was a Jew, was soon on his legs, and started raving at Ishaq. Ishaq did his best to soothe his anger, but in vain. The man went on shouting and hurling abuses at him. Ishaq begged him to let the matter go, but the man lost all temper, and began to attack Ishaq. Ishaq was a strong, young man. The Jew was no match for him. Finding himself too weak, he drew a dagger that was hanging by his arm, and plunged it into Ishaq’s heart. Ishaq instantaneously fell down, and was soon a dead man.

The news of Ishaq’s victory at the tournament had reached his aged father Idris. His heart was filled with joy, and he stood at the gate of the villa awaiting the return of his son to kiss him and embrace him. He sent word to some of his friends also to come to the reception in honour of Ishaq. It was getting unduly late. The sun was already setting but there was no sign of Ishaq to be seen.

The assassin, discovering what he had done, was seized with terror. In the meantime Ishaq’s servant also appeared in the distance coming that way. When the assassin saw him coming, he took to his heels, and ran frantically for his life.

Idris, finding Ishaq being unduly delayed, asked his servant to accompany him to the nearby mosque, to say his sunset prayers. They had hardly
gone a few paces, however, when they saw a man running along, much terror-struck. "Just wait!" Idris said to his servant. "Let us see what the trouble is with this man who seems so frightened."

Presently the man came up to where Idris and his servant stood. His hands were red with blood. He was too frightened to utter a word. He fell down at Idris's feet, and with great difficulty managed to say a few words.

"O Sheikh," he said, "I am a stranger to this land, I know nobody in this part. I am innocent. Pray, grant me protection."

"What is the matter with you?" asked Idris. "Protection you shall have. A Muslim never refuses asylum to a man in distress. You need have no worry on that account. But do tell us what the matter is with you."

"O Sheikh," said the assassin, "as I was coming along a young man jeered at me. I told him not to do so. He began to abuse me. I returned his abuses. He fell upon me. I was alone. He was too strong for me. I took out my dagger to defend myself, and in the scuffle he got wounded and died." "Don't be afraid," said Idris. "Just step in. You are in a Muslim's house, and you have a Muslim's protection. Nobody will now dare touch you."

"O Sheikh!" said the man, "it is so kind of you to give me protection. But I must tell you that I am not a Muslim. I am a Jew. I hope you will not give me up if the man I have killed turns out to be a Muslim."

"Be of good cheer," said Idris. "To a Muslim there is no difference between man and man. Whatever a man's colour or creed, he is as much dear to God as a Muslim. That is the teaching of our religion. Have no fear, you are perfectly safe under a Muslim's roof."

The assassin kissed Idris's hand and followed him into the interior of the house, where the hand of the law could not trace him.

It was growing late in the evening. Yet there was no trace of Ishaq. The party of the distinguished men had already come and were in their seats. But Ishaq was nowhere in sight. This caused Idris much misgivings. What could have detained him so long, he wondered. He never stayed so long away. All sorts of thoughts crossed his mind.

Presently, the silence was broken. There was some noise at the front door. A domestic servant came into the dining hall where Idris was sitting with his friends waiting for Ishaq, and bursting into tears told the Sheikh that his son was dead.

This was a bolt from the blue for Idris. The party could hardly believe their ears. Idris hastened to have a look at the dead body, and when the sheet was lifted from its face, he saw that it was truly his own darling Ishaq who lay drenched in his blood.

"From God we come, and unto God we go" — he exclaimed with a truly Muslim-like resignation.

The merry-making party became a mourning party. Everybody consoled Idris and expressed deep sorrow at the brutal murder of his only son, the prop of his old age.

In the adjoining room, the assassin, hearing the lamentations was filled with terror, thinking it might be the dead body of the young man he had killed. The relations of Idris in the meantime dispersed in all directions to look for the assassin.

After a while Idris entered the assassin's room, lamp in hand. The man thought he had been found out, and he began to tremble.

"Don't be afraid," said Idris. "Just follow me!" And taking him to the room where Ishaq's body lay, removed the sheet from his face and asked, "Is this the young man you have killed?"

"Yes, yes," said the man in broken words. "Have mercy on me. It was no fault of mine. He abused me" and so on.

"Don't worry," said Idris. "A Muslim's word is a Muslim's word. There is still some night left. Early in the morning, I will arrange your safe escape.

While the assassin kept brooding over his fate, Idris kept a vigil by the body of his son. Early at dawn he bade one of his swiftest horses, together with a water-skin full of water, to the back door of the villa. While the attendant was busy saddling the horse, Idris went into the assassin's room with a bag of food and some money. Presently the attendant came with the horse. Idris led the assassin, and beckoned the attendant to go away.

"You wretch!" he said, "the young man you have killed is my own darling son, the prop of my old age. You have put out the only light of my life. You can't imagine the agony I am going through. There is the picture of Ishaq before my eyes crying for revenge. But there is the word of God calling that word once pledged must be honoured. Let it not be said that a Muslim was so mean as to go back on his word. A promise once made must be kept. That is a Muslim's code of honour. Here is the food for the journey and some money. You are a free man. Go!"
AVICENNA: THE PRINCE OF THE LEARNED

by K. M. YUSUF

Avicenna's childhood

Iran, the land of the Aryans, has the unique honour of having produced a galaxy of eminent Muslim scholars, scientists, thinkers and poets like al-Farabi, al-Biruni, al-Tabari, al-Razi, al-Rumi, al-Khayyam, Firdausi, Sa'di, Hafiz, etc., who even after their passing away centuries ago have been shining as bright luminaries and will continue to shine as such throughout the ages. Their genius was unsurpassable, and they attained perfection and won universal recognition. Tributes have been showered on them from all over the world. One such personality is that of Avicenna, the Râ'is al-Ulama or the Prince of the Learned, of whom the Islamic world is legitimately proud.

The Shaykh Abu 'Ali al-Husayn Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn Hasan Ibn 'Ali Ibn Sina is popularly known as Avicenna, which is the Latinized rendering of Hebrew Aven Sina, Arabic Ibn Sina. His father, 'Abdullah, a money-changer, came from Balkh, the ancient Bactra, which falls now in Afghanistan. Nothing is known about 'Abdullah's ancestors. 'Abdullah was a man of importance, and when he had settled down in Bukhara (now ruled from the Kremlin), the Samanid ruler Sultan Nuh Ibn Mansur II (976-997 C.E.) appointed him Governor of Kharmathian District. There a village named Afshana witnessed the wedding of 'Abdullah with Sitarah, a lady of Persian stock, and there the Almighty's gift of a bonny child, known in history as Avicenna, was bestowed on them in the month of Safar, 370 A.H. (August 980 C.E.). Following the child's birth, 'Abdullah shifted to Bukhara (known to the Chinese as Pu-ho).

The biography of Ibn Sina records instances of his genius. The little Abu 'Ali al-Husayn, indeed, was a prodigy. "At the age of ten years," says the famous biographer Ibn Khallikan, "he was a perfect master of the Qur'an and the general literature, and had obtained a certain degree of information in dogmatic theology, the Indian calculus (arithmetic) and algebra." When Abu 'Abdullah Ibrahim Ibn Husayn came to Bukhara, it was with him that Husayn read the elements of the Figh (jurisprudence), the beginning of Porphyry's Isagoge, elementary Euclidian geometry and some astronomy. After solving six geometrical figures with the help of his teacher, Husayn worked out the remainder by himself. Soon the pupil found his master to be but a charlatan and the latter modestly retired to Gurganj. Left to his own resources, he read voraciously whatever book came within his reach and completed the study of Euclid's treatise, the Almagest of Ptolemy, the Aphorisms of Philosophers with various commentaries and all the books he could obtain on medicine. In his autobiography, Ibn Sina has himself described his passion for knowledge, immediately after the departure of his master, in the following words: "During all this time I did not sleep one night through, nor devoted my attention to any other matter by day... whenever I found myself perplexed by a problem, I would repair to the mosque and pray, adoring the all-Creator, until my puzzle was resolved and my difficulty made easy." Deep into the night he would continue his studies and even in his dreams, problems would pursue him and he would work out their solutions.

Avicenna's teachers in medicine

Next, he turned his attention more fully to metaphysics and read Aristotle's Metaphysica some forty times, till the words were imprinted on his memory. Still he could not understand it. One day, roaming in despair, he came across a little commentary, On the Objects of Metaphysics, by Abu Nasr al-Farabi (Alpharabius, d. 950 C.E.), and bought it for three drachmas. As he went through the notes of the renowned philosopher, he had an illumination and suddenly discovered Aristotle's mind. So great was the joy of Avicenna that he hastened to express his thanks to God and distributed alms to the indigent.

Under the guidance of Abu Sahl 'Isa Ibn Yahya al-Masihi, a Christian physician of Gurganj, and Abu Mansur Hasan Ibn Muhammad al-Qamari, another noted man of medicine, Avicenna made an extensive study of the science. He made his own clinical observations and diagnosed every case with great care. He opened a surgery of his own and...
to entice patients at first took no fees for his services. He recorded his observations carefully and investigated the causes of the diseases. The young scholar was only sixteen years old.

Soon the youthful prodigy made a name for himself and fame grew around him. The Samanid ruler of Bukhara had been sick for some time and the strangeness of his disease had puzzled the court physicians. At last they suggested that Ibn Sina be called in for the treatment, and the boy physician had the good fortune to diagnose the case correctly and was able soon to cure the Sultan. As a reward, Avicenna begged and obtained access to use the ruler’s remarkably rich library. He was amazed to see the fine collection of books and rare manuscripts in it. Endowed with extraordinary powers of absorbing and retaining knowledge, he devoured the contents of the huge library and also took abundant notes. One unfortunate day witnessed the destruction of the Samanid library by fire, and the young Sina’s enemies spread the rumour that he himself purposely caused the disaster, so that he might alone be the absolute possessor of the academic secrets of the treasure-house. His books, however, were considered as substitutes of this library.

Avicenna an author at the age of twenty-one

When Avicenna reached the age of twenty-one, he set out to compile his first works, Majma‘ (a compendium of science) and al-Haasil wa al-Maysil (the actuating and the actuated: a dissertation in 20 volumes on law and asceticism) at the request of his two wealthy patrons, Abu Hasan al-Arunci and Abu Bakr al-Barqi, whose absolute property they became. His other work was on ethics, al-Birra wa al-Ithim (Good Work and Sins), which he wrote to oblige his friends.

Avicenna had so far been living with his father, and this meant ease and comfort. But in 1002 C.E. ‘Abdullah died, and the young scholar had to shoulder the burdens of actual life. He was called upon to attend the royal affairs and was appointed in place of his father. He filled up this post for some time but soon confusion prevailed in Transoxiana and he had to move to Khwarizm, where he was well-received by Abul Sahih Ahmad al-Suhayli, the learned Vizir of Prince ‘Ali Ibn Ma’mun. He presented the scholar to the Prince who fixed an allowance sufficient for the philosopher’s requirements. Al-Suhayli induced the scholar to continue the completion of his works.

It is here that Avicenna came in personal contact with another master-genius of his age, Shaykh Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973-1048 C.E.). They discussed astronomical and scientific subjects. Avicenna defended to his best most of Aristotle’s theories against al-Biruni’s severe attacks and they could not avoid some amount of bitterness in their discussions. The mature scholar of Khwarizm mentions Ibn Sina as “a most learned young man”. During his stay for a few years, he also met men of letters like Abu Nasr Ibn ‘Arraq and Suhayli Simi. Here he wrote some minor works for the Vizir. He cleverly escaped the clutches of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (999-1030 C.E.), who wanted him to adorn his court, and this infuriated the Sultan very much. In about 1010 C.E., Avicenna left Khwarizm for Gurganj, primarily with the intention of securing the patronage of the generous ruler of Tabaristan, ‘Amr Shams al-Mali Qabus Ibn Washmgir (976-1012 C.E.), himself a man of deep erudition; but the progress of his journey was very slow. Unluckily on his way to the place, the news of the ruler’s assassination by his own revoluted soldiery reached the enthusiastic scholar, and for a period he had to live a life of wandering and adventure, keeping an opening of his talents, before finally reaching Gurganj. He visited Tus, Shagqan, Samangan, Jajarm, the frontier post of Khurasan, Dahistan, where he fell ill, and finally Gurganj, near the Caspian.

Sayyid Hasan Barni, a modern Indian historian, disagrees with the view that Avicenna never met ‘Amir Qabus. He is of opinion that the scholar was in the ‘Amir’s service for some time in about 402 A.H. (1011 C.E.), and cites Kitab al-Shifa’s preface to Logic and Mahmud Shahabi’s Introduction to the Risalah Rawan Shima in support of his contention. Taking the dates of Avicenna’s departure from Khwarizm and the death of ‘Amir Qabus into consideration, the argument of Barni seems convincing and acceptable.

Avicenna in Iran

At Gurganj, Avicenna made friends with Abu ‘Ubayd al-Juzjani and Abu Muhammad al-Shirazi, both men of culture; and lectured on logic and astronomy. Al-Shirazi provided him with lodgings and the scholar wrote numerous books, some of which he dedicated to Shirazi. It is here that he commenced writing his memorable treatise on medicine, the Canon (al-Qanun fi al-Tibb). But he did not enjoy peace for long: and subsequently settled at Raiy, in the vicinity of modern Teheran, where the minor son of the last Amir, Majd al-Dawlah Abu Talib Rustan (997-1027 C.E.), was the nominal ruler under the regency of his mother, Princess al-Sayyidah, and Avicenna offered his services to the Princess. Here the scholar is said to have composed thirty of his shorter works. The lady refused to hand over power to her son when he came of age. Khwandamir, an historian, informs us that Avicenna infuriated al-Sayyidah by insisting on the legitimate rights of her son in the domestic quarrel between the two. The constant feud in the royal family compelled him to quit even this place.

He proceeded to Qazwin and passed southwards to Hamadan, where the Sultan Shams al-Dawlah Abu Tahir (997-1021 C.E.) had established himself. He treated the Sultan for colics and cured him. While there the scholar began to compose, at the request of his friend and disciple al-Juzjani, one of his most celebrated works — the Kitab al-Shifa. He also lectured to special gatherings of students on medicine and philosophy. The ruler of Hamadan, pleased with the skill of Avicenna, raised him to the office of his Vizir (some time between 1014-1020 C.E.). But he displeased the turbulent soldiery, mostly composed of Kurds and Turks, who did not like the appointment and mutinied against their sovereign, demanding death for the new Vizir. The Sultan did not put him to death but consented to banish him. For forty days the scholar remained in hiding in a Shaykh’s house, when the ruler was again attacked by the old disease and the banished physician had to be recalled for the treatment and was reappointed Prime Minister of the realm. On the death of the Sultan, he ceased to be the Vizir and retired to a druggist’s shop, where he continued his writings and also made confidential arrangements to pass over to Isfahan. This secret deal came to the knowledge of the new ‘Amr of Hamadan, who had him arrested and thrown into the fortress of Faridjan. Disguised as a Sufi, and accompanied by his brother, a trusted pupil and two servants, he managed to escape from the fortress and after a perilous journey succeeded in reaching Isfahan. This
happened some time after 1023 C.E. It is evident from his numerous treaties that Avicenna got a good deal of trouble in Hamadan at the hands of the literati.

AVICENNA’S DEBT TO THE BUWAYHID SULTAN OF ISFAHAN

He was received with great honours by the Buwayhid ruler, the Sultan 'Ala' al-Dawlah Abu Ja'far Kakuwyeh of Isfahan (d. 1042 C.E.), one of his great benefactors. He became the Sultan’s most intimate courtier, as well as his chief physician and educational adviser. Baihaqi says that in the court of ‘Ala’ al-Dawlah he used to sit very close to the king, and when he used to speak all those present listened attentively, none uttering a word. The remaining years of his life were spent in the service of this sovereign. During this period Avicenna led a free life, devoting his entire energy to the study of philology and in writing numerous treatises on various subjects. At the request of the Sultan, every Thursday evening he held discussions with the learned men of the place. In his Danish Namah-i-‘Ala’i, which is linguistically one of the most important books in the history of the Persian prose, Avicenna, while paying a glowing tribute to ‘Ala’ al-Dawlah, mentions: “To him I owe all my success.” He accompanied the Sultan in all his journeys and campaigns. Once he was asked by the ruler of Isfahan to accompany him on an expedition against Hamadan, and he readily agreed. While on his way to the expedition, he developed a severe attack of dysentery, and in spite of drastic drugging, his health deteriorated sharply and he could no more attend to the State affairs entrusted to him. With much difficulty he managed to reach Hamadan. Having little hope of recovery, he bestowed his goods on the poor, freed the slaves, devoted day and night to prayer and meditation, and occasionally listened to the reading of the Qur’an. His strength rapidly failed, and having lingered on a few days the soul of the great Master took flight to the “blessed companionship on high.”

Avicenna died in the month of June 428 A.H. (1037 C.E.), and was buried among the palm-trees in the beautiful valley of Hamadan, the east of the Archemenian city of Ecbatan, in Western Persia. This, in short, is the life-story of our scholar.

Avicenna wrote about 276 books on all conceivable subjects

An erudite among erudites, with the mind that treasured the highly developed culture of the people of the age, Avicenna, a prolific writer, was the author of some 276 titles, covering a considerable variety of subjects, according to Anawati’s Bibliography of Avicenna published in Cairo in 1950 C.E. They may be even more. He wrote on philosophy, mathematics, geology, zoology, astronomy, asceticism, psychology, metaphysics, music, literature, prosody, phonetics, cosmology, and evidently on all the principles of medicine, diagnosis, diseases and remedies. It was in the field of philosophy and medicine that he achieved real greatness and was acclaimed as Princeps Philosophorum, Prince of Eastern Philosophers, Prince of the Learned, and Prince and Chief of Physicians. Among the multitude of his works, the books — Kitab al-Shifa', al-Qanun fi al-Tibb and Kitab al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat—should be singled out, as these are the three monumental works which made Avicenna immortal both in the East and the West.
of the various parts of the Shifa' were revised, completed and re-edited several times during the Middle Ages and after.

In modern times Waepecke translated Arithmetical Extracts from the Shifa' in 1863 C.E. The 'Iradat, a résumé of the Shifa', has been translated into Latin by Mgr. Carame and published from Rome in 1926 under the title Avicenna Metaphysics Compendium.

Let it be emphasized that the logic of the Book of the Remedy, which is considered to be the most detailed work of Islam on logic, received attention from all later renowned philosophers, and many of them wrote excessively on the subject, but their dissertations merely consisted of detailed marginal notes, and none of them could reach Avicenna's standard. Several scholars have added important annotations on the metaphysics of the Shifa', among which the comments of the Mullâh Sadra of Shiraz (d. 1640 C.E.) deserves special mention. The Mantiq al-Shifa' in the illustrious Khwaja Nasirud-Din Tusi's (1201-1274 C.E.) book Asas al-Iqhtibas (the Basis of Adaptation) may be considered a translation of the logic of the Shifa'.

AVICENNA'S CANON

Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (the Canon of Medicine) is the most important book of Islam on medical science. This is the work that earned for Avicenna the reputation of a second Galen. With him Islamic medicine reached its zenith. The Qanun was begun at Gurganj and completed at Raiy. It is a detailed compendium of medical knowledge among the Arabs of the 11th century C.E., as well as the fruits of Avicenna's study in the magnificent Bukhara library and his own clinical researches. The book is divided into five parts and deals exhaustively with the general principles of medicine, therapeutics, pathology, diseases of various organs and materia medica. Commenting on this, Professor Hittin, in his History of the Arabs, writes: "The book distinguishes mediastinitis from pleurisy and recognizes the contagious nature of phthisis and the spreading of diseases by water and soil. It gives scientific diagnosis of ankylostomiasis and attributes it to an intestinal worm. Its materia medica considers some seven hundred and sixty drugs." It also opened new fields in surgery.

The Arabic text of the Qanun was first published in Rome in 1593 C.E. and was, therefore, one of the earliest Arabic books to see print. According to Saroton, in his Introduction to the History of Science, the Qanun was first translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187 C.E.) and published from Venice in 1544, 1554, 1582 and 1595 C.E., from Basle in 1556 C.E., and from Louvain in 1658 C.E. Several partial editions of the translations were published even before 1500 C.E. The tremendous popularity enjoyed by the Qanun in Europe can be judged from the fact that during the last thirty years of the 15th century C.E. and a further twenty years during the 16th century, as many as 36 Latin editions of the book were published, apart from the countless commentaries on the translations themselves in Latin, Hebrew and other languages.

In the words of Professor K. Hittin (op. cit.), "... this Canon with its encyclopaedic contents, its systematic arrangements and philosophic plan, soon worked its way into a position of pre-eminence in the medical literature of the age, displacing the works of Galen, al-Razi and al-Majusi ..." Latin translation of the Qanun held a prominent place in the curriculum of medical faculties at the European universities during the Middle Ages. At the Universities of Montpellier, Bologna, Louvain, Leipzig, Tubingen and Paris the official syllabus for the medical degree included the Canon as one of the most important text-books. The medical studies at the Universities of Vienna and Frankfurt-on-Oder in 1520 and 1588 C.E. were mainly based on the Canon. Up to the late 17th century C.E. it was still used as a textbook in the Universities of Louvain and Montpellier. The magnificent Qanun, in the words of William Asler, "remained a medical bible for a longer period than any other work".

The last two centuries saw several translations of the Qanun. Even in comparatively recent years (1899-1900 C.E.) four theses, all partial translations of the Qanun in German, were submitted at the University of Berlin. A partial translation into English was also made by Cameron Gruner and published under the title A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine of Avicenna from London in 1930 C.E.

According to Gai. Ferrari in his Text-Book of Medicine has quoted Hippocrates 140 times, Galen and al-Razi (Rhazes) 1,000 times, while he quoted Avicenna 3,000 times. The popularity of the Qanun has not been less in the East, where it has influenced considerably the Yunani system of medicine.

AVICENNA'S BOOK OF GESTURES AND WARNINGS

The Kitab al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat (the Book of Gestures and Warnings) is a remarkable work dealing with logic, metaphysics, cosmology, composition of bodies, the celestial and the terrestrial soul, Being and its causes, Creation, the organization and end of things, and finally in five chapters the questions of mysticism, such as the spiritual stages on the way to union with God. This is supposed to be Avicenna's last work written towards the end of his life at Isfahan. This book covers a series of extra-curricular discussions, notes and remarks on points of controversy in the Greek and Avicennian systems of philosophy. At the end of it, the author recommends that this book should not be shown except to learned men. A French rendering of 'Isharat by M. Forget was printed at Leyden in 1892 C.E. Horton rendered the Metaphysics in German in 1907.

Being the last work of Avicenna, much attention has been paid to it. Celebrated scholars and philosophers have written a number of annotations in Persian and Arabic on it. Among them may be cited the noted mystic Shihab al-Din Sulhrawardi (1145-1235 C.E.), who wrote a comment in Persian. There is a Persian translation of 'Isharat which is attributed to the renowned Iranian poet Anvari (d. 1191 C.E.) the most brilliant of panegyrisists.

SOME OF THE IMPORTANT WORKS OF AVICENNA

The other important works of Avicenna are: al-Najat (the Salvation), Hikmat al-Mashriqiyyah (Oriental Wisdom), al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'aal (the Origin and Resurrection), Risalah Fuyuzi Labi (Treatise of Divine Blessing), Sallaman wa Ahbl (Solomon and Abulom), al-Ta'ir (the Bird), Mantiq al-Mashriqi (Discourse of the Illuminati), al-Mukhtasar al-Awsat (the Middle Summary), al-Arsaad al-Kulliyah (the General Observations), Mukhtasar al-Majisti (Summary of the Almagest), Kitab al-Hilalay (the Book of Guidance), Risalah Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (the Thesis of Living; the Son of the Vigilant), Kitab al-Quluni (the Book of Colic), al-Adviyat al-Qalbiyyah (the Cardiac Remedies), Lisan al-'Arab (the Language of the Arabs), al-Mukhtasar al-Asghar (the Smaller Epitome), Kitab al-Insaq (the Book of Equitable Judgment), Danish Nam-i-'Ali (the ‘Ali's Book of Wisdom), Risalah Nubuwat (Book of Prophecy), Risalah Nahdhiyyah (Thesis on Pulse) and Risalah Mi'ta'ifiyah.
(Ascension Thesis). The last-mentioned work greatly inspired the Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273 C.E.), the reputed mystic poet.

Avicenna wrote in Arabic and Persian

Avicenna, like all the learned men of his age, used principally Arabic as the vehicle of his thought. He also wrote in Persian, his mother tongue. His Arabic is definitely more lucid than that of al-Kindi and al-Farabi. His Arabic vocabulary is full of new abstract terms, which were shock- ing to Arab purists, and which were very reluctantly, if ever, used by Arab authors after him. These terms were the direct result of his profound knowledge of Persian. He can claim to be the actual originator of Persian philosophical language. Another feature of his writing is his passion for classification. He divides and sub-divides far more than any Greek author, and it is from him that medieval European philosophers copied the method of classification.

Among many accomplishments of Avicenna was an observatory which he constructed in eight years with the assistance of al-Juzjani at the request of the Sultan `Ala al-Dawlah. He has mentioned in his book even the microscopic bacilli which cannot be seen through the naked eye without the help of an instrument. He has alluded to blood pressure (hypertension) which is supposed to be a discovery of the 20th century C.E. In pharmacology some of his contributions were original and important. He introduced many herbs into medical practice that had not been tried before. He seems to have been aware of the antiseptic effects of alcohol, for he recommended that wounds should, at first, be washed with wine. He also recommended the drinking of mineral waters, quite fashionable nowadays; and suggested that experiments should be made on animals. In the field of chemistry, perhaps his greatest service was the total discrediting of alchemy.

Avicenna left his mark on the history of musical technique. He defines music as “a mathematical science in which there is discussed the state of melody in so far as it is in harmony or it is in discord, and the state of the intervening periods”. After al-Farabi, he has contributed the most important works on the theory of music in Arabic. He wrote an Introduction to the Art of Music, besides a few definitions in his Divisions of the Sciences.

Avicenna as a poet

He was also a poet of no mean order. Some of his verses have survived till our time. He used to compose both in Arabic and Persian. As an example, one of his famous Persian quatrains may be quoted here:

Ay kaash bidamam ki man kistami,
Sargashdh ba `adam az payi chistami,
Gar maqbulam aasudeh wa khush zistami,
Warnah ba hazaar dideh bigristami.

Translation:

O would to heaven I knew as to who am I! Wherefore in the Universe bewildered am I! Fortune favouring, content and happy am I, Else a shedder of tears of thousand eyes am I.

Some of his verses were translated into English and French by de Slane and de Vaux respectively. Edward Browne rendered his poem on Soul in beautiful English verse recently. It has been thought that some of the famous quatrains of `Umar al-Khayyam (1038-1124 C.E.), are really his: and were introduced in the collection of al-Khayyam by anthologists. This, however, is a very difficult question to determine.

Avicenna was intensely religious from the outset. His father belonged to the Isma`ili sect but as the scholar had a broader training, he always entertained liberal views. In his younger days he studied and practised Hana'fi law, but gradually he became favourably inclined towards the Shi'ite doctrine. He was a great believer in Sufism and was a sincere admirer of the famous Sufi of his time, Khwaja Abu Sa'eed Abul-Khayr (967-1047 C.E.), with whom he came in personal contact. He wrote some shorter works on purely religious subjects, such as the philosophy of prayer, etc.

Avicenna, Razi and Ghazzali

As the representative Muslim philosopher, Avicenna was the main target of the Imam Ahmad al-Ghazzali's (1058-1111 C.E.) attack in his Tahafut al-Falasifah. A number of philosophical researchers believe that al-Ghazzali wrote Tahafut merely to reject the views of Avicenna and denigrate him from his lofty position, and that the Imam interpreted wrongly Avicenna’s views. The metaphysical doctrine of the Shi'ite commands till this day a respectful attention in spite of the refutation by al-Ghazzali.

Avicenna’s disputes with fellow-philosophers reveal a violent temper. He dismisses al-Razi’s (865-926 C.E.) philosophy and ridicules Miskawayh (d. 1030 C.E.) and “his pitiful limitations”. It is interesting to note that even in his lifetime people questioned Avicenna’s faith and considered him a heretic, but he strongly repudiated with indignation and contempt such charges levelled against him by fanatics and people jealous of him. Condemning such an imputation, he says in a Persian quatrain:

Kufr chu nani gazaf wa aasaan na buwad,
Muhkum tur az iman-i-man iman na buwad:
Dar dahr chu man yaki wa u ham kafr,
Pas dar hama dahr yak Musalman na buwad.

It means:

It is not so easy and trifling to call me a heretic,
No belief in religion is firmer than my own:
I am the unique person in the whole world and if I am a heretic,
Then there is not a single Muslim anywhere in the world.

In support of this contention may be quoted one of the greatest mystical poets of Islam, Sana’i (d. 1180 C.E.), who has embodied his veneration for Avicenna, his philosophy and sciences, in the following immortal lines:

I do not seek for any reward in this world or the next.
Every moment I pray, whether in prosperity or in adversity.
O my Lord, bestow on Sana’i the proficiency in philosophy and sciences,
Such as would make even the soul of Bu Ali Sina jealous.

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Avicenna as a philosopher

Avicenna’s intelligence and wit were extremely powerful. He was the most moderate among the peripatetic philosophers. He is one of the greatest philosophers of Islam who pondered on Aristotle’s philosophy, without knowing Greek or Latin, making use of what incomplete translations he could obtain, and appraised it in such a manner as it annulled the older works on the subject and his books replaced those of Aristotle. It is, thus, not surprising that he rapidly out-distanced his contemporaries. They admitted his mastery of Aristotle’s teachings, and always sought his philosophical opinion, which they considered conclusive. Muhammad ‘Abd al-Karim Shahrazuri (d. 1153 C.E.) in his al-Musara’a says: “It is unanimously agreed that Avicenna is paramount in the science of medicine and unequalled: and whoever understands the meaning of what Avicenna said, has reached the height of philosophy.” Hitti remarks that through him Platonism and Aristotelianism found their way into Latin and exercised a determining influence upon medieval European scholasticism. Avicenna rules as the absolute Prince over the realm of philosophy and medicine from the 11th up to the 18th century C.E.

Cairo, Morocco and Delhi. All through the long period of the Middle Ages as well as the Renaissance, he was the medium for the exchange of ideas between the Orient and the Occident.

Avicenna will always remain a leading landmark in the cultural history of mankind

Universalist in genius and encyclopaedic in writing, his services would be gratefully remembered in the annals of human knowledge. In the words of Sarton, the famed author of the Introduction to the History of Science, he is “the most famous scientist of Islam and one of the most famous of all races, places and times”. Paying him a glowing tribute, Dr. Houben says, “Ibn Sina is and always will remain one of the leading landmarks in the cultural history of mankind for every age and every period. . . .” It stands to Avicenna’s eternal credit that he succeeded in reaching the head, if not the heart, of a large and distinguished erudite group in the West. When Chaucer wrote his splendid Canterbury Tales and Dante his imperishable La Divina Commedia, they accorded Avicenna a unique place in the throng of the patriarchs and sages of the old world. His picture found its way in the stained glasses of Christian churches: and even today a huge portrait of Avicenna adorns the main hall of the School of Medicine at the University of Paris. This bears an eloquent testimony to the reverence in which the Persian Galen, perhaps the most amazing example of universal knowledge, who occupies an eternal place in the Paradise of Knowledge, is held by modern Europe.

India and Pakistan are greatly indebted to Avicenna for his system of medicine, which has for centuries been the guide and the inspiration for the Hakims (physicians) of India. His pharmacopoeia have brought relief to countless sufferers in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent down several centuries up to this day. His philosophical studies penetrated deep into the country and sharpened the minds of enthusiastic scholars: his mysticism has been the inspiration of the pious.

His millenary, according to the Islamic era, fell in 1370 A.H. (1950 C.E.). Since then commemorative meetings have been held in various parts of the world, and numerous articles, pamphlets and books written on him. In his homeland, under the supervision of the Society for the Preservation of National Monuments, a beautiful mausoleum worthy of Avicenna’s dignity has been constructed on his tomb at Hamadan; and one of the hospitals in Teheran and a big street of the capital have been named after him. The society has, further, formed a committee for publishing the Persian treatises of Avicenna. Recognizing the fact that few scholars have exercised such a deep and lasting influence on European and Asian culture as did Avicenna, it has been decided that under the auspices of UNESCO all his extant works are to be either edited for the first time, re-edited or translated.

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THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
HIS HOLINESS SARDAR DR. SAYYIDINA TAHIR SAIFUDDIN SAHEB

BY A DAWOODI BOHRA

The Dawoodi Bohras are a comparatively small but an important and influential section of Shi’ah Muslims. They are essentially a business community and have been engaged for generations together in carrying on trade and commerce in all parts of the world. Their enterprise, acumen, skill and success in this particular field have been acknowledged on all hands.

The major portion of the community reside in India and have established themselves as prosperous merchants and big traders in every province of that vast country. A fairly large number have made their homes in East Africa and have been assisting in the economic development of that region. Many families have also settled in Madagascar, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Burma, Ceylon and Japan.

Dawoodi Bohras believe in the descendants of the Imam Husain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, as the legitimate successors to the Imamat and give undisputed allegiance to them. According to their history the twenty-first Imam, under pressure of circumstances, went into seclusion about 1132 C.E., leaving his mission on earth to be carried on by his vicegerents or representatives, who were known as Da’i, an Arabic word meaning “one who calls (to a particular).”

It is the belief of Dawoodi Bohras that an Imam is always present on earth, whether he is visible or invisible, and that even though he may be in seclusion at present, he will reveal himself at some time considered proper by him. Till such a revelation takes place the Da’i have to deputize for the Imam and are charged with the duty of fulfilling all the obligations and responsibilities and exercising all the powers and authority that appertain to that office.

The Da’i is thus the spiritual head of Dawoodi Bohras. The office has existed for centuries and enormous prestige and importance have attached to its holders. The organization set up by the Da’i is known as the Da’wat (literally: invitation). It is the focal point in the religious and social life of the community and the strongest unifying influence which keeps it together.

His Holiness Sardar Dr. Sayyidina Tahir Saifuddin Saheb is the present Da’i of Dawoodi Bohras. He was born in 1888 and assumed charge of the office of Da’i in 1915. Bohras scattered all over India and in different parts of the world acknowledge unquestioned allegiance to him. They seek his guidance in all matters, whether spiritual or temporal, and carry out his advice and instructions with reverential fervour.

There are some very happy features about the character of this illustrious personality who has been functioning as a religious leader for over a generation. He does not derive his importance only from the exalted office he holds nor his exalted position. His personal qualities and ability have been recognized as being as great as the eminence of the office he has been destined to occupy.

Gifted with an exceptionally keen intellect, His Holiness has remained an ardent student throughout his life. His mastery over the Arabic language and literature has been acknowledged throughout the Arabic-speaking world. His profound study of the Islamic religion, of its tenets and doctrines, of its laws and code, and of the many vicissitudes of its complicated history, has been worthy of erudite scholars who have spent a lifetime in the study of those subjects.

A number of books and poems written in the Arabic language have emanated from the pen of His Holiness. They have been admired at once for their grace of expression and as a valuable contribution to thought. A striking command over language is evidenced in their composition. In one of these books there are actually several pages containing sentence after sentence in which the important alphabet Alif is not used at all, and simultaneously the use of any dotted word whatever is deliberately excluded. It is conceded by scholars that such an achievement is most remarkable and unique and is probably unprecedented in the

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history of Arabic literature. In several other books the use of particular words is entirely avoided with complete ease and without the smallest detriment to the meaning that is sought to be conveyed.

There is another very distinctive feature which tends to these writings of His Holiness an exceptional value. They have given to the world for the first time a glimpse of that sector of the literary wealth of Islam which was not much known outside a small circle of specialized savants. The length of the published works of His Holiness extends to over 3,000 pages.

Even in the midst of all the external aids to material comfort which naturally abounds in his palatial home, His Holiness lives a life of remarkable simplicity, and even austerity, which is quite in consonance with his status as a religious head. Enjoyment and recreation as such are unknown to him, both as concepts and as facts of the daily routine of life. Day and night, he is absorbed in work—teaching, preaching, writing, interviewing, discussing, advising and guiding.

His Holiness has given very great impetus to the spread of education, particularly in his community, by starting or substantially helping schools for boys and girls in different parts of India and even elsewhere. The total number of such schools is about 250. Several educational bodies, Muslim and non-Muslim, have honoured him with addresses in recognition of the sympathy and help which he has extended to them. His charities to public institutions alone have run into hundreds of thousands of rupees. Nor have they been confined to his community. Many a deserving cause has benefited by them.

The most important educational institution established and maintained by His Holiness is of course the Jamia'at Saifiyyah, which is located at Surat, India. It is a high-level academy for imparting intensive training in Arabic language and literature and in Islamic religion, history and culture in general. The courses of study are fairly elaborate and graded and are framed by His Holiness and his experts. They cover a period of eleven years, at the end of which an examination is held and a degree is conferred on successful students. The study of English is compulsory; instruction is also given in subjects like history, geography, arithmetic and science. All education is free; so is boarding and lodging to students and teachers. The academy is conducted on the lines of a residential university and has immense potentialities of future development.

Though primarily occupied in spiritual pursuits, His Holiness also takes keen interest in advancing the material prosperity of his community and of the country in which he lives. He is endowed with profound wisdom in understanding and directing the practical affairs of the world and his suggestions have been found to be extremely helpful even by experts. Many business enterprises run by Dawoodi Bohras have owed their existence to his inspiration.

Though not in any sense an active politician, His Holiness has never isolated himself from the public life of the country or from its great leaders and people. Almost all the Indian celebrities of modern times, including men like Gandhi and Jinnah, have had personal contacts and acquaintance with him. Governors of provinces have exchanged visits with him and several of them are known to have highly cherished his friendship.

His Holiness has visited more than once all the important places in India and has also travelled in the countries of the Middle East. Wherever he goes, he is received with marks of great respect and affection. The municipalities of Madras, Poona and Karachi held civic receptions for him when he visited these cities. When he visited Egypt, the Egyptian Government presented him with a number of gold coins, ancient pieces of dress, manuscripts and other relics of ancient days. In Iraq the government of the day extended its hospitality to him and gave a party in his honour. In Mecca, King Ibn Su'ud entertained him as a State guest and had several discussions with him. Throughout the Islamic world, His Holiness is known and respected as a man of deep piety, profound learning and zeal for the interests of Islam.

Following the traditions of famous universities in Western countries of conferring honorary degrees on men of merit and eminence, the Muslim University of Aligarh, India, conferred on His Holiness its honorary degree of Doctor of Theology in the Spring of 1946. A special Convocation was held for that purpose and along with the degree was also addressed an address appreciating and eulogising his services.

Though deeply imbued with the doctrines and tenets of the orthodox Islamic faith and leading his life in strict conformity to them, His Holiness is by no means insensible to the trends of modern times nor unreasonably intolerant of the modern ways of life. He realizes the value of scientific advancement and has kept himself in touch with the manifestation of world forces in every sphere, whether political, economic, religious or cultural. His Holiness has made arrangements to impart knowledge of modern subjects, in addition to Islamic religion and Arabic language and literature, to all the members of his family. One of his sons visited England and other Continental countries, where he was sent on an observation tour.

His Holiness is thus a remarkable personality. He represents a healthy combination of all that is best in the old and the new and it is no wonder that he commands esteem and respect not only from members of his community, to whom he is a spiritual messenger, but from all those who have had the privilege of meeting and knowing him.
PATHS TO GOD

by NORMAN LEWIS

Is it enough that we say, "I believe in God"?
One of the greatest men I have ever known said to me.
"Ever struggling to reach God --- that is all that ever matters, ever has mattered, or ever will."

But how are we to do this? How are we to attain our goal, which is God?
The first and most important path is the moral path. No one will ever approach God while he is an adulterer, a murderer, a thief, or a liar.
Each man has his faults, and each man knows his greatest fault, whether it be quick temper, greed, selfishness, vanity or what not. This must be overcome.
The discussion of religious subjects with other people is probably the greatest substitute for Godly living that has ever been discovered. It is not likely that any good ever resulted from a religious discussion from the time the world was created.

Whoever indulged (and that is the proper word) — whoever indulged in religious discussion for two or three hours without coming away utterly weary and drained and with less true religion than he had at the beginning of the discussion? Probably it is indulged in chiefly by the very young.

Then what is the approach? It is above all personal and individual. The best procedure is to select a time and a place for meditation, the time being at four, six or eight o'clock in the morning and the place where there can be no interruption.

One sits in a straight chair without upholstery, does not cross his arms or legs, as this tugs up the nervous system, sits with palms upward, closes his eyes, and relaxes.

If the thought is turned towards God, it is not long until one is aware of God and of nothing else. And, as the weeks go by, this communion with the Unseen becomes deeper and higher and greater.

At first the period of meditation may be only twenty minutes. But as time goes on this may gradually increase. I know a man who is a whirlwind of activity in a large community, doing good all day long. Yet he would never miss the period of meditation and of withdrawal from the world of activity which usually begins at four o'clock in the morning and may continue four hours.

This particular man tells me he is not a Christian, but he is in sympathy with all truly religious thought and is very tolerant. He has a positive horror of joining any organization. Yet his whole aim is to do good.

It is only the complete knowledge of freedom from interruption that can make this meditation possible. Then all consciousness of the material world vanishes and we are conscious only of eternal things.

Some feel that they are facing a purple mist which is gradually superseded by a blazing golden light and that concentration upon this golden light becomes the gateway to higher and deeper apprehensions. The exact way by which this higher consciousness is reached is not the point. The point is that the people I know who approach the Eternal in this way are among the most active and useful members of society. Strangers are impressed by the look of something deeper than life in the peaceful countenances of such people but may not know from whence it is derived.

Knowledge of God! Is it to be obtained from books? Thoreau once said that no blueberry ever reached Boston: by the time it got there it was only provender. Knowledge of God is to be obtained only from God.

What is it for which we pray? Do we pray for things or for God? Prayers are always answered. But how much more beautiful to pray for spiritual progression and understanding and knowledge of God. And have we the patience to persist upon this path, week after week, month after month?

Is there any other value that we would place above it?

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Before the present French translation of the Qurʾān there existed about 30 translations, including at least four by Muslims. The present one is rigorously literal, and tries to correct the former ones, such as those of Blachère and Kasimirski. Notes are given and also cross references. Specially important are the notes on slavery, polygamy, Zayd and Zaynah, Dhul-Kifl and the Fig, the meanings of the Zakat, the people of the Cave, Haneef, confession of sins in whisper before the Prophet, the description of Paradise and Hell, etc. Constant and precise references are given to the Biblical passages (although unfortunately there are several printing mistakes in this connection). There is a map on the geography of the Qurʾān and also one for the Hajj. Most important is the Introduction, tracing the history of the compilation, preservation and transmission of the Qurʾān.

There is an exhaustive list of all the known translations of the Qurʾān in each of the European languages, including the Latinized Turkish. A new interpretation is attempted.
for the meaning of the Arabic words ayaat, soorah and
manzil — ayaat means to go to bed; soorah comes from
sor, that is, wall; manzil means a station of the caravan’s
journey. Bed, walled room and station are the three elements
of the journey of the Faithful to the Lord, and through the
Word of the Lord. There are seven manzils, according to
the seven days of the week, i.e., the eternity. Most of the
grammatical difficulties encountered by the translators have
been easily explained by reference to the Qur’ân itself. For
instance, “the girl buried alive will be questioned” (81 : 8):
“three prophets simultaneously” (36 : 14); “the miraculous
capacity of the Qur’ân, but on the contrary…” (13 : 31), etc.

This translation has been a great success in France.
About 25,000 copies were sold within a matter of a few
months of publication. According to Les Arts, Paris, the
get-up and printing of this edition was “an event” of the
year in the French world of printing.

* * *

LE PROPHETE DE L’ISLAM, in two volumes. By

However strange it may appear, this is the first French
complete biography of the Prophet Muhammad. Even the
huge Gaudefroy Demombynes’s treats only with certain
aspects. It is the first in the world to deal with the
administration of State: education, finance, justice, military
organization, frontiers, constitution, legislation, etc. This
biography of the Prophet Muhammad has also the rare
feature that instead of the purely chronological order in
which a particular subject is constantly interrupted by

events, this study is divided according to the subject matter
— relations with Mecca, with Jews, with Byantines, with
Iran, etc., inside which subject chronological order is
observed. The result is that we see the development of
Muslim policy and its relationship with each unit. It renders
the subject more vivid, and at the same time easy to under-
stand and easy to appreciate. Isolated facts cause perplexity
and the reader does not know why a given event happened.
In this subjectwise arrangement, the causes and effects come
like the rings of a chain. Moreover, facts are related in a
manner that baseless and interested allegations are auto-
matically refuted, without the aid of polemics and embittering
those vested interests. But flagrant and outwardly scientific
allegations, however, have been minutely analysed and
arguments given why the contrary was to be admitted as the
historical fact. A very vast number of MSS. have been
used. Considerable data were assembled on pre-Islamic condi-
tions, in order to serve as background for each unit of the
subject, both political and cultural. Especially long is the
description of the economic conditions in pre-Islamic
Arabia, which explains the system of taxation and prepara-
tion of expenditure, budgets of the time of the Prophet.
Three original letters of the Prophet, still existing, have been
reproduced in facsimile and the question of their authenticity
minutely discussed.

We wish a book of this literary merit was translated
into English, for in the English language there does not as
yet exist an authentic biography of the Prophet by a Muslim
scholar, into the preparation of which so much research
has gone.

What our Readers say …

SHOULD THE QUR’ÂN BE READ IN ARABIC
WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING IT?

4 Rue de Tournon,  
Paris VI.  
20th February 1960.

Dear Sir,

Assalamo ‘aleykum!

I wish to say a few words on the Editorial of The
Islamic Review for October 1960. There is a mistake of
fact in it. The Diyanat Isleri Reisi of Ankara never gave a
fatwa about what you mention. The facts are these: someone asked him whether the recitation of the Arabic
Qur’ân transcribed in Latin characters was allowed or not.
The chief of the religious department replied, “No, it is
not allowed.” (The reply was political, not dogmatic. Per-
haps you know that there are over 200 schools, where at
Government expense Turks are taught the Arabic script in
order to be able to recite the Qur’ân. The Ahmad Amin
Yalman & Co. wanted the suppression of these schools,
saying that Turks may as well recite the Qur’ân transcribed in Latin script. That is the kernel of the story. Whereupon
there was a tumult, and after some time it subsided,
apparently at the secret direction of the Prime Minister to
the press.

It is true that reciting the Qur’ân without understanding
is not of much avail. But between “not at all reading” and
“reading without understanding”, I for myself prefer the
latter. (Of course, reading the Arabic text along with a
translation is even more preferable.)

Yours sincerely,

M. HAMIDULLAH.
Dear Sir,

Alif Layla wa Layla

I have read with great interest in The Islamic Review for December 1960, the brief but brilliant article of Dr. S. A. Khulusi. I hope he will continue his researches in this direction and many an obscure point will one day be elucidated. May I suggest some such points.

As far as I know, the contents of the Hazaar Afsaana, the supposed prototype of Alif Layla, are not known. The name means "thousand stories", whereas in the Alif Layla there is one single story told in the course of 1,001 nights (or at least was to be told, since we do not possess the text for 1,001 nights). It is true that inside the narration there are many stories and sub-stories — if I may say so — but the plan is for one story: the unfortunate (or rather fortunate) queen relates night after night part of a talk, and it is that talk which ends the story, or the 1,001st night.

I have no objection if Ibn al-Muqaffa' has also taken some part in the work, but certainly not the entire part. He belonged to the 'Abbasa'd caliphate, and it is not thinkable that he should die in 757 C.E. and should be the author of stories on Harun al-Rashid, who died in 786 C.E. Much less can he write the stories in which Zubayda (wife and near relative of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, being herself a member of the 'Abbasa'd reigning family) is depicted as a perverted demi-rep if not actually a prostitute: her sisters also. It may be conjectured and surmised that such anti-'Abbasa'd elements belong to the Fatimiz Egypt which was a bitter rival of the 'Abbasa'ds both politically and religiously.

Again, the famous Sindbad the Sailor had met, in one of his adventurous voyages, a demon with only one eye, a cannibal who ate roasted human beings: with a ruse, Sindbad got rid of the calamity. This is exactly the same story which Homer attributes to Ulysses. This Greek story could be known to the Syrians, reported from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation, even if the Arabs had really not translated Homer into Arabic. It seems more apt to believe that such elements came from Syria.

My congratulations to the learned author for the new ground he has broken in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

M. HAMIDULLAH.

* * * *

THE WEAPON OF PROPAGANDA

192, 31st Street,
Rangoon, Burma.

Dear Sir.

We were shocked to read a letter under the above heading in The Islamic Review of July 1960, and it seems that some dissatisfied supporter of our Front had written it in haste.

We support the Palestinian Arabs' cause because we think they are in the right. We are not at all concerned with any foreign mission in our capital and are not interested in the topic of the efficiency or otherwise of foreign diplomats here.

We wish to see the Arabs united and we do not take part in quarrels among Arab countries. We also desire strong diplomatic, cultural and trade relations between Burma and the Arab countries because we believe it is in the interest of our country and also of our Arab brethren. Our main task is to convince the people in every nook and corner of our country the correctness of our views and ideals.

The writer of the letter brought in the Muslim Burma Publishing House, which is also irrelevant, and the Directors of the said publishing house have expressed surprise at it.

I hope you will kindly publish these few words in your esteemed magazine.

A. KYAW TIN,
Secretary,
Save Palestine Front, Burma.

* * *

APPEAL FOR ISLAMIC LITERATURE

59 Barkly Road.
Kimberley.
South Africa.
7th February 1961.

Dear Sir,

We are now busy building a mosque, school and library to serve a community of over a thousand Muslims who are mostly converts and are not financially well off.

We are therefore appealing to you for any books and literature on Islam in either Arabic, Urdu or English, especially English books and English translations of the Qur'an. At present we are unable to purchase books owing to our limited finances and building obligations, but hope that generous sympathisers will donate books to serve as a nucleus, and later when we can afford it we might be able to buy further works, and in this way build up a proper Islamic library.

We sincerely hope that you will be able to help us propagate Islam amongst these people who are sorely in need of enlightenment, especially since anti-Muslim propaganda is rife among the people. This is being spread by Christian missionaries, who distribute books and literature based on their beliefs and whose source of supply seems unlimited.

Thanking you and with our regards.

Yours faithfully,

I. E. JARODIEN, Imam.

* * *

ISLAMIC ACADEMY IN DACCA

67a Purana Paltan,
Dacca.
East Pakistan.
12th February 1961.

Dear Sir,

An Academy for Islamic Research was established in Dacca (East Pakistan) as early as July 1959, under the style "Darul 'Uloom" (Islamic Academy) with the untiring efforts and active guidance of Al-haj A. T. M. 'Abdul Mateen,

Mr. Justice Hamoodur Rahman, Vice-Chancellor, Dacca University, a great patron of Islamic learning, culture and ideology, took a great interest in the development of this Academy and helped Mr. Matten in establishing it on a sound foundation.

The idea of establishing such an institution in East Pakistan at first originated with Mr. Matten, who planned to develop his country home at Aswinpur in Comilla (East Pakistan) into a well-organized educational institution in line with the Aligarh University, where he had his higher education and actually built the nucleus of this Academy there towards the end of 1958. This later shifted to Dacca, and formally inaugurated in July 1959 with a Constitution adopted in an assembly of a vast number of scholars and theologians and people of other vocations interested in Islamic culture. Mr. Justice Hamoodur Rahman and the Al-huj A. T. M. 'Abdul Mateen were elected as first Chairman and Director respectively of the Academy. A governing body consisting of eminent Islamic scholars was in overall charge of the Academy. During the last two years of its existence the Academy authorities have held twenty-two well-attended symposiums on topics of Islamic interest addressed by leading scholars, published fifteen books with Islamic bias, organized a reference library of a large number of rare books on Islam, opened a free-reading room for the public and have been regularly bringing out a Bengali monthly magazine of their own under the title of The Dishari, ably edited by the Maulana Mahiuddin Khan.

But the financial resources of the Academy have been quite limited, and as a result many ambitious projects could not be executed. In the meantime the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, came into being and decided to have its zonal branches in Dacca, Karachi and Lahore. On request, the Central Institute has been pleased to affiliate the Academy as its East Pakistan Organization with a modified constitution according to which the Academy now goes by the name “Islamic Academy, Dacca”.

In terms of the new constitution of the Academy, the President of Pakistan, who is ex-officio Chief Patron, has been pleased to appoint Mr. Abul Hashim, an eminent Islamic scholar, as the first Director of the Academy. Mr. Justice Hamoodur Rahman is the Chairman of the Board of Governors. Mr. Hashim has now taken over from Mr. Matten, the retiring Honorary Director.

Yours faithfully,

MAHIUDDIN KHAN.

* * * * *

THE MUSLIM CONCEPTION OF WORSHIP

412 Main Street.
Dickoya, Ceylon.

Dear Sir,

Assalamu 'alaikum


My mind was attracted to its excellent meanings — perfect realities according to human experiences. There was much interesting subject matter such as the object of man’s creation, worship and remembrance of God in Islam, prayers five times with purified heart, patience and perseverance in worship which has been manifested by the Prophet Muhammad.

I feel that it is a magnificent explanation of worship in Islam to non-Muslims, and a feast to the religious minds of your readers. In my opinion it answers the fifth question of our brother who wrote in The Islamic Review in September 1960 on “Some questions that agitate the minds of thinking Muslims”.

Yours in Islam,

M. IBRAHIM.

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