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THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
The Vatican and the Muslims in the Context of World Affairs of Today

The Oecumenical Council of the Catholic Church on Muslims

The Oecumenical Council of the Catholic Church, held at the Vatican during September-November 1964, discussed various topics concerning the relationship between the Catholic Church and the members of other faiths. The communiqué (the complete text of which we print elsewhere in this issue) of the Council contained references to other religions in rather friendly terms. There Muslims were referred to as though not acknowledging Jesus as God, they reverence him as a prophet, they also honour Mary, his Virgin Mother, and at times even call on her with devotion. Also, they await the day of judgment when God will reward all those who have risen.

The Muslims heartily welcome this expression of friendship by the Catholic Church. It is indeed significant that in 1964 the Catholic Church should, by accident or by design, echo what was said on this subject in the seventh century C.E. in the sacred book of the Muslims. However, we cannot help making comparisons when we say that it is one thing to talk of friendliness and co-existence in the latter part of the 20th century and another to have talked of it 1400 years ago. What the Catholic Church says today was said by the Qur’ān 1400 years ago. The Qur’ān (3:57) said: “Say: O People of the Book (Jews and Christians), come to an equitable agreement between us and you, that we shall serve none but God and we shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides God. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims.”

Islam has always believed in co-existence. It is for this reason the Qur’ān has mentioned the Christians on several occasions in the friendliest of terms and bid the Muslims be respectful, kind and friendly towards them. In talking of Christians, the Qur’ān (5:82) displays convincing proof of its ability to see good wherever it may be found. It says: “And you will find the nearest in friendship are those who say: We are Christians: this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly.”

In the days of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Caliphs of Islam the Christians were treated generously and never coerced or oppressed in religious or any other respects. There was no reason why the Muslims and the Christians should not have peacefully co-existed. There have been bitter wars in the distant past between the Muslims and the Christians, and more recently the Christians have been colonizing and oppressing Muslim communities. But for practical purposes almost all this is history, and not a serious obstacle at the present to co-existence and co-operation.

Befriending enemies of Islam?

There is, however, one aspect of the deliberations of the Vatican Council about which the Muslims are unhappy. It is the decision to absolve the Jews from the “crucifixion” of Jesus Christ. For the Muslims, of course, Jesus Christ was never “crucified”, so no one was guilty of his “crucifixion” (see Allal al-Faasi’s article on page 17 of this issue in this con-
A Short History of the Arab Opposition to Zionism and Israel

By Dr. Sayyid Naufal

The Zionist Movement

At the Zionist Conference held in 1897, the Zionist idea was crystallized. It took the form of a world political movement, which greatly exaggerated what it termed "The Jewish Problem", which it sought to solve by establishing a Jewish State in Palestine and gathering therein the Jews from all parts of the world and particularly from the European countries which could no longer tolerate them. In such a State, Jewish immigrants would be trained to till the soil and undertake other activities which would bring them more closely to the land in which they would be living and thus develop within them what was termed Jewish nationalism as a means for realizing Zionist ambitions.

Arab countries at that time were suffering from underdevelopment and foreign rule. The Arab East was under the Ottoman Sultan; North Africa was a prey to the exploiting forces of imperialism — French, British, Italian and Spanish. Every part of the great Arab homeland was struggling against foreign domination.

The Arabs and the Ottoman Empire

The Arab East was almost all within the Ottoman Empire. In opposition to the Tantur movement (i.e., the movement which aimed at rendering everything Turkish), the spirit of nationalism developed in different parts of the Ottoman Empire. The European portions of the Empire seceded one after the other. Narrow racialism among Turkish youth condemned the citizens of the Ottoman Empire who were not Turks. The authority of the Caliphate, which was centralized in Istanbul, waned and failed to control the various parts of the Empire. Corruption, negligence, bribery and all the manifestations of misgovernment spread everywhere. They all combined to kindle the flame of Arab nationalism. Enlightened Arab youths, holding strategic civil and military posts in the Empire, began to think of improving the conditions of their countries. Their efforts aimed at realizing for the Arabs an entity within the Ottoman State. Until then, it did not occur to them to secede from it.

Arab liberals struggled to obtain a modest portion of their rights. They sought freedom and decentralization of government. At the very same time, Zionism was making its plans for the invasion of Palestine, the very heart of the Arab world. It seemed as if there was no apparent relation at the time between Zionist aggressive action against the Arabs and the awakening of the spirit of nationalism among the Arabs and their keenness to win a part of their rights. Yet, such an awakening was bound to come. It was bound to achieve full results and lead to the success of Arab opposition to Zionist ambitions. Arabs alone realized the Zionist menace, not only to Palestine but to all parts of the Arab world.

In order to achieve emancipation, even in this modest form, the Arabs began in 1908 (i.e., since the Declaration of the Ottoman Constitution) to organize their ranks and form secret and public societies and parties so that they might maintain their national character. They formed the "Society of Arab Brotherhood for the Development of the Arab Nation", which collaborated with the Turkish "Society of Union and Progress" in the development of the Ottoman State as a whole; the Library Club, which became the meeting place of Arab thoughts and hopes; the "Arab Parliamentary Bloc" for the defence of Arab rights in different parts of the Ottoman State; "The Arab Secret Society of al-Fath", which was established in Paris and later became the most powerful of Arab societies; "The Military Society of al-'Abd", which aimed at realizing self-government for Arab countries under the Ottoman Crown; "The Party of Decentralization" which was founded in Egypt in 1912: "The Reform Movement" in Beirut which was a result of the Decentralization Movement; and the Arab Congress which met in Paris in 1913 and in which all Arab organizations were represented. The Congress called for decentralization of government and decided to boycott all Ottoman government posts if Arab demands were not complied with.

The Arabs and the Allies in World War I

In order to achieve emancipation, the Arabs sided with the Allies in the First World War. Arab officers of the Ottoman army led the Arab forces which co-operated with the Allies in the liberation of parts of the Arab world. The Arabs believed the messages which the Husain-Macmahon correspondence contained. The last of these messages, dated 24 October 1915, and addressed to the Sherif of Mecca, says that, "subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sherif".

The modifications referred to in Britain's pledge and which were later said to include Palestine were, according to the message, "the portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo which cannot be said to be purely Arab and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation".1

It did not occur to the Arabs that the Allies were conspiring against them, were trying to partition their countries

1 MacMahon-Hussein Correspondence Command 5957, pp. 3-8.
between themselves, and planning to replace the Arab people of Palestine by Jews gathered from all parts of the world.

The Balfour Declaration

The Russian Revolution of 1917 disclosed the secret plots of the Allies. The Russians published the confidential documents of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which included the Sykes-Picot Treaty for the partition of Palestine among the Allies after Palestine had been severed from Turkey. News of the Balfour Declaration reached the Arabs when it was communicated by General Jamal Pasha (Jnr.) to the Emir Feisal, son of Husain, early in 1918 when the latter was at Akaba. It created a rebellion within the ranks of Arab youth which proved how much the Arabs in general felt about their entity and their future. This rebellion would have led to the conclusion of a separate peace between the Turks and the Arabs had not the British Government quickly sent Commander Hogarth with a message to King Husain Ibn ‘Ali calming the rebellious Arabs. Though the message of the British Government and the explanatory cable which it sent to King Husain Ibn ‘Ali on 8 February 1918 did not deny either the Balfour Declaration or the Treaty, it only sought to mitigate their effects. The responsible Arabs at the time helped to convince Arab rebellious elements to continue the fight on the side of the Allies. King Husain wrote to the Committee of Seven, which represented the Party of Decentralization in Egypt, informing it of what took place between himself and Commander Hogarth and conveying to the Committee Britain’s assurance that “the Balfour Declaration would not affect the entity of the Arabs or their future in Southern Syria”.

Despite this, the Committee of Seven addressed, through the Arab Bureau of the British Embassy in Cairo, a memorandum to the British Foreign Office protesting vehemently against the news circulating about the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

In its reply to the memorandum, Britain said, “With regard to the territories occupied by the Allied armies, His Majesty’s Government invite the attention of the memorialists to the proclamations issued by the Commander-in-Chief on the occasion of the capture of Baghdad (19 March 1917). The proclamations define the policy of His Majesty’s Government towards the inhabitants of those regions, which is that the future government of those territories should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed. This policy will always be that of His Majesty’s Government”.

When the two Allies, Britain and France, became aware of the popular Arab rebellion against the rumours circulating about the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement, they issued and published, on the widest possible scale, a Joint Proclamation dated 7 February 1918, in which they said: “Far from wishing to impose this or that system upon the populations of those regions, their (i.e. France’s and Great Britain’s) only concern is to offer such support and efficacious help as will ensure the smooth working of the governments and administrations which those populations will have elected of their own free will to have, to secure impartial and equal justice for all, to facilitate the economic development of the country by promoting and encouraging local initiative, to foster the spread of education and to put an end to the dissensions”.

The bad faith of the Allies was thus obvious in all the declarations, proclamations and messages issued by them.

The Arabs and the Versailles Conference

The year 1919 witnessed a violent and desperate struggle on the part of the Arabs for the sake of Palestine. In January, the Versailles Conference was held. The Arabs demanded independence for all Arab countries and their unification into one independent Arab State, including Palestine. They based their demands on the natural and legitimate rights they had, on the pledges and assurances given by Britain and the other Allies, and on the fact that the Arabs were an effective factor in winning the war.

The Zionists and their supporters in the Conference strove to make the Conference adopt a resolution confirming the Balfour Declaration. On 3 February, the Zionist Congress presented a note to the Conference saying that the Jewish people should have a national home in Palestine. The member-States of the Conference responded to Zionist demands. A committee, representing the four Powers — Britain, France, Italy and the U.S.A. — was formed to study the note. On 23 February, the Committee met and heard the Zionist delegation explaining its demands. One of the members of the Committee was Balfour himself. The rest were known pro-Zionists. The Committee endorsed the Balfour Declaration and agreed to put Palestine under Britain’s trusteeship as a device to implement the Declaration.

The Arab Delegation returned from the Peace Conference in the Spring of 1919. It proceeded to unify Arab efforts and called for a conference, representing all the national parties of Syria, in order to co-ordinate Arab policy against the serious developments which had taken place. As a result of the discussions which took place in the Peace Conference, the American King-Crane Commission was sent to find out the opinion of the inhabitants of the area on the type of government they wanted.

The report of the Commission presented to the Conference on 28 August 1919 showed that the inhabitants of the area rejected the Jewish Programme entirely. “In his address of 1 July 1918,” the report stated, “President Wilson laid down the following principles as one of the four great ends for which the associated peoples of the world were fighting: the settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned and not upon the basis of material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery. If that principle is to rule and so the wishes of the Palestinian population are to be decisive as to what is to be done with Palestine, then it is to be remembered that the non-Jewish population of Palestine — nearly nine-tenths of the whole — are emphatically against the Jewish programme. The tables show that there was no one thing upon which the population of Palestine were more agreed upon this. To subject a people so minded to unlimited Jewish pressure to surrender the land would be a gross violation of the principle just quoted and of the people’s rights, though it kept within the forms of the law. It is to be noted also that the feeling against the Zionist programme is not confined to Palestine but shared generally by the people throughout Syria.”

The Conference, which the Arabs decided to hold on the return of the Arab Delegation from the Peace Conference, met at the Arab Club in Damascus in June 1919.

It represented all the national portions of Syria (Syria, the Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan). It adopted several
resolutions which it presented to the Commission. The resolution which most concerns us here is: "that the Arabs reject Zionist policy and Jewish immigration entirely. They protest against any former secret treaty for the partition of Syria and against any promise aiming at the establishment of the Zionists in Palestine. They demand the annulment of any such treaty as the Sykes-Picot Treaty, if it does exist, in accordance with the rule laid down by President Wilson annulling secret treaties."

The British mandate over Palestine

The efforts exerted by the Arabs were in vain. A peace treaty with Turkey was signed at San Remo on 26 April 1920. The Balfour Declaration was included in the treaty and was considered a part thereof. At the same time the British mandate over Palestine was proclaimed; Britain, or, in other words the Jews, drew up the mandate over Palestine. It was adopted by the Assembly of the League of Nations on 16 September 1922. It defined the functions of the Mandatory Powers as follows:

“To put the country in such administrative conditions as to help the establishment of the Jewish national home therein.”

Thus was the conflict between Arabs and Zionists transferred to the land of Palestine itself.

Imperialism and Zionism both united to weaken the issue of Palestine and the cause of the Arab world as a whole. Arab countries, in both the Arab East and the Arab West, continued to suffer under the heavy yoke of the new imperialism of the Allies.

During the period between the two World Wars, Palestinians continued to struggle against Zionist ambitions represented in the Jewish Agency which became “a State within the State” as well as against Britain, the Mandatory State and the premier imperialist power. The sanguinary events and the successive rebellions which took place in Palestine shook the whole Arab world. The rebellion of 1936, in particular, was the most comprehensive expression of the upsurge of Arab nationalism in Palestine. Arab peoples everywhere responded to the call for national struggle. The heads of Arab States, which were until then still under foreign domination, appealed to their citizens to remain calm in order to avoid bloodshed and asked them to have faith in the goodwill of the British Government and in its proclaimed intention to do them justice. They asked Palestinians to have confidence in their leaders and to continue to support them.

The rejection of the Partition Plan by the Arabs

But Britain had no goodwill, neither did she do them justice. On 7 July 1937, it agreed in principle to the partition of Palestine and appointed the Woodhead Commission to study it technically, pending its application. As a result, Arab peoples everywhere moved more vigorously. They stood side by side with the people of Palestine. All the Arab Governments declared they would support the people of Palestine and reject the Partition Plan.

The unity of Arab aims in opposing Zionism was obvious in the first conference of Bludan, which was held on 8 September 1937. Delegations from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and from the Arab Maghreb met and adopted resolutions providing “that Palestine is and should remain an integral part of the Arab world”. The Conference condemned Zionism and rejected its objectives in establishing a Jewish State in Palestine. It also rejected the partition of Palestine and demanded the abrogation of the Mandate; the removal of the effects of the Balfour Declaration; the immediate cessation of Jewish immigration; and the promulgation of legislation banning the transfer of land from Arabs to Jews.

The unity of Arab policy as regards Palestine was equally evident in the League of Nations Assembly which met on 14 September 1937. In their reply to the speech of Britain’s Foreign Minister, when he stated that his country was prepared to send a technical commission to draw up a plan for carrying out the partition, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and Iraq pointed out the interest of their countries in the Palestine issue. They rejected the principle of partition and opposed the West’s point of view. Thus did the interests of Arab Governments in the Palestine issue begin to appear on the international stage represented in the League of Nations.

When Britain, relying on her power in the Arab world, refused to listen to Arab protests, and when the League of Nations followed Britain’s example in this respect, Palestinians could do nothing but resort to arms in order to obtain their right. All the capitals of Arab countries responded to the call. A Palestine Defence Committee was formed in order to provide the revolutionary movement in the Holy Land with material aid and political support, disregarding the pressure exerted by imperialism.

An Egyptian Parliamentary Commission convened an Arab parliamentary conference in Cairo on 7 October 1938. Representatives of Arab Parliaments in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, as well as representatives of Palestine and delegates from the Arab Maghreb, from the Yemen and from Muslims in India, participated. The Conference decided to support Palestinians in all their rights. It condemned the partition of Palestine and proclaimed the Balfour Declaration invalid and illegal.

They described the oppression inflicted by the British upon Palestinians. The Conference also decided to send a delegation to London to make publicity for the Palestine issue.

Arab women, on their part, did not hesitate to enter the field in defence of Palestine. The head of the Egyptian Women’s Union summoned the First Arab Women’s Conference ever held in history. Delegations representing the women of Egypt, Syria, the Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and the Sudan participated. Several resolutions were adopted supporting the Palestine issue and the struggle of Palestinians, opposing partition and urging material and moral assistance to Palestinians.

The British Government abandons the Partition Plan

Faced with the struggle of Palestinians and the wholehearted support of the Arabs to their cause, the British Government was compelled to declare that it was ready to give up the partition of Palestine. In a proclamation issued on 9 November 1938, it declared that the partition plan was impracticable and expressed its intention to invite Arab States, Palestine Arabs, and the Jewish Agency to a conference in London, as soon as possible, in order to discuss the future policy as regards Palestine. This in itself was a recognition, on the part of Britain, of the ultimate unity of
the Arabs and that of the fact that the issue of Palestine concerned all the Arabs and not the people of Palestine alone.

Invitations to the Conference were actually extended to Egypt, Iraq, the Kingdom of Su'udi Arabia, the Yemen, Transjordan and to the Palestine Arabs. The Conference met on 7 February 1939. The Arabs refused to meet the representatives of the Jewish Agency. It was consequently agreed that the meetings between the Arabs and the representatives of Britain would be held in the morning and that those between the representatives of the British Government and the Jewish Agency in the evenings.

Though the Conference did not realize the hopes of the Arabs, yet the British authorities, conscious of the Arab feelings of tension against them for their attitude in the Palestine issue, could not but hesitate in implementing the Zionist programme in Palestine. The British Government issued the White Paper on 17 May 1939, in which it declared that it had finally abandoned the Partition plan; that it would establish within ten years an independent State in Palestine in whose government Arabs and Jews would participate; that Jewish immigration would cease after five years and that restrictions would be put on the sale of land.

Zionists exploit Second World War

The Arabs rejected the White Paper. The Second World War broke out. Its duration was regarded by the Arabs as a truce owing to the conditions of war.

No doubt the Arab States did not profit from such conditions, though they put all their potentials in the service of the war effort of the Allies. Zionists, on the contrary, fully exploited all the circumstances. They exaggerated in depicting the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. They used all media of information for their purpose. They succeeded in obtaining repeated assurances supporting their ambitions in the Arab world.

Zionists, moreover, exploited American representatives and Congressmen for their purposes. On 2 June 1942 they addressed a note to President Roosevelt asking him to sponsor the Jewish question. “The aim of the Balfour Declaration,” the note stated, “is to open the doors of Palestine for the masses of homeless Jews and prepare for the establishment of a Jewish State.” In May 1942 the American Zionist Congress met at the Balfour Hotel. It decided that a Jewish State should be quickly established in Palestine, that Jewish immigration to that State should be unrestricted and that State should have a recognized Jewish army flying its own flag. In the campaign for the election of the President in 1944, the Zionists supported Truman and were the cause of his success. In return for this, he put all his potentials as well as those of his country in the service of Zionists. The first result of his efforts with Britain was the establishment of a purely Jewish army in 1944.

In Britain itself, Zionists used the British Labour Party for their end. They induced the Trades Union Congress held in 1945 to express its sympathy with the Jews and encourage the emigration of Jews into Palestine.

When the Second World War ended, the Arabs felt extremely bitter. After utilizing the Arabs and all Arab potentialities in the war, the Allies turned against them. The British in Palestine were working for the realization of Zionist objectives. In accordance with their traditional policy, they pleaded that they were unable to protect Arab rights in Palestine against Jewish terrorism and American pressure. The Americans were supporting Zionism politically, material, and financially. Terrorism and disturbance prevailed all over the country.

The role of the Arab League

And finally, after Zionism had gone a long way in its planned aggression, the Arab States formed the Arab League and signed the Pact thereof on 22 March 1945. A special Annex showing Palestine was attached to the Pact. It affirmed the independence of Palestine and called on the Arab League Council to select a representative of Palestine to attend Council meetings. Following is the text of the Annex:

“At the end of the last Great War, Palestine, together with the other Arab States, was severed from the Ottoman Empire. It became independent and did not belong to any State. The Treaty of Lausanne proclaimed that its fate should be decided by the parties concerned in Palestine. Though Palestine was unable to decide its own destiny, yet it was on the basis of the recognition of its independence that the Covenant of the League of Nations devised a system for its government. Its existence and its dependence among nations can no more be questioned de jure than the independence of any of the other Arab States.

“Even though the outward signs of this independence have remained veiled as a result of force majeure, it is not fitting that this should be an obstacle to the participation of Palestine in the work of the League.

“Therefore, the States signatory of the Pact of the Arab League consider that in view of Palestine’s special circumstance, the Council of the League should designate an Arab delegate from Palestine to participate in its work until this country enjoys actual independence.”

This was in fact an official endorsement of the unanimous resolutions of the Arabs against Zionism. It meant, in other words, the resumption of collective Arab opposition to Zionism after the Arab rebellion was liquidated during World War One.

The Arab League has striven from the outset to defend the rights of the Arab people of Palestine. Soon after its establishment, its Council decided, as a result of the renewed bad faith of Britain and the pressure of the U.S.A. “to direct the attention of the two governments not to make any decision on the Palestine question which may impair the friendly relations prevailing or disturb peace and security in Palestine and other Arab States.”

The Council also adopted several resolutions against Zionism. The most important of these called for the boycott of Jewish goods and Jewish manufactured articles, for the formation of a Higher Arab Committee for Palestine and for saving the land of Palestine. A company, guaranteed and subscribed to by Arab governments, was founded to save Palestinian lands. Arab offices were opened in London, New York and Jerusalem to disseminate information on the Palestinian issue.

The British and American Governments did not heed the feeble note sent to them by the League. Britain threw the doors of Palestine open for Jewish immigrants, thereby violating the provisions of the White Paper published in 1939.
Arab peoples everywhere faced this new challenge by declaring a general strike and by demonstrating against the two governments.

The Anglo-American Enquiry Commission

In collaboration with the U.S.A., Britain formed an Anglo-American Enquiry Commission to study the conditions of Jews in European camps, to find out if they wanted to emigrate to Palestine or to any other country, and to know the views of Arab and Jewish organizations on the question. The Commission began its work in Washington on 4 January 1946, then it moved to London and later went to Palestine and to other Arab countries. Arab policy towards the Commission was unanimous. All Arab organizations, bodies and responsible individuals declared that the defence of Palestine was a defence of the Arab nation as a whole. They demanded that the Palestine issue should be solved separately from the Jewish question by the establishment of an independent State in which all citizens would enjoy constitutional rights.

The report of the Commission was published at the end of April 1946. It was, as was expected, disappointing to the Arabs. In fact, the very formation of such a Commission and the recommendations it made were a blow to the cause of the Arabs and of Palestine. The Commission ignored the White Paper of 1939 and abolished the restrictions imposed on the sale of land. The report contained ten recommendations, almost all of which complied with Jewish demands, and none of which satisfied the Arabs. The report was a shock to all Arab circles. Strikes were declared and demonstrations held everywhere in protest against it. The Heads of Arab States met at Inshas (Egypt) on 28 May 1946. After discussing the Palestine issue from all its aspects they declared: “The issue of Palestine is not only the issue of Palestine alone but also of all Arabs; Palestine is Arab and it is the duty of Arab States and peoples to safeguard its Arabism; Arab States will by no means accept any further immigration. Such immigration is an obvious violation of the White Paper, to which Britain is in honour bound. Arab States earnestly hope that the two friendly Powers will not insist on adopting measures affecting the rights of the Palestine Arabs, lest these measures should disturb the friendly relations existing between them and Arab States and peoples. Arab States are anxious that such friendship should be maintained so that no reactions may take place which may have dire consequences on public peace.”

(To be continued)

Editorial — Continued from page 3

section). But this is not the point. In their decisions the Vatican Council extended a hand in friendship to the Jews and appeared to sanction and patronize Zionism, the movement which has unjustly created a State of Israel in the heart of the Arab homeland. In disapproving of this decision the Arabs and the Muslims are not trying to interfere in the religious affairs of the Catholic Church. All they have done, and will continue to do, is to express the hope that in its formulation of matters of dogma the Catholic Church should not appear to condone what the Zionists did to the Arabs of Palestine in 1948 and thereafter.

More than one million Palestinian Arabs, including thousands of Christians, were mercilessly expelled from their homes by the Zionists; and repeated resolutions by the United Nations affirming the rights of these refugees to repatriation and compensation have been ignored by Israel. Whatever the Vatican Council may decide on the Jews’ responsibility for the death of Jesus, no one would have any doubt about the responsibility of modern Israel and those who profess the political creed of Zionism for the plight of the Palestinian Arab refugees. And the offer of friendship made by the Catholic Church would appear to the Muslims more genuine and sincere if it were not extended at the same time to those who have savagely wronged an important section of Islam — the Arabs of Palestine.
"Only God is the Overlord"

The Creed of Islam¹ and the Muslims of Today

The Meaning of the Kalimah

By Abul Hashim

“Twenty-three years in the life of an average man is not very significant; far less so is it in the life of a nation, and taking humanity as a whole twenty-three years can only be likened to a bubble in the ocean. The question that appears here in bold relief to every inquisitive mind is how this mighty transformation was possible within such a short period of time and what were the ingredients in the teachings of Muhammad which caused this unparalleled revolution in the thinking, feeling and action of man? This question, when answered in concrete terms, will reveal the revolutionary character of the Kalimah (the Creed of Islam).”

Post-Caliphate creation and expansion of kingdoms and empires by nations and dynasties like the Umayyads of Damascus, the Abbasides of Baghdad, the Moors of Granada, the Moghuls of India and the Ottomans of Turkey, who called themselves Muslims misrepresent Islam. Their conquests and exploitations of the weak peoples of the world in the name of Islam are responsible for prejudicing the world, particularly Europe and India, against Islam. The world of today, with its highly-developed intellect, can hardly afford to be influenced by prejudice. These emperors and kings, and the theologians of their courts, most wickedly and dishonestly utilized and deliberately distorted, misinterpreted and mutilated Islam for exploitation and oppression of the world for the exclusive benefit of some individual, dynasty, class or nation just in the same manner as every useful and beneficent human knowledge under our very nose is being used for increasing the miseries of millions for the benefit of some class or nation. Unprejudiced, unbiased and objective study of Islam from its original sources by the talents of the world, conversant with the ever-expanding knowledge of man, has the potentiality of guiding humanity through the ages until through its natural evolution the entire humanity as one man attains its highest destiny and touches the frontier of Qudrat or Godliness.

The door to Divine guidance is not closed, as some Muslims think

The Holy Qur’an is the last of all revealed Books in the cycle of creation. Sensation of revelation is received by highly-developed sound intuition or subtle sound organ, and there are very carefully veiled indications in the Holy Qur’an to suggest that the Angel “Jibra’il”, or Gabriel, is its medium and the heart is its focus. Its first sensation is, however, received by the skin, and then it penetrates into the heart. Experience of revelation is as old as the creation itself. The Rishis of India called it “Vak” or the Veda, and the sages and philosophers of Europe describe it as inspiration. This sound inspiration has various degrees of development, and revelation is its highest attainable degree when the Voice of God is actually heard. This is experienced only by the prophets. The office of prophethood was sealed and made final with the completion of revelation of the Holy Qur’an.

This leads some to think that sound intuition as a source of direct Divine guidance is now closed for ever, but this is not correct, for selected and highly-developed persons will continue to receive similar experience, though not in such a degree of development as revelation but in fairly advanced degrees just below revelation which in Islamic terminology is called Ilham. To make it clear, God will not send revelation to man but will continue to convey to man knowledge and guidance directly through other manifestations of His will and thoughts. The Prophet Muhammad received these various kinds of inspirations; Wahi, or the revealed part of the inspiration, constitutes the Holy Qur’an, while Ilham and other kinds of inspirations constitute the bulk of the Hadith or the Traditions. With the aid of Ilham he explained and clarified the teachings of the Holy Qur’an.

¹ For previous instalments in this series, please see The Islamic Review for January 1965, etc.
Humanity has been receiving guidance from God directly through revelation from the birth of man until humanity attained maturity. Muslims do not only believe in the prophethood of Muhammad and the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, but also in all prophets of God. While defining the believers the Holy Qur'an lays down, “And those who believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you” (2:4). Thus belief in previous revelations is mandatory and is a fundamental of the faith. Unfortunately, however, original purity of previous revelations has not been preserved; human interpolation and interpretation mutilated them. Nevertheless, whatever of them remains should be carefully collected and studied with devotion and faith. It is further stated in the Holy Qur'an that the prophets and the Books were sent to every people, and making any discrimination between the prophets is specifically forbidden. Discrepancy found between the Holy Qur'an and previous revelations is definitely due to human interpolation. The Holy Qur'an does not abrogate the truth in the earlier revelations but rediscovers them and makes them complete. The Holy Qur'an removes all doubts on this point when it proclaims, “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar” (2:106).

Why the Holy Qur'an is the last book of God

The Holy Qur'an, being the last Book, contains universal and eternal truths previously revealed to man at various stages of his development, and as such it can be said that the Holy Qur'an is a systematic and concretly formulated integration of past revelations and is the correct interpretation of man in relation to the Universe when man and his nature were made complete. Revelation has been made final, but other kinds of sound intuition and other faculties of direct perception of truth are open to man for his guidance. With the guidance of the Holy Qur'an a highly-developed intellect in co-ordination with a highly-developed intuition will henceforth correctly interpret life and guide humanity in the right path. It will keep the torch of progress burning ever-fresh and bright through all ages to come and further revelation will no longer be needed for the purpose, particularly when the Holy Qur'an guarantees preservation of its original purity. The Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad do not preach any new-fangled doctrine or introduce much that was not made known before, but their teaching is in perfect continuation of what had gone before them. The Holy Qur'an is very clear and our spoken on this point when it declares, “This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than God; on the contrary, it is a confirmation that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book — wherein there is no doubt — from the Creator, Sustainer and Evolver of all the Worlds” (10:37), and again the Holy Qur'an directs the Prophet to say, “I am no bringer of the new-fangled doctrine among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by revelation; I am but a warner open and clear” (46:9).

In all the scriptures of the world there is a clear prophecy as to the appearance of a prophet who would recover the lost revelations and confirm and consolidate them into a Book and would thereby revive all the religions of the world in their original purity. This in Sanskrit scriptures is known as Veda-Udharana, or recovery of the lost revelations. It is a pity that the peoples of the previous Books do not accept the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad as the fulfillment of this prophecy; they are still waiting in fond hopes for the advent of the Prophet, the Scriptures' prophecy. This unyielding attitude of man flows from his ego and conceit and is inherent in his very nature. The Muslims are not free from this fault.

According to the teachings of Islam every century produces a Mujaddid or a reformer who receives Ilham and therewith cleans all the rust that accumulates on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. But when such a Mujaddid comes they, with the exception of a few, reject him and call him a heretic. The Holy Qur'an describes beautifully this habitual rebellious attitude of man. There are scattered over the pages of the Holy Qur'an in numerous verses like “They swore by their strongest oaths by God that if a warner came to them, they would follow his guidance better than any of the peoples: but when a warner comes to them, it has only increased their flight” (35:42), and “There came no messenger to the peoples before them, but they said in like manner, ‘A sorcerer, or one possessed!’ Is this the legacy they have transmitted, one to another? Nay, they are themselves a people transgressing beyond bounds!” (51:52-53).

A misconception amongst Muslims with regard to the meaning of the Caliph 'Uthman being the “Compiler of the Qur'an”

The Qur'an was revealed in twenty-three years. Sometimes a single verse, sometimes a few verses together and sometimes a complete chapter was received. There is a common error amongst a section of Muslims and non-Muslim scholars that the third Caliph, 'Uthman, was the compiler of the Holy Qur'an. This is not a fact. During his Caliphate, when the copies of the text of the Holy Qur'an were made in different parts of the Caliphate, apprehending that there may be dispute as to the accuracy and authenticity of these copies, 'Uthman collected all these copies, verified them and made several authenticated copies of the Holy Qur'an and distributed these copies in his Caliphate. This is the significance of 'Uthman's title, Jam'i al-Qur'an, or the collector of the Holy Qur'an. But the Holy Qur'an as it is now arranged — arrangement of chapters and parts and even putting notations and punctuation — was done under the direct guidance and supervision of the Prophet Muhammad himself. Mu'awiyah and Zayd are the two reputed original scribes of the Holy Qur'an. Records of revelation and order of revelation of the Holy Qur'an were so faithfully made that even today one can say with certainty the actual time and place of revelation of each verse. The divine guarantee of preserving the purity of the Holy Qur'an has survived the test of over fourteen hundred years and civilization has reached a stage when it can be safely presumed that no future interpolation is possible.

The style of the Qur'an

There are frequent similies, metaphors, parables and references to history and nature woven round the precepts of the Holy Qur'an with a view to making understanding and assimilation of the message of the Holy Qur'an simple and easy. There is another very big and fatal error of thinking that knowledge of the contents of the Holy Qur'an is absolutely beyond comprehension of a normal human intellect. This error is removed by the encouraging verse of the Holy Book, “And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition? (24:17). The Holy Qur'an is meant for the guidance of man and the style of the Holy Qur'an advisedly sacrifices brevity for clarity so that men may read and understand.

The pragmatic and the operative aspect of the Holy Qur'an is divided into two parts—duty to God and duty to man, called in Arabic Haqq Allah and Haqq al-Ithaad. Duty to God is private and personal and duty to man is the public and social part of the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. The
novelty of the Holy Qur'an is that it makes performance of duty to God void and invalid when duty to man is ignored or is not duly performed. The Holy Qur'an puts it like this: "Do you see the one who belies religion? Such is the one who is inimical to the orphans and encourages not the feeding of the indigent. So woe to the prayer performers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who make a show and refuse neighbourly needs" (197:1-7). This is the greatest tragedy of man, that this human aspect of Islam is now completely forgotten. This is why we do not find anywhere in the world of today a typical Muslim society, although there are so many so-called Muslim States and nations in the world. Social ethics and social laws of the Holy Qur'an are so simple, sound and so natural that any social order in which man may be happy and really progressive must accept these as its foundation as definitely as the ten commandments of Mount Sinai, the ten precepts of Gautama Buddha or the three "Da's" of Indian philosophy. Dana or munificence, Damayata or self-restraint and Dayuddhamma or mercy — must necessarily be the foundation of every civilized society. The pundits of Nihilism have also consciously or unconsciously accepted them. Truth is truth, and the earth attracts everything towards its centre however much any particle has a tendency to go in the opposite direction.

Looked at from another standpoint, the contents of the Holy Qur'an may be likewise classified into two categories, namely, the necessary minimum or the immediate and the ideal or the ultimate. At the stage of development of man, when the Holy Qur'an was revealed, the necessary minimum or the immediate was mandatory for all, while the ideal was mandatory for the Prophet Muhammad. For instance, not anti-social hoarding or capitalism but small private saving consistent with social needs is allowed to a common man, but this is absolutely negated in the case of a prophet. Pointing to this ideal, the Holy Qur'an says: "Accursed are those who accumulate wealth and count it" (94:2). The Muslim social law must now be interpreted in the light of the ideal since humanity has now attained that stage of evolution when some of these ideals can be made mandatory for all. It is, therefore, a gross misrepresentation of facts, wilful or otherwise, to say that Islam is not flexible and dynamic but is rigid and static. The gap between the immediate and the ultimate programme of Islam is so wide and so vast that it can comfortably accommodate ever-expanding progress of man till eternity, that is, till the cycle of creation and evolution of man is complete. To put it in one word, the human aspect of Islam is monothestic materialism and not theology, dogmas, customs and rituals.

The purpose and method of studying the Holy Qur'an

According to the Holy Qur'an man is the best of creation and he has been given powers to acquire knowledge of the secrets of nature and to harness the forces of nature for increasing his happiness. The Upanishads address man in these terms, "Listen, O Children of Eternal Bliss". In the world of creation man is, therefore, the pivot round which the rest of creation revolves. Ignoring the world of matter and form and influence of man's material environment upon his everyday existence is detrimental to the welfare of his being and becoming. In relation to this aspect of human existence the Holy Qur'an is a perfect guide to man's thought and action. The purpose and method of studying the Holy Qur'an should, therefore, be such as it may give man practical guidance as to how he may be happy here and in the life hereafter.

Happiness is not merely absence of pain but is the presence of joy and pleasure in the struggles of life. This conception of joy led the poet Wordsworth to exclaim in ecstasy:

"The birds around me hopped and played.
Their thoughts I cannot measure;
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure."

The Muslims have forgotten the human values of the Qur'an; for they read it parrot-like

The human values of the Holy Qur'an having been forgotten, it is read these days not for the benefits of earthly life but for acquiring a wishful and imaginary comfortable existence in the Garden of Heaven. Heaven and Hell are not place-names but they are states or stages of development and under-development of deathless life. They may not be of the world of matter wrapt in the shroud of mystery and time and space, but they are definitely co-existent with it. The Holy Qur'an describes Heaven and Hell in terms of material pleasure only by way of parables and similies. Anyway, abstract speculation as to the nature of Heaven and Hell is neither necessary nor useful. The belief that life after death bears direct relation to earthly life, and furthermore that the present always determines the future, is what is essential and is the spirit and central idea of the wonderful metaphorical and allegorical imageries of Heaven and Hell. Biased and superficial study of the Holy Qur'an led the critics of Islam to think that the Holy Qur'an offers a sensual Heaven. That the present determines the future is perfectly rational, and our everyday experience in life bears testimony to this. Faith in this develops a sense of responsibility in man which is so essential to peaceful existence and is a perennial source of energy and inspiration, since life sustains itself in the midst of struggles in the hope of future prospects. If life here be handsome, the life hereafter will be handsome too. On the contrary, if life here be ugly the life hereafter will be equally ugly. Hence the purpose of studying the Holy Qur'an must necessarily be seeking knowledge and practical guidance as to how best we can mould our destiny in this world of matter and form, for if that is done well the future will take care of itself.

The method of studying the Holy Qur'an must also be revolutionized. The Holy Qur'an is now recited almost parrot-like and is crammed without understanding a line of it, or even without making any serious attempt to understand it. The plain meaning of the text of the Holy Qur'an is scrupulously avoided, and seeing mystery in every word is considered the greatest wisdom. This stupid method of studying the Holy Qur'an is the secret of virtual ignorance of concrete values of the contents of the Book. The knowledge of Arabic language and literature is doubtless essential for the proper understanding and assimilation of the message of the Holy Qur'an but to acquire knowledge of the Holy Book just sufficient for practical guidance of one's normal business of life, knowledge in Arabic is not indispensable. Translations and commentaries of the Holy Book are now available in almost all the civilized languages of the world. If the text of the Holy Book can be read or crammed, its plain meaning can also be read or crammed without much difficulty, if so desired.

The method of studying the Holy Qur'an must be scientific and free from preconceived ideas, bias or prejudice. Each verse must be read with reference to its context and verses immediately preceding and following it without losing significance of its sequence with its preceding and following verses. So each chapter and part should be read and understood with due regard to their own context and sequence. The
Holy Qur‘án is a composite whole and not a collection of unrelated fragments. Each word, each verse, each chapter and each part must, therefore, be studied with reference to the whole. The whys and wherefores of selection and use of a particular word or expression for expressing a particular idea should be carefully ascertained and, particularly, the greatest care and emphasis should be given to realize the import of choice of Divine attributes.

Of the verses of the Holy Qur‘án, some are basic and some are allegorical. The Holy Qur‘án, with a view to avoiding confusion, clearly states: “In it are verses basic or fundamental; they are the foundation of the Book; others are allegorical” (3:7). The Holy Qur‘án should be studied with plain and blunt meaning of the words without attempting to find mystery everywhere, having, however, due regard to similes, metaphors, allegories and images. Like the secrets of nature the secrets of the Holy Qur‘án may not be completely or absolutely known by all or at a particular stage of human development but the Holy Qur‘án like Fitrat (nature) is knowable and not unknowable.

The study of the Holy Qur‘án should be both deductive and inductive. Nature should be studied, taking guidance and lead from the Holy Qur‘án, and reciprocally the Holy Qur‘án should be interpreted in the light and background of man’s accumulated knowledge of nature. For a correct interpretation of the teachings of the Holy Qur‘án both intuition and the power of observation through external sense organs should be equally developed. Knowledge of the Holy Qur‘án is the highest knowledge, and to acquire this a calm and quiet surrounding, purity of faith and the highest concentration of the mind are necessary prerequisites. The Holy Qur‘án, addressing the Prophet Muhammad, says: “O thou folded in garments! Stand by night, but not all night — half of it — or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Qur`an in slow, measured, rhythmic tones. Soon shall We send down to thee a weighty Message. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing, and most suitable for the Word” (23:1-6).

The meaning of the Kalimah — belief in the Oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad

The Kalimah, or the belief in the Oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad, is the cornerstone of Islam. It contains in itself in seed form all the magnificence of the mighty revolution Islam created in the thinking, feeling and action of man known in the history of human evolution as the Arab civilization.

“There is no deity but God and Muhammad is His Prophet” is the correct English rendering of the text of the Kalimah. The Kalimah negates atheism and polytheism and positively proclaims the Oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad. By implication the Kalimah teaches the composite nature or the unity of the universe and the oneness of man, and insists upon belief in revelation and intuition as sources of transcendent knowledge and wisdom. God of the Kalimah is not a blind cosmic force, the unconscious first cause or inert fountain-head of vitality, but He is the Living and the Conscious Creator, Sustainer and Evolver of the Universe. The Holy Qur‘án categorically defines God and the purity of faith in God in a few short verses: “Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not nor He is begotten; and there is none like unto Him” (112:1-4); and again, “All praise is due to God, the Creator, Sustainer and Evolver of the Universe, the Beneficent and the Merciful and the Lord of the Day of requittal” (1:1-3).

The Muslim nations are not the chosen people of God

Faith in the Kalimah is not a passive faith in some uncertain deity, but is an active faith in the Living and Conscious God Who is visible in Nature. This faith has concrete values in the everyday business of life. A faith without action or an action without faith has no place in Islam or in any view of life worth the name. Belief in the Kalimah, therefore, demands a faithful implementation of the contents of the Kalimah in every aspect of human existence. The truth, grandeur and practical values of the Kalimah would not have been made so clearly manifest if some advanced and progressive people had been selected and given the distinction of being the nursery of Islam; a diamond shines most when set in lead, a base metal. This is the law of nature. According to the calculations of Karl Marx, some industrially advanced countries like England and America, having highly organized labour, should have been the incubator of his philosophy, but contrary to his expectations Russia, an industrially backward country, had the credit of demonstrating to the world the cult of Marxism in a living form.

The Kalimah, when its contents were actually implemented in life, moulded the human materials of Arabia into a magnificent and lovely nation, and that mighty nation was sent back to the sands again from which it sprang when the Arabs reduced their faith in the Kalimah into a lip profession having no bearing upon their active life. The Muslim nations of the world are by no means the chosen people of God. The invariable and impartial laws of God operate equally on them as they do on other peoples. The Muslim Arabs were great as long as they maintained the purity of faith and action.

The distorted meaning of the Hadith “the rulers are the shadows of God”

To be free from the sovereignty of the contents of the Kalimah, the Abbaside Sultans of Baghdad and their feudal chiefs, the noblemen and the aristocracy of Baghdad, induced the ‘Ulemas or the pundits of theology, who for material advantages would always manufacture religious sanction for all un-Islamic actions of the Sultans, to mutilate the Kalimah. They invented a new Arabic version of the Kalimah, La Ma‘budu Ilallah, Muhammad al-Rasulullah, or “There is no object of worship but God and Muhammad is His Prophet”. Thus Islam was reduced to a mere form of worship and divided life into two watertight compartments — temporal and spiritual. No time was lost in creating temporal and spiritual lords. The ‘Ulemas themselves became the spiritual lords and called themselves representatives of the Prophet. The sultans became the temporal lords. The temporal and the spiritual lords in perfect harmony and concord with each other conspired to exploit the people. For securing the pleasures of Heaven, obedience to the spiritual lords and for securing pleasures of the earth, obedience to the sultans became the order of the day. There is a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, “The rulers are shadows of God,” which means that the rulers must sustain the people under their charge faithfully in the manner in which God sustains His creatures. This Hadith, or the saying of the Prophet, was again mutilated to give Divine rights to the sultans. This novel and un-Islamic conception of religion found a very congenial seed-bed for its growth and development in materialistic Europe and has very nearly destroyed religion.
Why the enunciation of the Prophethood of Muhammad is an integral part of the Kalimah

The Prophethood of Muhammad is an integral part of the text of the Kalimah. This was necessary for ensuring the purity of faith in the Oneness of God and in the Divine origin of the Holy Qur’án. There is an innate tendency in man to exalt and even to worship their heroes, and perhaps the influence of polytheism created and developed this habit into an instinct. This instinct is mainly responsible for destroying the purity of faith and mutilating the text of the previous revelations. Jesus was raised to divinity by his over-zealous followers. The Christians called Jesus the son of God and forged Trinty out of strict monotheism of pure Christianity. The Brahmans of India described their teachers as incarnations of God and ultimately created a cult of idol worship, destroying the sublime monotheism of pure Vedic Dharma. That the followers of Muhammad in their blind devotion to the master may not commit the same error consciously or unconsciously, the fact that Muhammad is not God or is not in any way associated with Him, but is merely a prophet, is mentioned in the body of the Kalimah itself. The Holy Qur’án directs Muhammad to say, “I am a man like you except that I receive revelation” (41 : 6); and again, “And before thee also the messengers sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration: if ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the message” (16 : 43). In fact, all the prophets were men and their distinction was that they received revelation. The Prophethood of Muhammad implies faith in revelation and the Divine origin of the Holy Qur’án, the Book of Islam. The mention of the Prophethood of Muhammad in the text of the Kalimah projects and actively guards against corruption of the faith in God, faith in the Prophet and faith in the Holy Qur’án, the three main sources of Islam. But for this, the purity of the sources of Islam, its precepts and examples, would have had the same fate as previous revelations.

The Kalimah has the potentiality of carrying humanity from progress to progress

The Kalimah has the potentiality of carrying humanity from progress to progress and achievement to achievement towards its goal as the mariner’s compass leads a ship to its destination safely through the troubled waters as it did in the past, if it is accepted once again as a guide to thought and action and its contents are actually implemented in life. History tells us that in the age in which the Prophet Muhammad was born, lived and worked, his own people, the Arabs were the most degenerate people morally, culturally, socially, politically, in fact, in respect of every aspect of human life. They were the worst specimen of the then civilized humanity. The Prophet lived only for sixty-three years, and he received revelation in his fortieth year. His ministry, therefore, lasted only for twenty-three years, and it is during these twenty-three years that he delivered his mission and his work. History tells us again that the very same Arabs, the nomadic children of the desert who only a few years ago were the worst specimen of humanity, at the time of the Prophet’s death were in every respect — morally, culturally, socially and politically — the best among men. The unlettered Arabs became the teachers of the then civilized world. The uncultured Arabs, who would delight in drinking, debauchery, gambling, and in every imaginable kind of moral and intellectual perversion, gave the world all the refinements and fineries of culture.

The Arabs, divided into countless tribes, clans, families, and ever-engaged in never-ending family and tribal feuds, moulded themselves into a compact and homogeneous nation and gave the world the conception of a real world-wide brotherhood of man. The most easily ignitable Arabs, incapable of resisting the slightest provocation and temptation, presented a perfect example of temperance and tolerance. The brutes, the uncivilized peoples of Arabia, created a magnificent and wonderful civilization in twenty-three years the like of which the world had never seen. This in itself is a miracle — the miracle of the Kalimah. Twenty-three years in the life of an average man is not very significant; far less so is it in the life of a nation, and taking humanity as a whole twenty-three years can only be likened to a bubble in the ocean. The question that appears here in bold relief to every inquisitive mind is how this mighty transformation was possible within such a short period of time and what were the ingredients in the teachings of Muhammad which caused this unparalleled revolution in the thinking, feeling and action of man? This question, when answered in concrete terms, will reveal the revolutionary character of the Kalimah.

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Some Aspects of the Constitution and the Economics of Islam

by NASIR AHMAD SHEIKH, M.A., LL.B.

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FEBRUARY 1965
THE HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF THE MIRACLE (i'JAZ) OF THE QUR'AN

By NA'IM AL-HUMSI

(IV)

Freedom of criticism during the Caliphate of al-Ma'mun (d. 833 C.E.)

There were other men of thought and letters who had no inhibitions about criticizing the Qur'an. They were members of other faiths who enjoyed freedom during the caliphate of al-Ma'mun to express their views on the prophethood of Muhammad, the Qur'an and other religious matters. The Caliph al-Ma'mun professed freedom of thought, and maintained this freedom very effectively, and allowed the expression of views which may not have been popular with the people generally. He thus gave support to the idea that the Qur'an was created — an idea which at one time predominated over all other ideas, including the idea of the i'jaz of the Qur'an, which was then debated only as part of the idea of the creation of the Qur'an. People who professed other faiths had of course cast doubt on the concepts of the prophethood of Muhammad and on the quality of the Qur'an. This first started during the life of the Prophet Muhammad. But during the days of the first Caliphs and the Umayyads they could not openly or boldly express such views. Things, however, were different during the reign of al-Ma'mun. It is said, for example, that 'Abdullah Ibn Isma'il al-Hashimi, one of al-Ma'mun's men, wrote a letter to a Christian friend called 'Abd al-Masih Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi inviting him to embrace Islam and extolling the qualities of Islam compared with Christianity, and also referring to the i'jaz of the Qur'an as a fact confirming the prophethood of Muhammad. 'Abd al-Masih is said to have sent a long letter in reply, in which he contested all the views put forward by al-Hashimi, particularly regarding the nature of the Qur'an. He expressed strong criticism of the way in which the Qur'an was collected, and questioned its i'jaz, language and style, and he resorted to various arguments in an attempt to prove that the Qur'an was but the work of man and was in no way of a superior nature.

Two strong currents converged in opposition to the concepts of the i'jaz of the Qur'an. On the one hand there were free thinkers amongst the Muslims themselves, and on the other hand there were the members of other faiths who opposed Islam. These currents continue to the present day. The first opposition made against these currents emerged in the early days of the Abbasid era — when the various Islamic schools of thought were first formed — and it was championed by the Mu'tazilite group which was responsible for the first systematic work on the i'jaz of the Qur'an in the middle of the second Hejira century. It has in fact been maintained that the Mu'tazilite group started primarily to counter this opposition to Islam and the Qur'an on a scientific basis. Other groups — the theologians (al-Mutakallimun) and the exegetists (al-Mufassirun) — followed the Mu'tazilites in defending Islam and the Qur'an on similar lines.

Writers on i'jaz

The Mu'tazilite school of thought was engaged in discussion about the creation of the Qur'an, and it dealt with the question of i'jaz as part of this concept. The most famous of the Mu'tazilites to discuss this matter were al-Nizam (d. 845 C.E.), Isâ Ibn Subayh al-Mizdar (d. 850 or 870 C.E.) and al-Jahiz (d. 869 C.E.). Only al-Jahiz is known to have written a special treatise on this subject, and this, under the title Nizam al-Qur'an, has been lost. We shall examine the views of the various members of the Mu'tazilite school of thought in detail later, and compare them one with the other.

The question of the i'jaz of the Qur'an was discussed by 'Ali Ibn Sahl Raba'an al-Tabari, a protégé of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (who ascended the throne in 847 C.E.), who wrote Kitab al-Din wa al-Dawlah (The Book of Religion and the State). In the introduction he said that the Caliph gave assistance in the writing of the book. He discussed proof of the prophethood of Muhammad, and in the seventh chapter of the book he discussed in detail the idea that the Qur'an was a mu'jizah (miracle) proving prophethood. The manner of the presentation of this argument indicates that the problem had not been tackled before in a serious manner in a written work, and that the i'jaz of the Qur'an was one of the articles of faith which were accepted without argument by the Muslims. Another writer on this subject was Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari (d. 994 C.E.), but not much remains of his writing except his book Maqalat al-Islamiyyin (Islamic Treatises). There was also Muhammad Ibn Yazid al-Wasiti (d. 918 C.E.), 'Ali Ibn 'Isa al-Rimani (d. 994 C.E.), Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Khattabi (d. 998 C.E.), Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Baqillani (d. 1012 C.E.), Muhammad Ibn Yahya Ibn Suraaqa'h (d. 1019 C.E.), al-Sharif al-Murtada (d.

1 See The Islamic Review for January 1965 for the previous installment.

The arguments on *iʿjaz* in Kalaam (dialecitics)

The science of *kalaam* (Islamic dogmatic theology), which began to flourish in the Abbasid era, dealt with the ideas of God and proophood in Islam. Muslim dialecticians postulated firstly that the Qurʿān was the word of God, and secondly that the Qurʿān was inspired and was a miracle, since every prophet needed a miracle. They placed emphasis on the fact that the Qurʿān on several occasions challenged the Arabs to match it, and that the Arabs failed to do this. They also referred to the report that the Prophet Muhammad had said about the Qurʿān: "Every prophet has been given something like this so that mankind would believe him; and I hope that I shall have the greatest following."

Muslim philosophers usually began their discussions by asserting that the Qurʿān was a miracle and the hallmark of prophethood (as the Qurʿān itself asserts). They put forward five propositions which, they maintained, proved the truth of the message brought forth by Muhammad: firstly, that the Prophet had come; secondly, that he claimed prophethood; thirdly, that he had a miracle; fourthly, that he challenged others to match this miracle; and fifthly, that people could not match this miracle.

The first two propositions needed no great argument, for they were accepted as undeniable fact. As for the miracle of the Qurʿān and the challenge made to the Arabs, the dialecticians said that it was undeniable that the Qurʿān had challenged the Arabs — this was done on several occasions and in clear terms. The Arabs had not been able to match the Qurʿān, and nothing similar to the Qurʿān had been produced. If there had been anything like the Qurʿān it would have remained extant and would have reached posterity in the same way as poetry and literary masterpieces of old were memorized and handed down throughout the ages. It would not be reasonable to suggest that the Muslims would have suppressed such *qurʿans*, because the enemies of the Muslims could have ensured that this did not happen. The existence of something matching the Qurʿān would have also weakened the belief of the Muslims themselves and undermined their loyalty to Islam. But the Muslims remained convinced all the time that the Qurʿān was beyond the capacity of human being and could not be matched. The Muslim dialecticians deduce that if the Arabs, with their skill in their language and their high literary attainments in poetry and similar arts, could not match the Qurʿān, then other people most definitely could not.

Al-Baqillani

Al-Baqillani's book is considered the central work in the study of the history of the *iʿjaz* of the Qurʿān. He summarized all the works of previous writers on the subject, and subsequent writers based their works on his. After the death of al-Baqillani (1102 C.E.), most of the theories on the question of *iʿjaz* assumed their final form, and subsequent writers followed the pattern of earlier ones on this subject. The philosophers did not have to bring forth new proof of this question of *iʿjaz* — rather they had to collect the views of writers or philosophers of old on the subject and present the proof they adduced in a new form. Thus al-Mawardi, a philosopher, lists twenty points to prove the *iʿjaz* of the Qurʿān, but not one of these was original or new.

One of the features of the writing of Muslim philosophers generally on the question of the *iʿjaz* is that they all make an effort to answer criticism made or likely to be made by non-Muslims on this subject. The philosopher Abu al-Hasan ʿAbd al-Jabbar al-Asadabadi (1015 C.E.) devoted a whole book to this purpose — *Tanzih al-Qurʿān `an al-Mataʿān (The Acquittal of the Qurʿān from Accusations)*, published in Cairo in 1911 C.E.

Ibn Jarir—Hasan al-Qimmi

The earliest works on the *iʿjaz* of the Qurʿān were written in the early 10th century C.E. Of the works written in the 8th century C.E., only the titles have reached us, and the texts have been lost. Works written in the 9th century C.E. include one by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 922 C.E.) in thirty volumes. This is a work of very great importance and contains the views current in that era, and has been the basis of a great many works. He deals with the question of the *iʿjaz* of the Qurʿān in the course of his explanation of the verse of the challenge in 2:23-24: "And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides God if you are truthful. But if you do it not — and you can never do it — then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is men and stones; it is prepared for the disbelievers ", and does this in a very simple manner free of the complications which characterises the works of philosophers on this subject. He considers the evidence offered by the Qurʿān adequate proof of this proposition, and he merely explains the relevant verses of the Qurʿān. Al-Tabari was followed by Hasan Ibn Muhammad al-Qimmi (d. 988 C.E.), who has written a book on this subject. His style is more like that of the dialecticians (mutakallimun) rather than the exegetists (mufassirun) of the Qurʿān, and he uses the technical expressions of the science of kalaam. He was probably both an interpreter and a philosopher. This compares with the works of al-Tabari, who was mainly an interpreter of the Qurʿān rather than a philosopher. But the fact is that subsequent writers on the *iʿjaz* of the Qurʿān tended more to follow the style of al-Qimmi and not that of al-Tabari. Very often they used purely philosophical techniques in their arguments. Perhaps al-Qimmi started a trend on this subject, for it was not long afterwards that the interpretation of the Qurʿān began to follow a more distinctly philosophical line which introduced complicated ideas and terminology into this study. Of the interpreters who discussed the *iʿjaz* of the Qurʿān, other than al-Tabari and al-Qimmi, the more well known are al-Aaqib ibn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108 C.E.), al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1432 C.E.) in *al-Kashshāf*, Ibn ʿAtiyah al-Gharinati (d. 1147 C.E.), Fakhri al-Dīn al-Rāzi (d. 1209 C.E.), Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashi (d. 1391 C.E.) in a book entitled *Al-Iṣaqān fī Ulūm al-Qurʿān* (Perfection in the Sciences of the Qurʿān), Ibn Kamal Pasha (d. 1533 C.E.), Abu al-Suʿūd (d. 1574 C.E.), who wrote *Irshad al-ʿAql al-Salīm* (Guidance for the Sound Mind), al-Alusi (d. 1855 C.E.), who wrote *Ruh al-Muʿāni* (The Essence of Meanings), Muhammad Rashid Rida, and Tantawi Jawhari, who wrote *al-Jawahir* (The Gems).
The Muslims and the Vatican Oecumenical Council

The implications of the decisions of the Oecumenical Council held at Rome (14 September—21 November 1964) in regard to the abolution of the Jews from the death of Jesus by Crucifixion, and for Muslims and Christians

Muslims should re-double their efforts to save Palestine

By ‘Allal al-Faasi

The Vatican in the pay of the Zionists

The discussions on the question of acquitting the Jews of the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, with which the Oecumenical Council of the Catholic Church meeting at the Vatican has recently been preoccupied, have been engineered by Zionist and capitalist propaganda. I first came to know of this when I was in exile (1937-46) in Gabon, in Equatorial Africa. M. Lawrence, then Secretary-General of the General Agency in the Congo, and a leading member of the Congolese National Liberation Committee, told me that endeavours by the Allies had been made, and were about to succeed, to induce the Vatican to concede the innocence of the Jews and to bring the Jews into the fold of Christianity. Although I was surprised at this, I understood that in those cases where Christianity was subject to the decrees of the clergy, it was not inconceivable for a decision to be made conflicting with the very foundations of Christian doctrines. And when I lay ill at the Princess Faryal Hospital in Cairo in 1951 I had a visit from the late great French orientalist, Professor M. Massignon. I showed him a letter I had sent to His Holiness the Pope condemning the arrest of the late Ahmad Bin ‘Abdullah, who had delivered a sermon at the mosque in Rabat emphasizing the importance of sacrifice and selflessness, and mentioned leading figures in that sphere, including Saint Jean d’Arc. I had thought that that would have clearly demonstrated the desire of the Muslims to bring about a spiritual rapprochement with other faiths in the service of the causes of peace and freedom. Professor Massignon, however, reacted to that letter with mixed feelings. He approved of it, but also expressed despondency. He said that the Vatican circles received money from the Zionists and wanted to white-wash the Zionists. He expressed regret at the mixing of politics and financial interests with religion and truth. He further added that “when the Christians engage in negotiations to serve the interests of Zionism they do harm to their religion and to loyal and sincere people like myself, who consider such an attitude as deviationist and feel impelled to deny the status of the clergy in religious matters.”

This, in my opinion, is one of the reasons why the Middle East Christians not owing allegiance to the Vatican have rebelled against this attitude and declared their indignation against those who wished to trifle with what were considered to be sacred principles which must remain inviolable. Another reason is that the Arabs as a whole consider that this attitude would strengthen the statelet of Israel and would increase the emotional pressure against the Christian Arabs, who in fact are united with their Muslim brothers in regard to the Palestine problem, and who utilize the harm done by the Jews to Jesus Christ as a means of promoting distaste against the idea of subjecting the land of the birth of Jesus Christ to Zionist rule.

While I appreciate these Arab sentiments and their political connotations I think that it would be better for the Arabs and the Muslims to devote attention to positive efforts to save Palestine. The acquittal or otherwise of the Jews by the Christians does not in any way alter the stark fact that Israel is a base for foreign capitalism and a springboard for the invasion of Arab markets and the exploitation of the resources of the Arab countries. The attempt to influence the feelings of some Christians would be tantamount to avoiding this fact and its ramifications, and would be a useless effort.
In 1949 I attended a meeting at the house in Alexandria of that great fighter President Shukri al-Quwatli, former President of the Syrian Republic. It was attended by several responsible leaders of the Arab countries. They were all agreed on the need of the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem as a means of warding off the possibility of its occupation by Israel. I was very grieved at this policy and protested against it. I also made every effort to oppose this policy, which eventually was officially condemned at several Islamic conferences, particularly after it had become abundantly clear that the Vatican was making every effort to buy property in that part of Jerusalem which remained in Arab hands. Fortunately, the idea of internationalization has now decisively been forgotten even among the Arab States themselves.

Three reasons why Muslims should not feel unhappy over the Oecumenical Council’s pronouncement

With these facts in mind, I can say that there is really no need for any feeling of unhappiness at the decision to acquit the Jews of the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ. This is so firstly because we believe that however much the Jews may have attempted to harm Jesus Christ they did not in fact succeed in killing him, but thought wrongly that they had done so. The Qur’an says: “They say we have killed Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of God. They killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but it was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain” (4 : 157). Thus, when the Christians deny that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus they implicitly admit that the Qur’an’s version is correct. The second reason is that when official Christianity goes back on its previous doctrines it demonstrates once again that the laws formulated by the Church at times lead to the casting of doubts about the attributes of God and the truth of revealed facts which must remain unalterable. The third reason is that when Christian doctrine proclaimed that Jesus was crucified and that the Jews were responsible for this, the matter was laid down in firm and unequivocal form and an established fact. And while views and resolutions may be changed it is not feasible to change what purports to be historical facts. Factual matters are accepted by believers as the basis of their beliefs, and to alter them would deprive such beliefs of foundation. The decision of the Oecumenical Council is thus a denial of the truth of a fundamental fact, and cast doubt on the basis of Christian doctrine. This does not harm the Arabs in any way — it would only harm Christianity as portrayed by its clergy.

We therefore need not worry about something which does not really directly affect us. We must devote our attention primarily to positive efforts which would make the entire Muslim world — and not only the Arab world — an effective weapon to liberate Palestine and save the world from the danger of Zionism.

The full text of the Oecumenical Council document (held at Rome, Italy, from 14 September to 21 November 1964)

The following is an unofficial translation of the working draft of the document on the Church’s Relationship Toward Non-Christian Religions. Once called a declaration on the Jews, the document has now been broadened to speak also of others, such as the Muslims, as well as the Jews.

In this age of ours when mankind is being drawn closer together, day by day, and the ties between peoples here and there are made stronger, the Church weighs earnestly her relationship toward non-Christian religions.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the entire human race live on all the face of the earth (cf. Acts 17, 26). One, too, is their ultimate end, God: His providence, His goodness — of which creation is the witness — His saving design extend toward all men (cf. Wisd. 8, Acts 14, 17; Rom. 2, 6-7, I Tim. 2, 4). And in the end all the elect will be united in that Holy City whose light is the glory of God, that City where the nations will walk in His radiance (cf. Apoc. 21, 23f).

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, riddles that move the hearts of men today as they did in olden times: What is man? What is the meaning, what the purpose of our lives? What is the moral good, what sin? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgement, and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate, inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence, which is the fountain as well as the destiny of our being?

Hinduism — Buddhism

Ever since primordial days, numerous peoples have had a certain perception of that hidden Power which hovers over the events that make up the lives of men; some have even come to know of a Supreme Being and Father.

Religions, however, that are entwined with an advanced culture have been able to use, in their struggle for an answer to man’s great questions, more refined concepts and a more developed language.

In Hinduism, for instance, men try to fathom the divine mystery, expressing it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through keen efforts of a philosophical kind; they seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition through ascetical methods, profound meditation, and a flight to God, full of love and trust.

Again, Buddhism realizes the radical inadequacy of this changeable world: it teaches a way by which men, with minds devout and confident, seek to liberate themselves, through a self-denial and inner cleansing, from the fleetness of things, and to attain a state of lasting quiet. Other religions, everywhere on earth, counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing ways, that is to say, doctrines, rules of life, and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church scorns nothing in these religions that is true and holy. For ceaselessly she proclaims Christ, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn. 14, 6), in whom God reconciled all things to Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 15, 19). Having learned of various dispositions toward salvation (cf.

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Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. IV, 28, 2; PG 7, 1062), she regards with sincere reverence those ways of action and of life, those precepts and teachings which, differ though they do from the ones she sets forth, reflect nonetheless a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men!

The Church, therefore, admonishes her sons that they converse and collaborate with the followers of other religions in order to preserve, indeed, advance those spiritual and moral goods as well as those socio-cultural values that have a home among men of other religious traditions.

Islam

The Church is filled with esteem for Moslems: they adore the one God who lives, exists in Himself, and wields all power; they adore the Creator of heaven and earth who has spoken to men; they strive to obey wholeheartedly even His incomprehensible decrees, just as Abraham did, to whose faith they like to link their own.

Though Moslems do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a Prophet. They also honour Mary, His Virgin Mother: at times, they even call on her with devotion. Again, they await the day of judgment when God will reward all those who have risen.

Furthermore, as they worship God through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, so they seek to make the moral life — be it that of the individual or that of the family and society — conform to His Will.

In the course of centuries, however, not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems. Hence this Sacred Synod urges all not only to forget the past but also to work honestly for mutual understanding and to further as well as guard together social justice, all moral goods, especially peace and freedom so that the whole of mankind may benefit from their endeavour. (Italics ours. Ed., I.R.)

As this Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

With a grateful heart, the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election were already among the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ — Abraham's sons according to faith — were included in the same patriarch's call, likewise that her salvation is typically foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament from the people with whom God in his ineffable mercy concluded the former Covenant. Nor can she forget that she feeds upon the root of that cultivated olive tree into which the wild shoots of the Gentiles have been grafted (cf. Rom. 11, 17-24). Indeed, the Church believes that by His Cross Christ our Peace reconciled the Jews and Gentiles, making both one (cf. Eph. 2, 14, 16).

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "Their is the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs; and of them is the Christ according to the flesh," the Son of Mary the Virgin (Rom. 9, 4-5).

No less does she recall that the Apostles, the Church's mainstay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

Even though a large part of the Jews did not accept the Gospel, they remain most dear to God for the sake of the patriarchs. This is the witness of the Apostles as if the utterance that God's gifts and call are irrevocable (cf. Rom. 11, 28f). In company with the prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve Him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3, 9; cf. Is. 66, 23; Ps. 65, 4; Rom. 11, 11-112).

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is of such magnitude, this Sacred Synod wants to support and recommend their mutual knowledge and respect, a knowledge and respect that are the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

Moreover, this Synod, in her rejection of injustice of whatever kind and wherever inflicted upon men, remains mindful of that common patrimony and so deplores, indeed condemns, hatred and persecutions of Jews, whether they arose in former or in our own days.

May they never present the Jewish people as one rejected, cursed, or guilty of deicide. All that happened to Christ in His passion cannot be attributed to the whole people then alive, much less to that of today.

Besides, the Church has always held and holds now that Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of all men and out of infinite love. It is, therefore, the burden of Christian preaching to proclaim the Cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

We cannot truly address God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat some men or other in a brotherly way, even though they are created in His image. Man's attitude toward God the Father and his attitude towards his human brethren are so intimately linked, one to the other, that Scripture is able to say: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 Jn. 4, 8; cf. 1 John 2, 9-11; Lk. 10, 25-37).

Thus any theory or practice that, so far as their human dignity is concerned, discriminates between man and man or people and people, creating a different set of rights for each of them—any such theory or practice is shown to be without foundation.

All men, therefore, but especially Christians, must refrain from discrimination against, or harassment of, others because of their race, colour, creed or walk of life. But this is not enough. Treading the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this Sacred Synod ardently implores the faithful that they rather “maintain good conduct among the Gentiles” (1 Pet. 2, 12) and live, if possible, that is, so far as it depends on them, in peace with all men (cf. Rom. 12, 18), so that they may really be sons of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5, 44).
Old Monuments in the Arabian Peninsula

Pre-Islamic Period
Need of Excavations and Researches

By M. Abul Faraj al-‘Ushsh

Progressive nations look after their old monuments. They preserve their old buildings and edifices from deterioration by repairs and supports. Artistic pieces are collected from here and there and placed in museums to protect them from destruction. Excavations are carried out throughout the length and breadth of their countries to uncover the decaying stones and acquire knowledge of their heritage from ancient times. To ascertain the age of the layers in which the remains of man are found, they call to their aid geology, anthropology, biology and archaeology. A study of the ancient civilizations is also made to establish the chain of their continuance and discontinuance, the influence of the neighbouring civilizations, their own influence on others and their cumulative share in the shaping of human civilization.

With this end in view, all countries have created administrations for antiquities and all sorts of museums for the preservation of their national heritage, its protection from natural causes, and the encroachments of the ignorant and the traffic in antiques, even in countries with no past of their own and in which there do not exist such antiquities as are to be found in countries which are the cradles of old civilizations and which still continue to be the source of religious illumination — I, of course, refer to the Arabian Peninsula, generally speaking.

I don't intend to go deep into this aspect for the present. I shall now discuss in detail the ancient civilizations which existed in the Arabian Peninsula, leaving out of consideration those important relics whose large part has already been removed to foreign museums. The remains in the Yemen, Hadhramaut, Oman, the Gulf Coast and the interior oases go back to between 3000 and 1000 B.C., and some time, when excavations by experts are carried out, it may be possible to know more about those between 4000 years B.C. and even earlier.

Prehistoric Arabian Peninsula

It is a well-established fact that the naturally difficult conditions in which the Arabian Peninsula has been living for some thousands of years were not the same in the Fourth Ice Age. At that time Arabia used to get rain and its soil was fertile. It had mighty rivers and large seas, dense forests, grasslands frequented by all kinds of animals. Some visible traces are there to tell us about them. For instance a visitor to the Wadi al-Rummah near Jeddah (Juddah) notices that it is very extensive in spite of the many depression and ravages of time. Is it possible for the little quantity of water which flows therein at the present time to have carved such an extensive valley? This valley, in fact, tells us about the flowing a big river in this part of the world in no way smaller than the Nile and the Euphrates.

The Greek historian Herodotus (d. 425 B.C.) has also mentioned this fact in his Universal History. He speaks of the existence of a big river in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. And let this be noted that he flourished in the 5th century B.C. We believe that the river of which he speaks used to flow in the valley from the Yemen to Hadhrausaut falling into the Arabian Sea.

The discoveries in the excavations which have been carried out in Qatar and Kuwait lead us to the conclusion that the civilization of the Arabian Peninsula does not differ very much from the civilization of Iraq and Syria during 3000 B.C. and 2000 B.C., and that the antiquities of the
The inscribed letters on this stone date back to the period of the Nabateans (312-106 B.C.). It was discovered near the town of Khuraybah. (The Nabateans are Arabs whose ancient kingdom was situated to the east and south-east of Palestine, centre originally about Petra (in Jordan))

A side view of the antiquities of northern Su'udi Arabia. The inscriptions on the stone provide historical evidence about the Nabatean civilization.

A group of Nabatean relics in the Arabian Peninsula
ME MONUMENTS THE PENINSULA

The ancients in Mada'in Salih, in inscriptions are engraved on stone

The principal gate leading to the throne chamber in Mada'in Salih. It is to be seen between the regions of Tareef and al-'Ula' in northern Su'udi Arabia

Historical ancient antiquities in the town of al-Dar'iyah, in the province of Najd, Su'udi Arabia

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Yemen in 2000 B.C. and 1000 B.C. are even older than those in the rest of the Arabian Peninsula and that the Yemeni alphabet can be assumed to be much advanced in its evolution. As to the Thamudian and Safawite writing, they are contemporaneous with the Phoenician and Aramaic writings.

Arabian Peninsula the cradle of the Semitic peoples

Historical and archaeological researches point out that the Arabian Peninsula was the cradle of the Semitic peoples who migrated to the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris, Syria, the north coast of Africa and Egypt in continued waves from 4000 B.C. It is these peoples who gave birth to important civilizations in those parts of the world. The Phoenicians even crossed the seas with their gods and established colonies in North Africa and Spain. They also crossed the "Pillars of Hercules" (the Strait of Gibraltar) till they reached England in the north and Ghana in the south, and perhaps even South America, according to the recent researches.

Is it possible to say that these people, of whom we know—the Accadians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, Amurites, the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the Aramaens, the Nabateans and the Safawites, when they migrated from the Arabian Peninsula for natural and economic reasons—had no civilization and acquired it from the neighboring peoples as claimed by some researchers and scholars? Or is it that they carried with them the basic principles of civilization and spread them in the neighboring regions? It is essential that every people should take something from others and give something to others. That it should be devoid of any culture is simply not possible.

From this short introduction I conclude that Arabia hides in its bowels treasures of important antiquities for which the hearts of the scholars yearn to know and specialists desire to see in them the light shedding on mysteries of the past. It is a matter of satisfaction to recall that the cautiousness on the part of the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula during the 20th century resulting from their fear of the evil designs of foreigners did not facilitate their penetration into it. But despite this prohibition that existed during the 18th and 19th centuries, evil designers were all the same able to get into the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. They disguised themselves in local attire, some of them even pretended to embrace the religion of Islam in order to visit the Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, with the result that they succeeded in transferring some of the Arabian antiquities to foreign countries. Nevertheless, the knowledge that we possess about the Arabian antiquities from the various studies that have been made is still very meagre indeed. Thus the Arabian Peninsula continues to be a land about whose buried treasures of antiquity we know next to nothing.

Let us leave the ancient period for the time being. We would address ourselves to the few centuries before and after Jesus Christ down to the days of the advent of Islam. What do we
know about this period? For instance, we know that the Arabian coast and the Yemen of that period had always been economically very much active. We also know that the Yemen began to decline with the destruction of the Ma‘aarib Dam. Or it would be more correct to say that the Ma‘aarib Dam brought about the Yemen’s retardation and political, economic and social disintegration which ultimately overtook it. All this resulted in the dispersion of the Yemenites to Oman, Hira, Southern Syria and Tadmur. The Yemenites established political institutions consequent upon foreign penetration — the Ghassanishe Kingdom was subject to the influence of the Byzantines, the Mundhir Kingdom to the influence of the Persians, the Tadmur Kingdom partly to that of the Byzantines and partly to that of the Persians. As to the Arabian Peninsula itself, all that we know of it is that it lived a tribal and Bedouin system of life with the exception of some few civilized centres in Mecca, Yathrib (Medina) and Ta‘if, etc. Here we should ask ourselves a question: Does the thought of the Bedouin Arabs and their language accord with their social conditions? That which interests me most here is that I should refer especially to the maturity of the Arabic language in the matter of the perfectiveness of its derivatives and its ripeness and subordination to the rules and principles of grammar. Can this ripe and mature language and the taste of its sons for it, their love of exposition and rhetoric, be commensurate with their tribal way of life?

How did the Arabic script which was in use at the time of the advent of Islam grow and undergo changes? The earliest Arabic text dates back to 328 B.C. and is known as the Text of Nammaraah.1 Very few texts after this date have come to light2 which go back to the period between the 4th and 7th centuries C.E. These texts tell us that the Arabic script that underwent changes for the better under Islam goes back to the period before Islam. Some Muslim historians like Tabari (992 C.E.) and Baladhuri (892 C.E.) tell us that the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period learnt the art of writing from the Syrians and the people of Hira, and those who knew how to write were few, that the majority of them were traders, and that at the appearance of the light of Islam the number of such people who knew how to read and write multiplied rapidly, due directly to the encouragement and directives they received from the Prophet Muhammad, and that before very long there were many literate Arabs.

Arabs before Abraham must be an evolved people

It is worthwhile noting here that the Prophet Abraham, al-Khalil, migrated to the Hedjaz to rebuild the Ka‘bah and spread the revealed religion to those parts of Arabia at a time which we can place some time before the 18th and 17th centuries B.C. The Arabs accepted the revealed religion of that time. This is proof of their intellectual and social maturity. But when their condition deteriorated and their intellectual standard declined, they were not able to hold their own. They began to distort their religion gradually till they became idol- and nature-worshippers. They in their thought and belief adopted the ways of the retarded peoples.

Here we enter upon an important stage in history. What was the condition of the Arabs before Abraham? What were their beliefs and circumstances? How did they come to accept the „pure” religion? Then, how was it that their religion deteriorated and once again they degenerated into idol-worshippers with all their profession of their belief in the principles of their divinely inspired religion? The Qur’an speaks of these polytheists and their language thus: “We do not worship the idols but with a view to gaining proximity to God.”3

This is but one aspect of the conditions of the Arabs of those days about which we know so little before the advent of Islam. We know nothing with exactitude how the Arabic language evolved into a progressed language and then about its deterioration. How did their religious life come to be distorted? Likewise do we not know how the art of writing went through the various changes. Is it correct for the Arab historians to maintain that only very few men of the Arabian Peninsula learnt the art of writing from Syria? Are there any documents which lead us to this conclusion? There is no doubt that they lie buried under the earth, waiting for the scholars to bring them to light and to study them and read the past from them. I have discussed the hidden treasures of the period before the advent of Islam. In my next article I shall say something about the Islamic Arabian monuments.

1 Preserved in the Louvre, Paris. There is also another MS in the National Museum, Damascus, Syria.
2 Inscriptions of Umm Jamaal, Zubayd and Harraan — these are inscriptions of the period before the advent of Islam.
3 The Qur’an, 39 : 3.

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FEBRUARY 1965
Foundations of Arabic-Islamic Political Thought

Muslim political thinkers are the precursors of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Bodin

By Fadhil Zaky Muhammad, Ph.D.

“...the Islamic political thought is free from any extreme thought.”

I. NATURE OF ARABIC-ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT

Arabic Islamic political thought is in a class by itself

Although Arabic-Islamic political thought forms a middle ring in the political chain of human thought, it has in modern times received but little attention. One reason for this neglect is due to the fact that a considerable amount of the Islamic literature remains enshrined in Arabic, to which few Western scholars have access. The other reason is the lack of knowledge of the Arabic-Islamic civilization on the part of Western writers despite the fact that this civilization has played a significant role in the Western renaissance. There is also the contributory factor that few Western scholars of the Renaissance period have chronicled the huge transference of knowledge from the East to the West. The result is that to many contemporary Western scholars the Arabic-Islamic political thought is unknown. This study is an attempt at exploring Arabic-Islamic political thought: its basic characteristics, its theories and ideas about the form of the State, its function and administration.

Before going into the details of the Arabic-Islamic political thought let us discuss its nature.

In the first place, the Arabic-Islamic political thought, if it is to be properly understood, should not be interpreted in the light of any other political thought. For example, to say that the Arabic-Islamic political thought is synonymous with Western democratic thought will not be accurate. For if the Arabic-Islamic political thought overlapped some of the basic precepts of democratic political thought of today, it does not mean that they are identical in their nature. There are precepts in Islamic political philosophy, for example, the close correlation between politics and ethics, which is not a primary feature of the Western democratic philosophy.

An accurate approach to the Arabic-Islamic political thought, or any other political thought, is the one which takes into consideration the correlation between that political thought itself and the specific environment in which it arose. J. Figgis correctly observed in his book, The Divine Rights of Kings, that the theory of the “Divine Rights of Kings” was basically the reflection of the political conditions existing at the time. Moreover, he said that such a theory was a consequence of the sequence of events rather than pure thought. J. Mattern was right when he maintained that the political theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau can be understood only if one remembered that they reflected the clash of ideas existing at that time.

The Arabic-Islamic political philosophy is the outcome of the evolution of Arabic-Islamic history and environment. At first, it centred around the Caliphate (or Imamate); later the Islamic political thought developed into different ideas dealing with the origin of State, the theory of State, the form of State, and the sovereignty of the sovereign power. Islamic political ideas soon developed into theories — theories based on deductive logic from Islamic ideals and principles on which the various schools of thought were based.

Moreover, the Arabic-Islamic political thought is characterized by the fact that its theories stand upon juridical basis — the Shari’ah or Islamic law. Since the Shari’ah places great emphasis on the community, so the Islamic political thought is identified and concerned with community. In fact, the whole idea of erecting a State rooted in Islamic political thought is to realize community order, its security and happiness. Thus the individual, although he receives considerable attention, is dealt with within the frame of community.

Another important concept of the Arabic-Islamic political thought is that it is elastic enough to accommodate the individual’s ideas: this is called ‘Ijtihad’. The ‘Ijtihad’ in essence is recognition of the principle that change of conditions leads to a change of approach and interpretation. In its deeper meaning, the ‘Ijtihad’ means respect for human opinion, and considerable scope for human freedom. And it is this characteristic scope which enabled Muslim political thinkers to develop their opinions into theories. Consequently, their differing approach to political theories resulted in the development of political schools of thought. The “Caliphate”, for example, was viewed differently by the various schools. Thus each of the major schools, namely, the theological school, the juridico-political school, the moral-political school, and the philosophical school, interpreted and maintained its own standpoint concerning the caliphate system.

Still another characteristic of the Arabic-Islamic thought

1 The place of Arabs in Islamic Thought is undisputably that of a founder, enricher and protector.
3 J. Mattern, Concepts of State Sovereignty and International Law, p. 2.

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we might term the organic approach to the field of political theory. That is to say, the study of political ideas in Islam forms only a branch of one organic whole. Thus political thought, although distinct, is not separate from other branches of human knowledge such as history, biology, sociology, law and philosophy. This very approach, which was attempted before by the Greeks, and later by the Muslims, is coming into its own in the matter of the study of contemporary political thought.

In order to understand fully the nature of the Arabic-Islamic political thought, a reference should be made to the absence of a rigid line drawn between politics and ethics. Practically all Islamic political thinkers place a restraining measure on man's volitional action and behaviour. This restraining measure, the ethical measure, supplies man with the knowledge to differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice. It is through this knowledge of differentiation between good and evil that the highest aim of the State, the happiness of the community, can be achieved. Otherwise, human civilization degenerates and perishes. Thus the means to happiness and progress can be achieved only when the means coincide with the goals.

These are the basic characteristics of the Arabic-Islamic political thought.

II. ORIGIN OF THE STATE

Al-Farabi is the forerunner of those Western political thinkers of the 18th century who upheld “contracts” as the basis of the State.

Muslim writings on the various aspects of the State

4 E. Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam, p. 118.

Al-Ghazzali

Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111 C.E.) is another outstanding representative of Muslim thinkers, when he expounds his theory of evolution in his book Ihya’ al-Ulam. He wrote that man was created in a way that left him in constant need of others. And it is in “the nature of things that there should be co-operation amongst a very large number of persons each plying a profession or engaged in industry.” The association of groups leads to a community with new arts and industries. As the needs of survival and protection of the community introduces new professions, for instance, those of distribution and settlement of lands in dispute, and the development of the arts of warfare, so the need or organizing the life of a community requires the introduction of law and government to keep every member within his proper limits. Thus the application of law and the course of government and State affairs produces men of special qualities who are able to take the responsibility of heading the State — the sovereign. The sovereign, al-Ghazzali states, must be free and independent of any other power, whether external or informal.

Al-Ghazzali’s theory of evolution, as we have seen, is a theory based on natural and real bases. Moreover, al-Ghazzali’s analysis of the emergence of the State shows how the interdependence of human beings, as a natural human characteristic, leads to the formation of law and government on the one hand, and to the rise of the sovereign as a centre of power and authority on the other. One must keep in mind

5 H. Sherwani, Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration, p. 252.

6 Ibid., p. 157.
that the work of al-Ghazzali anticipated Western thinkers whoever wrote on this subject. "Ghazzali was perhaps the first political theorist who applied this theory to politics eight centuries before it was evolved in Europe by Spencer and Huxley".  

Ibn Jama'a'ah

The origin of the State also attracted the attention of Ibn Jama'a'ah (1241-1331 C.E.), another Muslim thinker. Ibn Jama'a'ah shows in his book, Tahrir al-Ahkaam, that the State was founded first on force. He labels it as the "theory of force". His State (of force) thus emerges when a "man of authority subdues a people by means of arms and brings them under his personal control".  

As one analyses Ibn Jama'a'ah's approach to the origin of the State, it appears that he was not interested in his predecessor's work, especially the "pact theory" of al-Farabi. Ibn Jama'a'ah thinks that man, in his early stages of development, had not attained a state of reasoning in which he could renounce some of his authority and right to sovereignty.  

Ibn Khaldun

It remained for Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 C.E.) the Arab-Muslim scholar and philosopher, to deal with the origin of the State in the most convincing sociological-political approach. Ibn Khaldun relates the rise of the State with society. He builds up his theory by saying that the human need of society is not only natural but also necessary. Man can live with others only by forming a group. Once a group is formed there arises the need of maintaining order and organizing its life: "the need of retaining force to keep men from each other's throats in view of their animal propensities for aggressiveness and oppression of others". This restraining force is used by a man of extraordinary courage and wisdom, "who wields power and authority with a firm hand and thus prevents one from attacking another one..." This man who wields the power and authority is called by Ibn Khaldun the sovereign.  

"The State is therefore to society as form is to the matter, for the form by its nature preserves the matter and... the two are inseparable. For a State is inconceivable without a society; while a society without a State is well-nigh impossible, owing to the aggressive propensities of men, which require a restraint."  

Ibn Khaldun also maintains that the power of the sovereign is not always derived from divine sources. Power rests on religion when the State is erected upon divine law revealed by a messenger or a prophet. On the other hand, the power of a sovereign can also rest on 'Asabiyyah, i.e., where a sovereign leads a group having a united will, thus maintaining order. Ibn Khaldun calls the former type a theocratic State, while for the latter he terms a kingly State.  

III. IBN KHALDUN, AL-RAYYES, FARABI, AL-MAWARDI. IBN BAJJIA ON THE THEORY OF THE STATE

The State must be governed by Islamic ideals and principles

While Muslim political thinkers saw society is indispensable for the survival of man, they also conceived of another equally indispensable concept; society cannot survive unless there exists within it an authority on which falls the responsibility of maintaining order and progress. This authority, to Muslim thinkers, is but a concept of the necessity of the State in society. The necessity of the State, as Ibn Khaldun sees it, is a "restraining force" to regulate life and maintain order. As already indicated, the State is as form is to the matter. To Ibn Rushd, political association is a necessity. He maintains that "no man can live... outside any kind of political association".  

Therefore the State, as seen by Islamic political thinkers, is both a restraining and regulating force for man.  

How did this concept come into being? To answer the question entails an explanation of the concept of the Islamic Ummah (nation) and its fundamental law or constitution. The Islamic nation is conceived as a large community but whose members are like one compact building in which all the bricks support each other. Moreover, a community as such cannot be united and live in an orderly society unless its life is enforced by authority and regulated by law. Under Islamic

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7 Sherwani, op. cit., p. 245.  
9 Sherwani, op. cit., p. 253.  
10 Ibn Khaldun: Al-Muqaddimah, An Arab Philosophy of HistorySelection from the Prolegomena (the Muqaddimah); Translated and arranged by Charles Issawi, p. 99.  
12 Ibid., p. 71.  
13 Issawi's op. cit., p. 102.  
thinking it is the State which possesses authority, provided that this authority rests upon legal grounds — the law. Thus the State is governed by law, or to use the Islamic nomenclature, the Shari'ah (the Islamic community law).

A government based on law, in Islamic political thinking, posits other important things: that the law as sets of rules does not become effective unless observed. This means that Islamic government is not a government of theory alone; the application of the law is the final test.

As the State, under the supreme law, has the authority to regulate human behaviour, it is regarded as a means of maintaining order, unity and happiness for all members of the Islamic community. Hence the function of the State imposes upon it exacting aims. In other words, the State must be governed by Islamic ideals and principles: the bases of the Islamic political system.

The Islamic concept of justice

In his explanation of justice being the primary basis of the Islamic political system, al-Rayyes says that justice is an aim which stands above all other aims in the Islamic theory of government. Justice is a basic ideal to be achieved in the Islamic Shari'ah. The Qur'an, the basic source of the Shari'ah, places justice as the prerequisite of government. The Prophet Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic State, is reported to have said that the "Islamic community lives in peace so long as it is governed by truth and justice. . . ."

A correct understanding of justice in Islamic thought must include its manifold meanings: social, economic, political and legal. Furthermore, justice is always associated with integration and progress of the community. Ibn Khaldun is right when he makes it clear that a State which stands on justice can hope to accomplish progress and a high degree of civilization. On the contrary, a State which stands on injustice should expect degeneration and death.

The Islamic theory of State, in addition, sees a relationship between justice and responsibility. This principle is regarded as the second basis of Islamic theory of government. Al-Farabi, in commenting on this, observes that authority which lacks wisdom and rationalization does not lead to progress — it leads to community disintegration and failure. He calls this kind of authority an ignorant authority. But an authority which is based on responsibility and reason is an authority which can observe justice and which leads the community to happiness. Al-Farabi calls this type of government the excellent government.

While al-Farabi associates responsibility with the general progress of the community, Ibn Baja (d. 1138 C.E.) sees that the qualities of the ruler, being responsible or irresponsible in the administration of the State, must be regarded as one of the most important bases of good or bad government.

Most interesting is al-Mawardi's (379-1058 C.E.) analysis

The Shuraa or consultation is the modern group thinking

The third basis of the Islamic system of government is the conception of the Shuraa. The conception of the Shuraa in Islamic thought means the approach of group thinking to problems arising in political life and a method of reaching rationalized decisions. The Shuraa means literally "the seeking of the advice of others". Besides, it is the way to arrive at decisions involving the opinions of others.

The conception of the Shuraa, politically speaking, is one which seeks the advice of ahl al-Hall wa 'l-Aqd (men known for wisdom and respect and confidence of people), who are more or less a legislative body representing al-Ummah (the nation) in the State. Ibn 'Arabiyyah (d. 1328 C.E.) indicates in his book Siyasa al-Shari'iyah that Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic State, not only practised the Shuraa in all his decisions, but insisted that the Shuraa was a basic concept of Islamic theory of State.

The importance of this concept lies in its closeness to our modern thinking and approach to the administration of the State. It can be said that the Shuraa concept in political thinking today represents almost the idea of a legislative assembly under the democratic system, only the latter appeared ten centuries later in the West.

IV. FORM OF THE STATE

The early Caliphate in Islam is much like the modern Republicanism

The Islamic political conception on the Form of the State is also a natural reflection of Islamic political environment and traditions. A careful study of Islamic political environment and traditions shows that both Islamic thought and system concentrate on the Caliphate system. A. al-Sanhoury, a prominent modern Egyptian Muslim thinker, indicates in his book Le Califat that the caliphate (or Imamate) forms a real contract. Describing the contract of the caliphate, al-Sanhoury says that it is a contract which satisfies all that is required of it from the juridical viewpoint. The purpose of the caliphate is to erect by such a juridical contract a political system based on Islamic political mind whereby the Head of State, the Caliph, is elected. The Caliphate, al-Sanhoury continues, is, furthermore, a free contract made by two parties: the Caliph and the Ummah (the nation). A further analysis shows that it is a system based on election and popular approach. Al-Ummah practises election in two bay'ahs (oaths of allegiance) — the specific bay'ah of Abl al-Hall

23 Al-Mawardi: al-Ahkaam al-Sultaniyah, p. 16.
26 Ibid., p. 94.
27 Ibid., p. 5.
28 Ibid., p. 5.
wal-'Aqd (electors), coupled with the general bay'ah of the public. Moreover, both the Head of the State and the Ummah are governed by the Islamic Shari'ah.

What is remarkable about Islamic political theory concerning the Caliphate is that the executive, legislative and judicial powers are independent of each other. The legislative power is in the hands of al-Ummah, the executive power is in the hands of the Caliph and the juridical branch is independent in itself, and formulates its decisions according to the Islamic Shari'ah.

When the Islamic system of government is translated into modern terms, it can be said that the Caliphate system is very much like Republicanism. Both systems establish the Head of State through election by the people and make him responsible to them. The only difference between the Caliphate and Republicanism is that the former allows the Head to remain in power for a fixed period, while the latter allows him to retire office as he abides by the Islamic Shari'ah.

Thus the Islamic political thought is not only original but is also a forerunner of many political ideas which appeared in almost similar fashion several centuries later in the West. The concept of separation of powers, together with the principle of representation, can be cited as examples in point. Islamic thinkers conceived of what is now known as Montesquieu's concept of separation of powers several centuries later. They also conceived of Rousseau's Social Contract. Rousseau's basic premise, which says that the Head of State is the choice of the people under a contract, was not unknown to Islamic political thinking. What Rousseau dreamed of in his Social Contract was already a reality in the Islamic system of government.

Of no less importance is the Islamic theory of al-Kifaya. Al-Kifaya is nothing more than allowing individuals who fulfill certain qualifications — such as knowledge of political life, responsibility and loyalty, among others — to elect the Head of State in the name of all people. In other words, what is termed the Kifaya in Islamic political theory is more or less the principle of representation in modern times.

V. SOVEREIGNTY AND THE SOVEREIGN POWER

In discussing sovereignty and sovereign power under the Islamic political theory, one must refer oneself to what has been said earlier about the Head of State, the Caliph, where he is elected by the people and that he is responsible to them. In other words, the Caliph derives his powers from the Islamic Ummah. How does it work? The answer to this question lies in the contract formed between two parties based upon free choice: the Caliph and al-Ummah. Thus the Caliph remains obligated to the Ummah — so long as he abides by the Shari'ah rules. When he fails to meet with the rules, it becomes the right of the people to proclaim the break of the contract, thus necessitating the election of another Caliph. In fact, the Khawarij Islamic school of thought takes an extreme stand whereby it advocates the principle of revolution against a deviating caliph.

Let us now attempt an answer to the question: Where does sovereignty rest under Islamic political thought? Does it rest with the people alone as in a democracy? Or does it rest with the Head of State as in a dictatorship? The correct answer to these questions must take into consideration the requirements of the Ummah (the nation) and the law or Islamic Shari'ah, because the Islamic political system is neither autocracy nor theocracy. Nor is it democracy, since an Islamic nation does not decide alone in public matters.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Arabic-Islamic political thought is an original system. Its originality stems from its contribution to the field of political theory of new theories and concepts. The fact that so many of the Islamic political ideas which still remain valid in our modern time testifies to its depth of thinking.

In concluding our treatment of the Islamic contribution to the field of political theory, a reference should be made to some of its basic and important theories such as the pact for the denunciation of rights propounded by al-Farabi, whose ideas anticipated both Rousseau and Locke. Of equal importance are Ibn Khaldun's conception of the "unstable state of nature," whose enunciation has been ascribed to Hobbes, and the theory of sovereignty developed by al-Farabi which later in Europe was formulated by Bodin in the 16th century C.E.

There are yet other contributions by Muslim thinkers that deserve recognition, e.g., the concept of "social justice," which includes equality before the law (a legal phase of Islamic justice), political freedom (a political phase of Islamic justice), equality of opportunity (an economic phase of Islamic justice).

Finally, a reference should be made to al-Ghazzali's Theory of Evolution, which anticipated both Spencer and Huxley; also al-Ghazzali's "principle of majority." At this stage it is useful to draw attention to some examples of erroneous comments made by Western thinkers on Islamic political thought. The American orientalist D. B. Macdonald, in his book Development of Muslim Theology, says (in page 58), "within limitation the Imam must rule as an absolute monarch." Of course such a statement raises the question as to whether the writer knows how to differentiate between the Islamic political theory and the practice of it. In the practice of Islamic political thought there are some Caliphs in Muslim history who have violated the Islamic rules — but that does not prejudice the concept itself.

Another example is Sir William Muir, who in his book The Caliphate makes the self-same mistake when he says: "The type and exemplar of Muslim rule is the absolute and autocratic monarch." Here one need only refer to the al-Shuraa principle in the Islamic system of government.

Some marked differences between Islamic political thought and democratic ideals

Before ending this study, it is but right that we refer our reader to a mistake made by some modern writers where Islamic political thought is regarded as synonymous with Western democracy. In fact, the Islamic political thought is purely Islamic. It is neither Western nor Eastern. And so are its theories. But this should not mean, on the other hand, that there are no similarities between Islamic and democratic ideals. For example, the Islamic and democratic ideals are almost identical in the matter of the sovereignty of the people, the equality before the law, the freedom of thought, and the separation of powers.

The Islamic political ideals differ from democratic ideals,
MODERN ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN INDONESIA
The Modernist Movement—Muhammadiyah’s Role in Indonesia

The influence of the writings of Ahmad Dachlan

By A. MUKTI ‘ALI

Dutch educational system in Indonesia and the activities of the Christian missionaries produced a distorted picture of Islam in the minds of the intelligentsia.

The Dutch educational system was entirely different from the two indigenous systems of schools, the pesantren and madrasah. Dutch education did not spread widely among the Indonesians, however, until after the introduction of the so-called “ethical policy” in 1900. In that year, with a native population in Java of nearly 30 million, less than 75,000 were attending government schools. The increase in the number of government schools was the first practical expression of the ethical policy, as Furnivall asserts. Thus in 1900, among those receiving primary instruction in Dutch, there were 17,025 Europeans, and only 1,615 Indonesians; in 1930, against 38,236 Europeans, there were 71,618 Indonesians. In 1901 the total number of students receiving M.U.L.O. or secondary instruction (then including vocational instruction) was 1,255, of whom all but 29 were Europeans; by 1910 the total had risen to 2,537, and by 1930 (now excluding vocational instruction) there were 6,994 Europeans and 7,768 Indonesians.

The system of Dutch education was mainly intellectualist and individualist. With the exception of the autonomous Christian schools, it did not play a leading part in the colonial higher educational system. The upper stratum of Indonesian society soon came under the influence of Western culture; and certain of its characteristics, such as individualism, rationalism, naturalism and the like, gained a hold on the Indonesians, especially the youth.

Thus at a time when Indonesian Islam was not yet wholly purified from indigenous unorthodox practices, the Dutch-educated intelligentsia began, under the influence of the above-mentioned ideas, to show an indifferent attitude towards Islam and even to regard it as a religious and cultural anachronism and an obstacle to progress. They were confirmed in this attitude by what they saw of the condition of the mass of the Muslims, which was not such as to give high reputation to their religion, and of the religious educational institutions, which were incapable of producing scholars of the worldly sciences on a par with the Western schools.

The activities of Christian missionaries with the help of the Dutch Government. Indonesians take stock of their failings

Another factor was the increase in Christian missionary activities in Indonesia. This had been made possible by the approval and the financial help given to them by the Dutch government. Since the early 19th century, Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries had been permitted to work in the outer provinces of Indonesia. But on account of the Dutch government’s fears that missionary activities in Java might inflame Muslim resentment, they were not admitted into Java until 1851. From 1890 onwards, however, mission schools were regularly subsidized and they began to make rapid progress both in Java and in the outer Provinces.

In view of the then conditions of Islam in Indonesia, it is no wonder that not only in the press, but even in the Dutch parliament, voices were heard casting disrepute on the Indonesian Muslims.

“... Every new period in the history of civilization obliges a religious community to undertake a general revision of the contents of its treasury,” said Snouck Hurgronje in a lecture given in 1914; and at this crucial period, the rehabilitation of Islam in Indonesia found its expression in the establishment of various religious, social and political organizations.

Thus we may say that:

(a) the impurity of the religious life;
(b) the inefficiency of the religious education;
(c) the activities of the Christian missionaries; and
(d) the indifferent and even anti-religious attitude of the intelligentsia

were the main factors which led to the establishment of those various movements and that these were the main sectors in which they endeavoured to introduce reforms.

Of course the pioneers of these movements were aware of the unsatisfactory economic and political condition of the Indonesians under Dutch colonial rule.

The aims of the Muhammadiyyah

One of the most important socio-religious organizations is the Muhammadiyyah. It was established by Kiya'i Hadji Ahmad Dachlan on 18 November 1912 at Djogjakarta (Central Java).

Although it was to become the most influential non-political Islamic movement in Indonesia, it was not the first modernist movement in the country. Rasein Bey, a Turkish Consul at Djakarta, had encouraged the sending of Indonesian students to Istanbul with scholarships from the Ottoman government. This met with a good response from the Indo-Arab community, and five students were chosen to be sent to Istanbul. To arrange their sending, a benevolent society was founded in 1905 with the name of “al-Djami’at al-Khayriyyah”. In the following year, 1906, the Djami’at established a madrasah at Djakarta.

In 1905, with the intention, among other things, of combating the Chinese supremacy in trade and commerce, the Sharikat Dagang Islam (Islamic Trading Society) was established by Hadji Samanhudi at Surakarta (Central Java). In 1912 this association was transformed into the Sharikat Islam the first political party in Indonesia.

The Muhammadiyyah, though, to start with, very limited in its programme, grew rapidly, especially in the 1920s. As the number of its branches and members increased, various projects were undertaken at various places and times — in Java, Sumatra and other islands — during the Dutch, Japanese and Republican periods, but the basic objectives of the movement did not change. These objectives can be summarized under four main headings:

1. the purification of Indonesian Islam from the corrupting influence and practices;
2. the reformulation of Islamic doctrine in the light of modern thought;
3. the reform of Muslim education; and
4. the defense of Islam against external influences and attacks.

These four objectives are interrelated but for the purposes of discussion will be treated separately.

The Muhammadiyyah addresses itself to uproot the evils of charms

The first and second objectives — the purification of Indonesian Islam and the reformulation of the Islamic doctrine — have in view many features of Indonesian religious thought and practice current then and now.

25 This is the name as given by Osmar Amin Hoesin, “Seraih perkembangan politik modern di Indonesia” in Hikmah, VIII, No. 20/21 (No Lebaran, 1374, 1954), p. 24.
26 See Tamar Dja’i’s article in Hikmah, IX, No. 137, April 1956, pp. 16, 18. For the controversial date of the establishment of the Sharekat Dangang Islam, who was the founder of the nationalist movement in Indonesia and who was the first to call for the emancipation of women; see Tamar Dja’i’s articles, “Rohana Kudus Srikiandi Islam sebelum Kartini” in Hikmah, IX, No. 13, 7 April 1956, pp. 16-17; No. 14, 14 April 1956, pp. 18-19; article “Rohana Kudus telah berbuat benjak sebelum Kartini” in Hikmah, IX, No. 15, 21 April 1956, pp. 16-17.
27 Literature on Sharikat Islam, vide supra, footnote (13).
28 These words have been taken almost unchanged from H. A. R. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1945, p. 33. The present writer considers that H. A. R. Gibb’s analysis of the basic principles of the Shaikh Muhammad ‘Abduh’s reform movement in Egypt is generally applicable to those of the Muhammadiyyah movement in Indonesia.


Of the many objectionable practices which had found their way into Islam as harmful innovations, and of the considerations put forward by the Muhammadiyyah in its campaign to uproot them, only some of the most typical instances can be mentioned here. These practices, partly of pre-Islamic (Hinduistic) origin, had been allowed to creep into Islam and had kept their hold over the common people, perhaps because the Kiya’i (religious leaders) had been too negligent and easy-going, or perhaps because the Kiya’i themselves had encouraged them to strengthen the hold of religion upon the common people. Many abuses were the outgrowth of the cult of saints (and the number of saints venerated in Indonesia was large) such as the offering of prayers and sacrifices at their tombs, etc. Others were connected with the sufi orders.

The Muhammadiyyah recognizes the right which the Indonesian Muslims have for sufiism, but it is also aware of the fact that what is commonly regarded as sufiism by the average Indonesian is quite out of harmony with the reforming modernist philosophy of life. Therefore the Muhammadiyyah does not reject sufiism in itself but takes account of it and seeks to give it an entirely new meaning. Its purpose, according to the Muhammadiyyah, should be to cleanse the heart and spirit of mankind from all uncleannesses, meanness and faults brought into being by the lust of the lower nature by Satan. It should not be another-worldly experience achieved by magical practices but a practical and measurable influence for the good in human relations. It should assist Muslims to live more intelligent, refined and useful religious lives. On the other hand, mysticism of a kind which rejects all worldly things, leading to mere asceticism, and giving itself up to the repetition of the dhikr, has no room in the Muhammadiyyah.

Other abuses are the result of misplaced veneration of parts of the Qur’an and other objects regarded as sacred, like the use of the portions of the Qur’an as adjimat (charm and amulet), the veneration of the kris (a kind of sword), the aqiq (a semi-precious stone — cornelian) and the like, which are popularly believed to possess special powers. (The leading article in the November 1964 issue of The Islamic Review deals with the subject of charms, amulets and other such deplorable practices amongst the Muslims.—Ed., I.R.) Similarly, the Muhammadiyyah fights various practices connected with marriage, circumcision, funeral rites, etc., which are regarded as harmful superstitions.

The root-cause of the present degeneracy of Muslims in Indonesia

The fundamental fault underlying the present degeneracy, in the view of the Muhammadiyyah, is the fact that Islam has been suffered to drift away from its early simplicity. So simple was the religion in its early days that it was easy for people to learn Islam from the Arabs, and thus the rapid spread of Islam was facilitated. When the different schools of thought came into being, the Muslims misunderstood their significance and tied themselves to them so blindly that they came to believe that religion consisted of these vast and complex systems conceived by the doctors of the schools; with the result that it became very difficult for the non-theologian to understand as to what religion was. All that is required therefore, is to return to the bases of the faith, that is to
understand Islam from the Qur'an and the Hadith. From this it follows that the *ijtihad* (intellectual exertion) is needed in place of slavish submission to the *fiqh*. The Muhammadiyyah therefore rejected the common opinion that the *Tuluh* and the *Nihayah*, the two standard *sha'ī'ite* law-books in Indonesia, were the only reliable guides to determining one's attitude towards miscellaneous religious questions. The Muhammadiyyah does not reject *a priori* the opinion of the doctors; on the contrary, it makes an inventory of their opinion, compares one opinion with another and favours the opinion which in its view conforms with the Qur'an and the Hadith. "This is our opinion, according to the Qur'an and the Hadith, after considering several opinions of the different *Imams* and *Ulama*. And we side with the true opinion," thus states the *Madris Tardjh* (the Muhammadiyyah Council of Doctors) when explaining its legal decisions.22

The inclusion of 'Abduh's *Risalah al-Taubhid* and the *Tasvir* in the curriculum of the *Mu'allimoons* (schools in which candidates for appointment as teachers in the Muhammadiyyah's elementary schools receive training) indicates the standpoint of the Muhammadiyyah on theology and the Qur'ānic exegesis.23

**Muslim education in Indonesia**

The third objective of the Muhammadiyyah is the reform of Muslim education. Hadji Ahmad Dachlan

31 The present writer regrets very deeply that materials on the Muhammadiyyah in the Dutch period, especially those published by the movement itself, which would have thrown so much light on that crucial period in which the leaders of the Muhammadiyyah endeavoured to lay down the principles of their movement, have either been inaccessible to him or very scarce. On the application of *ijtihad* and the rejection of *taqdis*, etc., see T. Kamil, "Pere-daran Hoekom Agama Islam", his speech at the Muhammadiyyah Conference of West Java, 1938, in *Panjuran Amal*, III, No. 9, 1938, pp. 206-212; see also Archer, op. cit., especially p. 112; c.f. B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, W. van Hoeye, The Hague-Bandung, 1955, pp. 126-127, from his observations in Minangkabau. The chapter "The Causes and Effects of Communism on the West Coast of Sumatra", pp. 83-166, in Schrieke, op. cit., was originally published as Chapters I and II, Sections I and II of *Rapport van de Commissie van Onderzoek Ingetijden* (Governments besluit van 13 February 1927, No. 1a, Land's druk-kerij, Wellingraden, 1928; see also Hamka, *Ajahku*, Wijidja, Djakarta, 1930, especially pp. 50-53, 57-72, how Dr. Hadji 'Abdulkarim Amrujah gave *fatwas* (legal decisions) on several religious matters. It is very interesting to examine how the Muhammadiyyah (the religious council) of the Muhammadiyyah explains and execute its decisions on religious matters. Usually the *Madris Tardjh* received questions from Muhammadiyyah groups or branches on matters relating to religion, the manner of answering the questions on the basis of verses of the Qur'ān or Traditions in both Arabic and Indonesian in such a way as to make it easy for the Indonesian Muslims to understand religion. See *Kitab beberapa masalah*, 4th ed., 1954, which contains the decisions of the *Madris Tardjh* in the 18th-29th (1929-1940) Congresses on several religious questions; *Kitab Shijam*, 2nd ed., 1955, contains decisions about questions of fasting taken by the *Madris Tardjh* in the 28th (1939) Congress; *Kitab Iman dan Sembuang*, 4th ed. (the resolutions of the 18th (1929) Congress); *Kitab Djuwazah*, 3rd ed., n.d. (decisions of the 32nd (1953) Congress); *Wakaf*, 1955 (decisions of the 32nd (1953) Congress); *Kitab Zakat*, 2nd ed. (decisions of the 31st (1950) Congress) *Dari hal* : *Pakauan Wantiu Islam*, 2nd ed., 1943; and *Tuntutun Shalatu-Murfah*, 3rd ed., 1955, both of the *Tardjh* of the Muhammadiyyah Djojakarta branch.

32 See the preface to *Kitab beberapa masalah*, 4th ed., 1954, p. 3 note.

33 'Abduh's *Risalah al-Taubhid* was translated into Indonesian by Muhammad Hani, a student of Ahmad Dachlan, see K. H. A. Dachlan, op. cit., p. 24; concerning the character of 'Abduh's commentary on the Qur'an and his theology, see the doctoral dissertation of Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, Oxford University Press, London, 1933.

especially, and leaders of the Muhammadiyyah generally, realized that the education in Indonesia was already split into two streams: the secular Dutch education which ignored the teachings of religion, and the pesantren education which taught no subjects except religion. All higher education was supplied, not by the pesantren, but by the Dutch faculties. In the first decade of the 20th century the rift between the secular and the religious education became so wide that it manifested itself in almost every department of social and intellectual activity: in the manner of dressing, speaking, living, etc., as well as in the way of thinking. The width of this rift in Indonesian society and the necessity of closing it down justified the emergence of an organization like the Muhammadiyyah.

From the start the Muhammadiyyah divided its educational reform programme into two parts:

(a) giving religious education in the Dutch secular schools:

(b) establishing schools in which both religion and other sciences are taught.

Being conscious of the importance of teachers, Ahmad Dachlan began at an early stage to give religious instruction in the government *Kweekschool* (Teachers' Training School) at Djojakarta so that *Kweekschool* graduates who became teachers in elementary schools might understand religion.24

The rationalistic character of the manner in which the Muhammadiyyah formulates the doctrines and principles of Islam is perhaps the reason why the influence of the Muhammadiyyah is much greater among the educated Muslims, more especially the Dutch-educated Muslims, than among the ranks of the professional men of religion or the pesantren-educated *santris*.

Ahmad Dachlan also opened a *Mu'allimoons* school in which the teachers of the Muhammadiyyah's own elementary schools were trained. The Muhammadiyyah has never neglected the problems of elementary and secondary education, and it has established many schools on the lines of the very complicated Dutch educational system.25

In this way the Muhammadiyyah creates a type of educated Muslim acquainted with both religious and secular sciences: a Muslim who is armed with religion and does not feel ashamed to call himself a Muslim in front of others, since he understands that his religion is in harmony with the modern age: a Muslim who is acquainted with modern sciences without fearing or incurring the reproach that he has abjured his faith, since he understands his religion just as well as he understands these sciences.

Besides establishing training schools for male teachers (*Mu'allimoons*) the Muhammadiyyah has established training schools for female teachers (*Muallimaat*). Parallel to these training schools for men and women, schools for male preachers (*Muhalliehoon*) and female preachers (*Mubahlihaat*) have been set up. A graduate of an elementary school (6-year course) is eligible to join either the training school or the preachers’ school, in which the periods of instruction are five years and three years respectively.


Realizing that the extension of secondary education would lead to a demand for universities, the Muhammadiyyah in its 25th Congress in 1936 passed a resolution to establish a Muslim University. A committee was set up to prepare for the setting up of this University, but the cloud of war was hanging heavily in the sky and it burst out in the form of the Second World War of 1939-1945. Though the war put an end to the initial efforts of the Committee, the idea of having a Muslim University continued to burn in the heart of every member of the Muhammadiyyah.

The Muhammadiyyah's defence of Islam against external influences and attacks

The fourth and last objective is the defence of Islam against external influences and attacks.

It has been said that in the first section the religious laxity of the Dutch-educated Indonesians and the increasing activity of the Christian missionaries were among the chief influences which stimulated the establishment of the Muhammadiyyah. The movement's efforts for the defence of Islam were primarily directed against these two influences. As a result of the Western secular education, many of the young intellectuals have become indifferent towards religion in general, indeed some of them consider that religion is an obstacle to progress. The case of Sumandari and Suroto in attacking the Prophet Muhammad in the late 'thirties, and other writings and speeches of nationalists criticising Islamic institutions, like saying that "to go to Digul (the Dutch government's concentration camp in New Guinea for political internees) is much better than to go to Mecca, because we go to Digul with consciousness and we go to Mecca without the least understanding," may explain why the Muhammadiyyah movement envisaged such a great need to defend Islam.

Another factor which has produced important effects among the Javanese intellectuals is that as a result of Western scientific research, old Hindu-Javanese traditions of political and secular cultures, which never died out in their cycle, have found new support. They revived the past glories of Indonesian history. The splendour of the ancient empire of Madjapahit with its able chancellor, Gadjah Mada, and its King, Hajam Wuruk, or the empire of Kediri and its King, Airlangga, were dug up from the forgotten past by archaeologists and linguists and have become heroic ideals for the young Javanese. Sometimes they compared the Hindu-Javanese period with the Islamic period to the disadvantage of the latter, without the least consideration that the time and circumstances of the two periods are not commensurable.

The next object against which the defence of Islam has been directed is the propaganda of Christian missionaries. The Dutch government officially proclaimed its "neutrality" towards religion but showed a very marked bias in favour of the Christian mission. A comparison of the subsidies given by the Dutch government to the Protestant and Catholic missionaires and to the Muslims will explain why the Muslims questioned the government's "neutrality." The present writer will not discuss the typical modernist character of the argument in defence of Islam which has been used by the Muhammadiyyah, since these have been analysed (and criticized) by scholars like Professor H. A. G. Gibb and Wilfred Cantwell Smith. The former's analysis of what he calls "apologetic" and "controversial" arguments in his Modern Trends in Islam, and the latter's analysis of "apologetics" in his Modern Islam in India, and again more comprehensively in his Islam in Modern History may be applied in a lesser degree to the Indonesian apologetics, also.

The Muhammadiyyah's treatment of religion as being in conformity with modern sciences, its presentation of the Prophet Muhammad, its explanation of the various Islamic social institutions, its justification of polygamy in the light of social economics, etc., show the same typical trends as found in Egypt and India.

The Sharikat Islam

It has been said elsewhere that besides the Muhammadiyyah, the Sharikat Islam was also founded in 1912 by Hadji 'Umar Sa'id Tjoekraamimoto. The difference between these two is that the first concentrates its activities in reforming Islamic doctrine in the light of modern liberal thought, while the latter carries out vigorously its liberal ideas on political reform.

38 See the Kiya'i Hadji Moenawat Chalil's article "Pemandangan sepiitas lalang" in Sinar Barce (Semarang), Jubilee number, July 1943 (unpaginated). The following table shows the difference of subsidies given to the religious communities in Indonesia:

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If we consider the percentage of the Muslims in comparison with that of the Protestants and Catholics, we may see how small were the subsidies which the Dutch gave to the Muslims. No census based on religion has been taken in Indonesia. The Kiya'i Raden Hadji Anawi Hadiswawata, another prominent Kiya'i of the Muhammadiyyah, Solo, has, however, recently published his findings as follows:

- Muslims: 66,286,097
- Protestants: 3,286,265
- Catholics: 921,938
- Hindu and Hindu Bali: 1,387,349
- Buddhists and Sam Kauw: 1,500,000
- Adat and Animism: 3,666,550
- Under investigation: 439,680

This is his article "Agama dan aliran Kepertajaman masjatki di Indonesia" in Hikohn, IX, No. 37, 38 (No Istimewa), 12 October 1956, pp. 33-35; and Hikohn, IX, No. 39, 20 October 1956, pp. 8-10.

39 See especially Chapter IV, Modernist Religion, pp. 63-84.

40 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Modern Islam in India, 2nd Indian ed. (rev.), Lahore, 1946; see, for example, pp. 45-46; 49 et passim.


42 See various articles in Pandjuran Amal. Such a presentation has also been given in the Congresses, for example in the 1928 and 1930 Congresses in Djojkarta and Buitkinnings respectively (see Bloemberger, article "Mohammadiah" in ENI, VI, p. 269).

43 See the description of the Prophet Muhammad given by several Muhammadiyyah speakers on Isra and Mi'raj meetings (the Prophet's Night Journey and the Ascension) in G. F. Piiper, Fragments Islamica: Studien über das Islamism in Niederlandse-Indien, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1934, especially pp. 148-149.

44 See the opinion expressed by a Muhammadiyyah leader in 1930 Congress at Fort de Kock (Buitkinnings); (Bloomberger, article "Mohammadiah" in ENI, VI, p. 269.).

32
The modernist movements in Sumatra

If in Java Islamic modernism radiated from Djokjakarta, in Sumatra it radiated from Manikabau. In 1910 the Shai Kh Ahmad Djalaluddin al-Azahri issued from Singapore a magazine, al-Iman, the first Indonesian15 Islamic magazine to propagate modernism. He sent his magazine to his friends and pupils in Sumatra, the most notable of them being the Shai Kh Muhammad Djamil Djambek, Hadij ‘Abdullah Ahmad and Hadij ‘Abdu Karim Amrullah. ‘Abdullah Ahmad, inspired by al-Iman and al-Manar (of Cairo), issued from Manikabau in 1911 a magazine named al-Munir.16 The former was an original stylist while the latter was an orator thoroughly well-read in the fiqh.

Al-Munir gained a very wide circulation in Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi (Celebes), Kalimantan and Malaya. It is significant to note that Kiyai Hadij Ahmad Dachlan, the founder of the Muhaddiyyah, was one of the subscribers to al-Munir and that he translated its several articles into the Javanese language for the readers in Java.17

It was in 1918 as a modernist Islamic association was formed in Sumatra with the name of Thawalib, the members of which were students. In 1920 a union of religious teachers (Persatuan Guru-Guru Agama Islam)18 was formed, and these two organizations were the exponents of Islamic modernism in Sumatra. It was only in 1925 that Muhaddiyyah as an organization acquired a foothold in Sumatra.19

If the negative aspect of the Muhaddiyyah in Java was its fight against all kinds of superstitions and surviving Hindu and indigenous influences, its negative aspect in Sumatra was its fight against the sufi orders and matriarchal ‘aadat practices contrary to the shari’ah.20

Perhaps on account of the temperament of the Sumatran modernist and of the influence exercised upon the local Muhaddiyyah by the Sumatra Thawalib, the movement in Sumatra, especially in the West Coast province, has been more politically orientated than in Java.21

Another difference between the growth and the development of Muhaddiyyah and other modernist movements in Sumatra and Java is that the movements in Sumatra, though more politically orientated, tend to be more conservative in religious matters than the movement in Java.22

Thus we have seen from the previous sections that the characteristic of modern Islamic thought in Indonesia is its liberalistic view. The modernists attempt to shake the foundation of the traditional opinions and established institutions, and prepare ground for the reception of new ideas or proposals of reforms, in religious, social and political life. But it does not mean that with the influence of modernism, there is no room for conservatism in the Indonesian Muslim twentieth century thought. On the contrary, as a reaction to liberalism, conservatism expands its activities also. So, Islam in Indonesia between 1912-1941 might be pictured as a struggle between liberalism and conservatism, with different intensity, according to the differences in places, times and circumstances. But the similar characteristic of the two different types of thought is their adherence to orthodoxy. In Indonesia, there are no extreme liberals who go beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy.

Another characteristic of Indonesian liberals is that they played and are playing a very important role in the Indonesian society. They supplied the leadership before the Independence (1945) and at present they staff the educational institutions, man the government offices and lead the people in their political, social and religious life.23

53 As an example, a plan on the 1930’s Congress at Bukittinggi to have women speakers address a mixed audience had to be given up when Hadij ‘Abdu Karim Amrullah issued a legal opinion (fatawa) that it is haram (prohibited) for a woman to make a speech to such an audience (Ajahku, op. cit., pp. 122-126).

54 Professor Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, however, writes in his Islam in Modern History, op. cit., “They (the liberals) have supplied the recent leadership of their societies in almost all spheres of activity except the religion. This does not come true with the liberals in Indonesia.”

55

So for they place more emphasis on the unity of ideology than geographic unity.24

A second difference between Islamic political ideals and the Western democratic ideals is that in Islam there is no separation between the unity what is regarded as material and what is regarded as spiritual. This means that Islamic political ideals must rest upon an ethical basis: there is an ethical basis for every political action.

Finally, the aspect of sovereignty is absolutely in the hands of the people in present-day Western democratic systems; while in the case of Islamic thought the Ummah (the nation) is guided by the Shari’ah.

To sum up, the Islamic political thought rests upon its own ideals and traditions. It is not synonymous with Western democratic thought, nor can it be identified with dictatorship. Also, the Islamic political thought is free from any extreme thought.

56 When this principle is applied to modern Muslim nations, no harm will be done if each kept its own geographic identity, and at the same time formed an alliance with other Muslim nations on similar lines to those of Western Europe who claim to be united by democratic ideals.

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FEBRUARY 1965

33
Professor A. J. ARBERRY

His Orientalism

By Rashid Ahmad Jalandari

There have been two extreme points of view in the Muslim world about the activities of Western orientalists in the field of Islamic studies. One is that the Western orientalists are more or less an avant-garde of colonial powers and Christian missionaries, and that all their efforts to bring classical Arabic or Persian literature to light are suspect. The chief exponent of this view is the Egyptian scholar Dr. Muhammad al-Bahiyy, now a Professor in Cairo University, Cairo (see Dr. Bahiyy's al-Mubashshirun wa al-Mustashriquun, published by the Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt).

The other view, namely, of those whose knowledge of Islam and its culture is based only on the writings of these orientalists, accepts without demur what these orientalists say. Both views are lacking, to some extent, in reality and truth. There are some orientalists, though they are few, who are really interested in human culture as it is. The nature of their cultural activities and contributions to Islamic literature are themselves witness to their sincerity, and their deep affection for what belongs to all mankind.

Among these latter distinguished scholars is Professor A. J. Arberry, born in a working class quarter of Frothen on 12 May 1905, who started his orientalist career not by design but by chance. Unlike the late Professor R. A. Nicholson, none of the Arberys, though his parents were eager readers of good books, was familiar with any Islamic language or literature. It was Professor E. H. Minner (later Sir) of Pembroke College, Cambridge, whose advice for a research into Arabic literature, changed Professor Arberry's future. Thus he, in 1927, went to Brown University, opened a new book of knowledge, which is often closed to the Western world. Then he went to Egypt to delve deeper into the Arabic literature. There he met an Arabic-speaking Armenian lady, later to become his wife. After having worked in several places as a lecturer in Arabic or Persian, or as editor of Arabic magazines, he came back to Cambridge University, where he is now Head of the Department of the Islamic Studies (see A. J. Arberry, Oriental Essays).

Professor Arberry, being a scholar of the Arabic and Persian languages, the which combination is a rarity in Western, and even Eastern, academic circles, enjoyed reading the Islamic literature. Apart from his editing some valuable Arabic and Persian manuscripts, he has written several books on various Islamic subjects.

His work in the Oriental literary field was crowned by his Introduction to the Holy Koran, published in London in 1953. The opinions of most Western writers about the Qur'ān are too well-known to us. Owing to the absence of a proper background or to their bad taste or to their missionary aims or bias, they have found in the Qur'ān nothing but contradictions and the Judaeo-Christian heresy. The fact is that to them a study of the Qur'ān is laborious and tedious. But Professor Arberry is in a class by himself in this regard. His literary sense was delighted with the supernatural qualities of the Qur'ān and its Divine message. He disagreed with the biased opinions of the Western orientalists in such a way that had never before fallen even to the lot of a Muslim. It is a matter of regret to observe that Muslim scholars have not even attempted to do so. In discussing the place of the Qur'ān in human history, Professor Arberry says:

"Thanks to the teachings of the Koran, the Arabs became the first people in history to be fully aware of the life and death of civilizations; the new dispensation, that was by definition nothing new but rather the restatement of what was always true, and only lost through human failings, by avoiding the fatal errors of the past, rebellion against the divine will and arrogant forgetfulness of man's place in the universe, would usher in golden and incorruptible age of perfect attunement to God's purpose" (Introduction to the Holy Koran, London 1953).

Further in the same book he observes:

"It (Koran) is among the greatest monuments of mankind. It surely deserves and demands to be more widely known and better comprehended in the West."

It is beyond my imagination to think that these words could ever emanate from a heart that is "hostile to Islam". I am sure if Dr. M. Bahiyy had read this remarkable Introduction to the Holy Koran, he would have given a different idea of the Koran's message and the man who wrote it.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
A most recent Arab writer, Dr. A. L. Tibawi, in a pamphlet English-Speaking Orientalists (London, 1964), rightly deplores the unsympathetic approach to Islam by Western orientalists, for they are not fair to Muslim and Arab affairs. But to my amazement he, also, is not very fair to Professor Arberry. He does not appreciate the services of Professor Arberry to Islamic literature. The author has not seen it fit to pay a tribute to the work of Professor Arberry towards understanding Islam and its culture.

Professor Arberry's attachment to Sufism

We are familiar with the opinions of some Western orientalists about Sufism. According to their point of view, Buddhism, Christianity and Neo-Platonism are the real sources from which Sufism sprang. It is worth pointing out that probably Professor Arberry is the first European orientalist who, being aware that the human spirit is constantly in search of truth, maintained that the Islamic mysticism is original, because mysticism is essentially one, whatever may be the religion professed by the individual mystic: a constant and unvarying phenomenon of the universal yearning of the human spirit for personal communion with God.” (J. A. Arberry, Sufism, London 1963, p. 11). Once Professor Arberry himself told the writer that the concept of piety as epitomized in the Arabic word zuhd as the origin of Sufism. Some people think that Professor Arberry's deep interest in mysticism is only on the intellectual level, otherwise practically he has no experience of this beautiful world. It may be true, but I myself find it difficult to accept this view; for Professor Arberry has paid special visits to the tombs of Ibn Arabi (d. 1240 C.E.) and Ibn Farid (d. 1235 C.E.) in Damascus and Cairo. This sacred journey he undertook was only for meditation and for spiritual discourse with these two celebrated Muslim saints. Again his burning soul led him to Morocco, where he met some Sufis. These sidelights on the life of the learned Professor Arberry enable us to appraise his deep interest in Sufism.

Professor Arberry, who is basically a man of letters, is also interested in pre-Islamic poetry, which exacts hard work even from the Arabs themselves. It is a patent fact that most of the Western orientalists do not taste the flavour of Arabic literature. In their opinion Arabic poetry is poetry of the desert, and that it may be of interest to those who still dwell in the desert and ride camels. But Professor Arberry, knowing the spirit of the Arabic language, enjoys the natural poetry of the Arabs. He says:

"For my own part I cannot share this view. Imra’u’t-Qays and his kind speak to my ear a natural, even at times colloquial language; such, I feel, was the effect they produced on their first audience “ (The Seven Odes. London).

While translating poems of the golden period of Arabic poetry, he gave in his The Seven Odes a brief survey of the translations done by his predecessor scholars, e.g., C. J. Lyall or R. A. Nicholson. One cannot but notice Professor Arberry's skill in translation and his literary sense of the Arabic language. In this brief sketch of Professor Arberry I just cannot give a full description of his work, or my own views about the literary value of the translations of the Qur’án in general and that of Professor Arberry in particular. This deserves a special article, which I hope to contribute to The Islamic Review at a later date.

Picasso once described his standing for long periods at a stretch at one spot without getting tired: “While I work I leave my body outside the door, the way Muslims take off their shoes before entering a mosque.” Professor Arberry sometimes, I feel, does the same thing while at work. At present he is engaged in translating Iqbal’s Jaweed Nameh. Above all, Professor Arberry's personality is a fine and impressive one. I do not know whether great art or literature plays a part in developing a fine personality or a fine personality leaves its impress on literature. But if either of them is found wanting in its influence on the other, then there is something wrong with one of them. Professor Arberry, it seems to me, thinks that he is an heir to the Islamic literature as well as an heir to the Christian legacy. Once the late Nehru asked himself: “What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir?” Answering this question he wrote: “To all that humanity has achieved during tens of thousands of years, to all that it has thought and felt and suffered and taken pleasure in, to its cries of triumph and its bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us” (The Discovery of India, Calcutta, 1956).

I am sure Professor Arberry’s answer would be the same if he was asked what his inheritance was. This is where the greatness of his scholarship and personality resides.

The Full Text of

Professor A. J. ARBERRY’S

Introduction to THE KORAN INTERPRETED
(The World Classics Edition 1964)

A non-Muslim Western Scholar’s gratitude to the Qur’an

“ The Koran, the Sacred Book of Islam, comprises in its 114 Suras or chapters the total of revelations believed to have been communicated to the Prophet Muhammad, as a final expression of God's will and purpose for man. These revelations were supernaturally received, in circumstances of a trance-like nature, over a considerable number of years intermittently, the first (Sura XCVI) dating from about A.D. 610 and the last shortly before Muhammad's death in A.D. 632. It is uncertain whether the whole of the text was committed to writing during the Prophet's lifetime; he himself is said to have been illiterate, and merely to have ‘recited’ the words he heard out of heaven. Tradition relates that a few years after his death the scattered fragments were collected together from scraps of parchment and leather, tablets of stone, ribs of palm branches, camels' shoulder-blades and ribs, pieces of board, and the breasts of men’ — this last phrase referring to the retentive memories of the Prophet's immediate followers. It was during the reign of the third caliph Uthman (644-656)

1 Reproduced with kind permission of the publishers, the Oxford University Press, Oxford, England.
that the definitive canon was established by a panel of editors directed by the Prophet's amanuensis Zaid ibn Thabit. To these men belongs the responsibility for the accepted arrangement of the text, an arrangement which is far from being chronological or rationally coherent; the principle followed seems to have been to place the Suras in diminishing order of their length with the solitary exception of the first Sura, called 'The Opening'. Apart from certain orthographical modifications of the originally somewhat primitive method of writing, intended to render unambiguous and easy the task of reading and recitation, the Koran as printed in the twentieth century is identical with the Koran as authorized by 'Uthman more than 1,300 years ago.

"Since the Koran is to the faithful Muslim the very Word of God, from earliest times orthodox opinion has rigidly maintained that it is untranslatable, a miracle of speech which it would be blasphemous to attempt to imitate. It is thus the duty of every believer to learn to understand its meaning in the original Arabic; to assist him in this not always easy labour he has at his disposal a great range of commentaries, some of immense length, compiled by learned exegetes in every century down to the present day. For all that, the Koran has been translated many times and into many languages, first into Latin (1143); the earliest English version appeared in 1657. The most esteemed English translations are those of Sale (1734), Rodwell (1861), Palmer (1880), and Pickthall (1930). In all these versions, with the exception of Rodwell's, the traditional order of the Suras has been followed; Rodwell attempted a chronological rearrangement, foreshadowing the far more radical recasting of Richard Bell (1937-9).

"In making the present attempt to improve on the performance of my predecessors, and to produce something which might be accepted as echoing however faintly the sublime rhetoric of the Arabic Koran, I have been at pains to study the intricate and richly varied rhythms which — apart from the message itself — constitute the Koran's undeniable claim to rank amongst the greatest literary masterpieces of mankind. (The summary result of my investigation is printed in my The Holy Koran, published by Allen & Unwin in 1953). This very characteristic feature— that inimitable symphony', as the believing Pickthall described his Holy Book, 'the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy' — has been almost totally ignored by previous translators; it is therefore not surprising that what they have wrought sounds dull and flat indeed in comparison with the splendidly decorated original. For the Koran is neither prose nor poetry, but a unique fusion of both. The verses into which it is divided— and the reckoning by fives and tens goes back to ancient times — are threaded together by loose rhymes into shorter or longer sequences within the Sura; the rhythms of those sequences vary sensibly according to the subject-matter, swinging from the steady march of straightforward narrative or enunciation (tales of the ancient prophets, formulations of ritual and law) to the impetuous haste of ecstatic ejaculation (the majesty of God, the imminence of the Last Day, the torments of Hell, and the delights of Paradise). I have striven to devise rhythmic patterns and sequence-groupings in correspondence with what the Arabic presents, paragraphing the grouped sequences as they seem to form original units of revelation.

"The reader of the Koran, particularly if he has to depend upon a version, however accurate linguistically, is certain to be puzzled and dismayed by the apparently random nature of many of the Suras. This famous inconsequence has often been attributed to clumsy patchwork on the part of the first editors. I believe it to be rather of the very nature of the Book itself. In many passages it is stated that the Koran had been sent down 'confirming what was before it', by which was meant the Torah and the Gospel; the contents of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, excepting such falsifications as had been introduced into them, were therefore taken as true and known. All truth was thus present simultaneously within the Prophet's enraptured soul; all truth, however fragment, revealed itself in his inspired utterance. The reader of Muslim scriptures must strive to attain the same all-embracing apprehension. The sudden fluctuations of theme and mood will then no longer present such difficulties as have bewildered critics ambitious to measure the ocean of prophetic eloquence with the thimble of pedestrian analysis. Each Sura will now be seen to be a unity within itself, and the whole Koran will be recognized as single revelation, self-consistent to the highest degree. Though half a mortal lifetime was needed for the message to be received and communicated, the message itself, being of the eternal, is one message in eternity, however heterogenous its temporal expression may appear to be.

"There is a repertory of familiar themes running through the whole Koran; each Sura elaborates or adumbrates one more — often many — of these. To take a very straightforward instance: Sura XII consists almost entirely of a recital of the story of Joseph, with dramatic hiatuses emphasizing that the story is a familiar one, re-told as a reminder of God's dealings with men and how He delivers out of evil and rewards His faithful messengers. A moral dramedy done in the epilogue. Sura XXVIII somewhat similarly relates incidents from the life of Moses, but the narrative is broken up to introduce a number of favourite leitmotifs; refutation of those who denied Muhammad's mission, the Last Day, and the Judgment, the Unity of God, woven backwards and forwards into the pattern of the composition. Sura XIX (and there are several others like it) follows a somewhat more complex scheme; episodes are sketched from the lives of a series of prophets in illustration of the Divine mercy, followed by a statement of the contrasting fates awaiting those who disbelieve and those who believe. The short Sura XCVII exhibits a simple but perfect rhetorical balance: an opening adoration by contrasted light and darkness introduces three triplets matching exactly together. Sura LV. a triumphant hymn to the power and glory of God, the terrors of Hell, and the joys of Paradise, is knit together by a running refrain as the tension is built up from a quiet and meditative beginning to an unbelievably tremendous close. So the pattern of each Sura can be thoroughly analysed in terms of its leitmotifs: new motives common to the whole Koran, treated in each context individually and with an astonishing wealth and variety of rhetoric and rhythm.

"All previous versions of the Koran, like the original text itself, having been printed as continuous prose, the rhythmic nature of its composition has been largely lost to ear and sight; by showing the text as here presented, some faint impression may be given of its dramatic impact and most moving beauty. I have called my version an interpretation, conceding the orthodox claim that the Koran (like all other literary masterpieces) is untranslatable; in making this interpretation I have considered the opinions of the learned commentators, and when (as not infrequently) they have differed I have been eclectic in deciding between alternative explanations. I have tried to compose clear and unmannered English, avoiding the Biblical style favoured by some of my predecessors. There is, however, one feature of antique usage which I have deliberately retained; it is absolutely necessary, if confusion is to be avoided, to mark the distinction between the second person singular and the second person plural.
footnotes and glosses do not interrupt the smooth flow of the
Arabic Koran, so in this English interpretation footnotes and
glosses have been deliberately avoided; readers anxious for
further guidance should consult the earlier annotated versions.

"This task was undertaken, not lightly, and carried to its
conclusion at a time of great personal distress, through which
it comforted and sustained the writer in a manner for which
he will always be grateful. He therefore acknowledges his
grateful to whatever power or Power inspired the man and
the Prophet who first recited these scriptures. I pray that this
interpretation, poor echo though it is of the glorious original,
may instruct, please, and in some degree inspire those who
read it."

July, 1962

A. J. ARBERRY.

1 XCVI. THE BLOOD-CLOT

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
Recite: In the Name of thy Lord who created,
created Man of a blood-clot.
Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous who taught by the Pen,
taught Man, that he knew not.

No indeed; surely Man waxes insolent.
for he thinks himself self-sufficient.
Surely unto thy Lord is the Returning.

What thinkest thou? He who forbids
a servant when he prays—
What thinkest thou? If he were upon guidance
or bade to godfearing—
What thinkest thou? If he cries lies, and turns away—
Did he not know that God sees?

No indeed; surely, if he gives not over.
We shall seize him by the forelock,
a lying, sinful forelock.
So let him call on his converse—
We shall call on the guards of Hell.

No indeed; do thou not obey him,
and bow thyself, and draw nigh.

2 XCIV. THE EXPANDING

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
Did We not expand thy breast for thee
and lift from thee thy burden.
the burden that weighed down thy back?
Did We not exalt thy fame?
So truly with hardship comes ease.
So when thou art empty, labour,
and let thy Lord be thy Quest.

3 LV. THE ALL-MERCIFUL

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
The All-merciful has taught the Koran.
He created man
and He has taught him the Explanation.

The sun and the moon to a reckoning;
and the stars and the trees bow themselves;
and heaven—He raised it up, and set
the Balance.
(Transgress not in the Balance,
and weigh with justice, and skimp not in the Balance.)
And earth—He set it down for all beings,
therein fruits, and palm-trees with sheaths,
and grain in the blade, and fragrant herbs.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
He created man of a clay
like the potter’s,
and He created the jinn
of a smokeless fire.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Lord of the Two Easts,
Lord of the Two Wests,
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
He let forth the two seas that meet together,
between them a barrier they do not overpass.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
From them came forth the peal and the coral.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
His too are the ships that run, raised up in the sea like landmarks.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still
abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
Whosoever is in the heavens and the earth implore Him;
every day He is upon some labour.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

We shall surely attend to you at leisure,
you weight and you weight.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
O tribe of jinn and of men, if you are able to
pass through the confines of heaven and earth,
and pass through them! You shall not pass through
except with an authority.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
Against you shall be loosed
a flame of fire, and molten brass;
you shall not be helped.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

And when heaven is split asunder,
and turns crimson like red leather—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

On that day none shall be questioned
about his sin, neither man nor jinn.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
The sinners shall be known by their mark,
and they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
This is Gehenna, that sinners cried lies to;
they shall go round between hot, boiling water.
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

But such as fears the Station of his Lord,
for them shall be two gardens—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
abounding in branches—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
therein two fountains of running water—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Therein every fruit two kinds—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
reclining upon couches lined with brocade,
the fruits of the gardens nigh to gather—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Our maidens restraining their glances,
untouched before them by any man or jinn—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Lovely as rubies, beautiful as coral—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Shall the recompense of goodness be other than goodness?
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

And besides these shall be two gardens—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Green, green pastures—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Therein two fountains of gushing water—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Therein fruits, and palm-trees, and pomegranates—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Therein maidens good and comely—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Houres, clustered in cool pavilions—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?
reclining upon green cushions and lovely druggets—
O which of your Lord’s bounties will you and you deny?

Blessed be the Name of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.
Why Not Have A Drink?

By NORMAN LEWIS

It is true that in the last revelation (The Qur’an, 5:90) God gave to Muhammad, we are told that strong drink is only “an infamy of Satan’s handiwork”. We are told to leave it aside in order that we may succeed.

Why did the Qur’an advise against the consumption of alcohol? We have met people who drink, and they urge us to drink. Some are offended because we don’t drink. Should we not reconsider the whole matter?

The surest way to get at the truth about anything, next to personal experience (which may be costly), is to ask someone who knows from experience. Most drinkers are somewhat inarticulate on the virtues and shortcomings of liquor. About all they seem capable of saying on the subject is “Have a drink!”

We have been fortunate that one of the greatest masters of English who ever lived, a man who made his own way in the world by immense toil and the study of life, has given us a minute description of his introduction to the use of alcohol, his subsequent use of it, what it did to him, physically and intellectually, and his ultimate understanding.

In the year 1913 appeared the greatest personal revelation since Thomas de Quincey’s Confessions of an English Opium Eater. The book was John Barleycorn, and the author was Jack London.

Jack London says: “I was no hereditary alcoholic. I had been born with no organic, chemical predisposition towards alcohol. In this matter I was normal in my generation. Alcohol was an acquired taste. It has been painfully acquired. Alcohol had been a dreadfully repugnant thing — more nauseous than any physic. I drank it only for its ‘kick’. And from the age of five to that of twenty-five, I had not learned to care for its kick. Twenty years of unwilling apprenticeship had been required to make my system rebelliously tolerant of alcohol, to make me in the heart and deeps of me desirous of alcohol.”

In this magnificent book, published by the Century Company, Jack London says: “I am writing of the effects of alcohol on the normal, average man.” We must jump across his enthralling true narrative of adventure in order to learn the conclusion of the matter:

“Back on the ranch, in the Valley of the Moon, I resumed my steady drinking. My program was no drink in the morning; first drink-time came with the completion of my thousand words. Then, between that and the mid-day meal, were drinks numerous enough to develop a pleasant jingle. Again, in the hour preceding the evening meal. I developed another pleasant jingle. Nobody ever saw me drunk, for the simple reason that I was never drunk. But I did get a jingle twice each day. . . .

“It was the old proposition. The more I drank, the more I was compelled to drink in order to get an effect. The time came when cocktails were inadequate. I had neither the time in which to drink them nor the space to accommodate them. Whisky had a more powerful jolt. It gave quicker action with less quantity. Bourbon or rye, or cunningly aged blends, constituted the pre-mid-day drinking. In the late afternoon it was Scotch and soda.

“My sleep, always excellent, now became not quite so excellent. I had been accustomed to read myself back to sleep when I changed from awake. But now this began to fail me. When I had read two or three of the small hours away and was as wide awake as ever, I found that a drink furnished the soporific effect. Sometimes two or three drinks were required.

“So short a period of sleep then intervened before early morning rising, that my system did not have time to work off the alcohol. As a result I awoke with mouth parched and dry, with a slight heaviness of head, and with a mild nervous palpitation in the stomach. In fact I did not feel good. I was suffering from the morning sickness of the steady, heavy drinker. What I needed was a pick-me-up, a bracer. Trust John Barleycorn, once he has broken down a man’s defences! So it was a drink before breakfast to put me right for breakfast — the old poison of the snake that has bitten one! Another custom, begun at this time, was that of the pitcher of water by the bedside to furnish relief to my scorched and sizzling membranes.

“I achieved a condition in which my body was never free from alcohol. Nor did I permit myself to be away from alcohol. If I travelled to out-of-the-way places, I declined to run the risk of finding them dry. I took a quart, or several quarts, along in my grip. In the past I had been ashamed by other men guilty of this practice. Now I did it myself unashamedly. And when I got out with the fellows, I cast all rules by the board. I drank when they drank, what they drank, and in the same way they drank.

“I was carrying a beautiful alcoholic conflagration around with me. The thing fed on its own heat and flamed the fiercer. There was no time, in all my waking time, that I didn’t want a drink. I began to anticipate the completion of my daily thousand words by taking a drink when only five hundred words were written. It was not long until I prefixed the beginning of the thousand words with a drink.

“The gravity of this I realized too well. I made new rules. Resolutely I would refrain from drinking until my work was done. But a new and most diabolical complication arose. The work refused to be done without drinking. It just couldn’t be done; had to drink in order to do it. I was beginning to fight now. I had the craving at last, and it was mastering me. I would sit at my desk and daily with pad and pen, but words refused to flow. My brain could not think the proper thoughts because continually it was obsessed with the one thought that across the room in the liquor cabinet stood John Barleycorn. . . .

“And now comes John Barleycorn with the curse he lays upon the imaginative man who is lusty with life and desires to live. John Barleycorn sends his White Logic, the ardent messenguer of truth beyond truth, the antithesis of life, cruel and bleak as interstellar space, pulseless and frozen as absolute zero, dazzling with the frost of irredeemable logic and unforgettable fact. John Barleycorn will not let the dreamer dream, the live live. He destroys birth and death, and dissipates to mist the paradox of being, until his victim cries out, as in ‘The City of Dreadful Night’: ‘Our life’s a cheat, our death a black abyss. And the feet of the victim of such dreadful intimacy take hold of the way of death.’

There is more, much more, in Jack London’s wonderful book, now known to only one reader in a thousand. America has set Jack London aside and now consumes more alcohol than ever. There remains the age-old delusion: “Other men are weak, but I am strong. I know just where to draw the line.”

Now that Jack London has concluded, let us go back and read again the inspired utterance of Muhammad.
STATUS OF WOMAN IN ISLAM

70 Ockendon Road,
London, N.1.
20 November 1964.

Dear Sir,

Assalamo Aleikum!

I am Irish and have lived most of my life in Britain. As I am married to an Eastern Muslim, I can claim some personal experience of the East as well as of the West.

I was not surprised to read Salina Soraya's letter in the November 1964 issue, and am in full sympathy with her observations. But, at the same time, I wish to ring a bell of caution for those who may write to you in response to Soraya's appeal, adding that the position of women in our Muslim society should be judged according to the Qur'anic standards and not according to the Western standards.

Eastern men and women are often dazzled by the glittering façade of the Western life. Most of the newcomers to the West feel that they have come into a highly cultured society. But those who live here long enough to know the true contents of the Western culture ultimately get disillusioned. The fact is that the Western women do enjoy more liberty than their Eastern counterparts. But it does not necessarily mean that they enjoy more rights as well.

The opinion of the Western writers, distorted or otherwise, should matter little to us, for they are either hostile to or are ignorant of Islamic teachings and the Muslim way of life. Their object is to boost up the morale of their own defunct social order. Their very philosophy of life is different from ours. The laws, customs and credos of both differ drastically. Licence of liberty or freedom without responsibility towards parents, for example, is one of the major causes of unhappy family life in the West. Individual liberty, at the cost of social harmony, ultimately ends up as individual unhappiness. Freedom without a planned division of labour and without proportionate rights as well as obligations, creates its own problems. Old people's homes and care of the sick are commendable in a Welfare State like that of England. But when you come to think of it, a very large number of the old and the sick in this country are those who have been neglected by their own kith and kin.

As to the un-Islamic restrictions and impediments imposed upon the women of Muslim countries, one cannot but condemn the rulers of those countries who are, to say the least, a product of foreign thought and influence. You have to have one of the two systems—either unadulterated Islamic culture, with its own social values, or the Western culture with its material advantages and spiritual disadvantages. Those who are trying to fuse the two cultures will never be able to produce good results, for the simple reason that cultures are the evolutionary products of mental attitudes. Mental attitudes, in turn, are the products of religious, geographical and various other backgrounds.

The present trend of the East to imitate the Western way of life is bound to result in a social chaos. We should work very hard to bring back our Islamic environment. Our success in achieving Islamic freedom depends on the degree of our success in reviving Islamic values.

I hope and pray that my sisters-in-Islam would not be deceived by the Western veneer whenever they write about or work for the uplift of the so-called weaker sex of the Muslim world.

Yours truly,
(Mrs.) CATHERINE KHADIJA KHAN.

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MUSLIMS ON THE BLACK MUSLIMS OF AMERICA

Muslim Students' Association,
Apt. 51, 111 South Allen Street,
State College, PA.16801, U.S.A.
29 November 1964.

Dear Sir,

Assalamu Alaikum!

We were sorry to hear about the financial difficulties you are facing. We assure you of our fullest co-operation in your efforts to maintain the quality of your publication. We would, however, take this opportunity to say that we were somewhat disappointed to see the type of coverage you have given the "Black Muslims" in your two previous issues. Since we subscribe to the Black Muslims' publication, Muhammad Speaks, we also happen to know that the Black Muslims appreciate the publicity given to them by your magazine. You know as well as we do that these people are as far from the true Islam as anyone can be. The crooked teachings and preachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad are badly thwarting the cause of Islam in this country. You may manage to gain subscribers among the Black Muslims, but you may lose some of your steadfast readers from among Muslims in general.

Money alone could not make up for the loss of the latter. We therefore request you, in all respect, to publish a balanced evaluation of the Black Muslims' movement, rather than repeating just what they themselves say. Also, you should, if you are interested in these matters, publish what Malcolm X, who is due back in this country soon, has to say about Black Muslims and Islam.

We hope that we have not caused you offence. Since we consider The Islamic Review our magazine, we thought that you would like to know our views. The current issue, by the way, is excellent as regards quality and content. All of us enjoyed reading it.

With best regards,

Yours in Islam,
AHMAD TOTONJI, Secretary.
SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD IN THE WESTERN MIND

Steindorfstr 18,
8 Munchen 22.
West Germany.
8 December 1964.

Dear Brother-in-Islam,

Assalamu 'Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatohu

Enclosed are some points noted during a lecture on Islam. They speak for themselves and need no commentary. This is a typical example of the innumerable and continuous unclean efforts of non-Muslims to distort and disfigure the beauty of Islam, and I think it is extremely important to bring such attempts to the notice of Muslims at large. I would suggest that your readers be requested to send in their experiences as well so that protests from our side could put an end to these tactics.

Yours in Islam,

F. YAZDANI.

Following are some points noted in the course of a lecture on "The Life of Muhammad (Peace be on him !)", held (in German) for the Volkschlohschule (Adult Education College), Munich, on 20 October 1964.

1. Islam is a mixture of Arabian heathenism, Christianity and Judaism.

2. Abraham constructed a temple for his son Isaac and a House of Worship for his second son Isma'il (Ishmael).

3. Dates of birth and death of Muhammad are uncertain.

4. At the age of 40, Muhammad started his efforts to create a new religion.

5. Muhammad's life has been written only on the basis of fantasy.

6. It is stated that Muhammad raised the dead to life and healed the sick.

7. Muhammad's ascension to heaven is a fairy tale wherein Oriental fantasy has been allowed to play its role. It is claimed that he met Allah (God) with 20,000 veils.

8. God ordered prayers 50 times daily, but Muhammad was a very capable business man, and using his skill he got the number decreased to five per day (laughter in the hall!).

9. The truth is that Muhammad was the founder of a religion and a statesman; he possessed a lovable personality but in no way was he wise or morally austere.

10. A rich lady of the Quraysh, Khadija, appointed Muhammad as her camel drover.

11. In connection with his business, Muhammad made several trips to Judaea and Syria, where he came in touch with Christianity and Judaism. He then thought of creating a new religion because he was dissatisfied with the religion prevailing in Arabia at that time.

12. Muhammad was a deep thinker. One day, while in a cave, he dreamt that an angel was asking him to read. On hearing Muhammad's reply in the negative; the angel caught him by his throat and choked him. Thereafter Muhammad could read and write.

13. Muhammad wrote the Qur'an.

14. Having heard from Gabriel that he was a Prophet, Muhammad felt extremely happy and hurried home.

15. At home, Muhammad fell on the floor, sweat covered his forehead and he bellowed like a camel.

16. Later this condition overtook Muhammad whenever he wished it. He claimed to hear voices, which were actually a product of his own religious-mindedness.

17. Muhammad preached for a period of 12 years. His efforts, however, remained unsuccessful, which made him declare, "I shall pluck out the eyes and tear open the bodies (of my listeners) till they understand my religion."

18. Muhammad was attacked in the Ka'bah during his prayers, thereafter he escaped to Medina.

19. For the betterment of State finances, Muhammad and his companions attacked and looted the caravans.

20. The stones of the Ka'bah, especially the Black Stone, are worshipped by the Muslims.

21. After the fall of Mecca, Muhammad became rich. He loved three things in particular:
   (1) Good food;
   (2) Perfumes; and
   (3) Women (laughter in the hall!).

22. It cannot be said of Muhammad that he was morally austere. He claimed that Allah (God) had given him the strength of 50 men, which was the reason for his several marriages (laughter!).

23. 'Ayesha was only ten years old at the time of her marriage.

24. Now (after the fall of Mecca) the proper time had come for spreading the religion of Allah (God) with the help of fire and the sword.

25. Muhammad knew the Bible but not to a satisfactory extent. He never read it properly.

26. At the beginning the direction towards which the Muslims faced while offering their prayers was Jerusalem. The reason, therefore, was that Muhammad expected conversion of the Jews. Later on, however, he gave up this hope.

27. Muhammad died in the year 632 C.E. at the age of 62. It would have been better if he had named a successor.

28. 'Uthman, who ruled from 644 C.E. to 656 C.E., was very religious-minded but a big miser. (Laughter.) He practised nepotism and took care of his own family.

29. After 'Uthman came the division: 'Ali had been waiting long to take hold of the Caliphate.

30. The success and spread of Islam was not only due to force. It was not always the same rule which was put into practice: i.e. "Believe in Allah (God) or you'll be beheaded". There were other factors as well which played an important role, as for instance payment of taxes. The Christians and the Jews were allowed to live in peace because they paid the taxes while the Muslims were granted exemption — no bad tactics indeed! Many Christians and Jews, therefore, accepted Islam and were thus freed from making payments.

31. In the Muslim world there are several movements which are directed towards reformation of Islam and thus to modernise it, e.g. (a) in Turkey, where Mustafa Kemal prohibited the Islamic way of life; and (b) Single marriages instead of marrying four women. This is also not possible due to economic reasons. Just imagine that each of the four wives wishes to have a flat for herself! (Laughter!)

32. The teachings of Muhammad, in short:
   (a) Belief in Allah (God);
   (b) Belief in the prophets; and
   (c) Belief in angels.

33. Allah (God) has 99 names, which include, among others:
   (a) The Tyrant; and
   (b) The Jealous.

According to (a) the relation between God and a Muslim is that of a master and a slave, as against the one in Christianity, where God is Love.

34. Muslims utterly repeatedly their confession of faith in the ears of another Muslim even after his death, so that at the time of his being questioned by the angels in the grave he does not forget his confession of faith. (Laughter!)

35. Muslims believe that on the Day of Judgment, Jesus Christ shall come to pronounce his verdict.

36. Muslims believe in Kismet (fatalism), i.e., God does everything. God knows everything and that man has no control over his affairs. This is enough for the satisfaction of the "Muhammadans". This in short means submission to the will of God, which is the same as Islam. (Laughter!)
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