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ISLAM AND THE CIVILIZATION OF THE WEST

The problem and the conflicting answers

Western civilization poses to the people of Islam today a serious and perplexing problem. This concerns the attitude which the Muslims should adopt towards the civilization of the Western world. Should they absorb or assimilate the civilization of the West in its entirety, or should they reject it altogether? Should they, in the latter case, draw exclusively upon the civilization of the early days of Islam, or should they take it only as a basis or a guide, and then build or engrave upon it ideas from the West? And if partial adoption of some of the facets of the civilization of the West be the right course, what exactly would these be, and what would be the ideas and practices which the Muslims must not import?

The leaders of the Muslim world today are far from unanimous in the solutions they offer for this problem. Some "reactionaries" hold that the best course lies in reverting completely to the civilization of the early days of Islam. Others, masquerading as "progressive", advocate the wholesale adoption of Western civilization. The middle path is followed by those who advocate a mixture of both Islamic and Western civilizations.

The views held on this all-important problem differ in every Muslim country. In the realm of personal attire, for example, you will find the turban, the traditional rural dress, and the fez, existing side by side with the European trousers, jacket and hat. In the realm of education, you will find in existence religious Universities (like al-Azhar of Cairo) as well as modern secular Universities. In the judicial field you will find Shari'a (religious) courts and secular civil courts. In agriculture, modern farming equipment is in operation as well as the primitive plough and the animal-drawn cart. In almost all aspects of everyday life in the Muslim world you will find this amazing contrast in varying degrees.

Western science preferred, but not Western culture

Before the Muslims can decide on what to take and what to discard from the civilization of the West, they must distinguish clearly between the science of the West, on the one hand, and its social culture. In the realm of science, the Muslims can adopt, without reservation, all that the Western world has to offer. Indeed, the Muslims must do this without delay if they are to achieve economic prosperity and strength. The Muslims must not be shy of learning from the West, for the Prophet of Islam bids them seek knowledge "even in distant China".

In the realm of culture, however, the Muslims must take a different attitude. Scientific findings and facts hold valid both in the East and in the West, and the laws of nature are uniform everywhere. But the same cannot be said of culture and national heritage. The cultural tastes and habits of a nation spring from its particular geographical and other surroundings, and from its history and the manner of life of its people throughout the ages. Religion also plays an important part in the moulding of the national characteristics of a people. There can be no greater contrast than that which exists between the Western Christian heritage and the Eastern Muslim heritage.

The infiltration of alien ideas

The social culture of the West has been evolved round the principle of the supremacy of the "white man". The Muslims believe in the equality of all men, and pay no heed to distinctions of colour or creed. The West have always been impatient of other people's religions, intolerant of other people's views, and often disrespectful to them. The Muslims have been enjoined by their religion to be tolerant to the believers in other faiths.

The Muslims can, and must, keep their own culture. To do otherwise would result in a monstrous situation. They must guard against the infiltration of harmful and alien social and cultural ideas from the West. They must take Western science without the social, political or other frills.

There is no doubt that vigilance and care are needed to guard against the infiltration of harmful ideas from the West through the agency of those Muslims who have been dazzled by the brilliant light of the scientific progress of the West, and have consequently developed an "inferiority complex" and a disdain for everything Muslim or Eastern. The excellence of the West in the scientific sphere must not be allowed to confuse the issue in the minds of the Muslims and induce them to import wholesale all manners of alien ideas from the West.

The Muslims have the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad to guide them. It must never be forgotten that when these were applied in their entirety in the early days of Islam they produced wonderful results. With care, they can be applied today with equal success, to give the Muslims something of which they can rightly be proud.
Compiled by Ibraheem ‘Abd al-Fattah Khalifah

Unity and solidarity

The Qur’ān says:

“‘And hold fast by the covenant of God all together, and be not disunited. And remember God’s favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so by His favour you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. Thus God makes clear to you His message that you may be guided” (3:102).

“‘And the believers, men and women, are friends one of another. They enjoin good and forbid evil, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and obey God and His Messenger. As for these, God will have mercy on them. Surely God is Mighty, Wise” (9:71).

“‘And keep your duty to Him, and keep up prayer and be not of the polytheists, of those who split up their religion and become parties; every sect rejoiceing in that which is with it” (30:31, 32).

These verses speak clearly of the need for unity and solidarity amongst the Muslims. The Muslims are members of one nation in the eyes of God.

Compassion

Compassion is the first foundation on which this harmony and solidarity can rest and become enduring. The Qur’ān says:

“‘O you who believe, let not people laugh at people, perchance they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perchance they may be better than they. Neither find fault with your own people, nor call one another by nicknames. Evil is a bad name after faith, and whose turns not, these it is that are the iniquitous. O you who believe, avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is sin: and spy not nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You abhor it! And keep your duty to God, surely God is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful!” (49:11, 12).

“‘And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and thee is enmity would be as if he were a warm friend” (41:34).

Honesty and justice

No social order can be healthy unless it is founded on honesty and justice. The Qur’ān says:

“‘And fulfil the covenant of God, when you have made a covenant, and break not the oaths after making them fast, and you have indeed made God your surety. Surely God knows what you do” (16:91).

“‘And take not a small price for God’s covenant. Surely what is with God is better for you, did you but know!” (16:95).

“‘O you who believe, be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice; and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just, that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to God. Surely God is aware of what you do” (5:8).

“‘O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for God, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he be rich or poor, God has a better right over them both. So follow not your low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely God is ever Aware of what you do” (4:135).

“‘And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know” (2:188).

Industry

The dignity and solidarity of the Muslim nation cannot be achieved without hard work and industry on the part of every member of the community. The Qur’ān says:

“‘He it is who created for you all that is in the earth. And He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens; and He is Knower of all things” (2:29).

“‘God is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forward with it fruits as a sustenance for you, and He has made the ships subservient to you to run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you. And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses; and He has made subservient to you the night and the day” (14:32, 33).

“‘And that man can have nothing but what he strives for, and that his striving will soon be seen. Then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward” (53:39-41).

The Muslim is thus enjoined to rely upon himself and endeavour to exploit the resources of the earth for his benefit.

No aggression

The Muslims must not harbour any aggressive or evil intentions against other nations. The Qur’ān says:

“‘And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but be not aggressive. Surely God loves not the aggressors” (2:190).

“‘Except those who believe and do good and remember God much, and defend themselves after they are oppressed, And they who do wrong, will know to what final place of turning they will turn back” (26:227).
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIRTH OF ISLAM

By “A Muslim Brother”

"Islam is not a mere religion in the sense denoted by this term in the English language. It is a comprehensive way of life both spiritually and materially, governing the individual as well as the group, and including the principles of individual and State rights and duties, and dealings of all sorts — economic, political, or international. Such expressions as ‘religion and State’ and ‘ethics and politics’, as understood in the West, have no equivalent in the Islamic lexicography. The term ‘Islam’ embraces all these concepts integrally and indissolubly. When the Muslim performs his prayers in the mosque, or sells his commodities in the market, or decides between litigants in a court of law, or manages the affairs of State, or concludes treaties and covenants with other States, or fights in the name of justice and right on the battlefield, he looks to the Qur'an and to the Practices of the Prophet Muhammad for guidance, and is mindful of the vigilant eye of God.”

Islam’s revolution to liberate man

For a Muslim, the birth of Islam was in reality the birth of a higher humanity. For Islam is in essence a great liberation movement encompassing the manifold aspects of human life, emanating from the conscience of the individual and oriented towards the life of society. It was a revolution which destroyed in its march all the spiritual, intellectual and social chains which had encumbered man, and declared — thirteen centuries ago — his full rights.

The advent of Islam was a revolution in the realm of belief. It emancipated the human conscience from superstition and fancy; it established the absolute transcendence of the divine essence beyond the polytheistic and anthropomorphic aberrations; and it formed a direct relationship between God and his subjects without any intermediary.

The absolute transcendence of God and the direct link between God and man are the crossroads between order and chaos in the realm of belief, as well as between freedom and slavery. This is no inconsiderable achievement if we recall the sufferings of mankind as a result of the power of clerical intermediaries, the persecution of scientists and free thinkers in the Middle Ages, and the revolutions which broke out in Europe to destroy the hegemony of those claiming to be the vicegerents of God on earth. And as a corollary to this basic approach, freedom of thought has been an indigenous attribute of the Islamic creed, because Islam does not recognize the existence of a clerical hierarchy or group in the sense understood in the non-Muslim world.

Fanaticism and religious intolerance ended

The birth of Islam constituted a revolution in another facet of belief: it was the revolution against religious intolerance, for the Qur'an says:

"There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256).

"And if thy Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers?” (10:99).

Religious fanaticism and intolerance thus gave way to liberality and tolerance. The inviolability of the freedom of belief and of worship for those in the Islamic homeland who professed other revealed religions was guaranteed. When the duty of jihad1 was ordained for the first time in Islam the Qur’an expressed it in the following manner:

"Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And surely God is able to assist them. Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God. And if God did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques, in which God’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely God will help him who helps Him. Surely God is Strong, Mighty” (22:39, 40).

1 Fighting in the cause of God.
The cloisters and churches of the Christians, and the synagogues of the Jews, are in this verse given precedence over the mosques of the Muslims. This significantly underlines the inviolability of these places of worship and the duty of every Muslim to safeguard them against any manner of encroachment or molestation. Religious minorities in an Islamic State are further protected in that in matters of “personal status” they are entitled to be judged in their own religious courts.

The tolerance ordained by Islam went so far as to accord protection even to the infidels, who do not believe in any divine religion at all, provided they refrain from molesting the Muslims in their faith and from enticing them away from their religion. The Qur’an declares:

“...And if anyone of the idolaters seek thy protection (O Muhammad!), then protect him so that he may hear the word of God, and afterward convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not” (9:6).

This is the height of tolerance to which mankind is aspiring today.

The late Shaikh Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt

Racial harmony and the brotherhood of man ordained

Furthermore, Islam represented a revolution against racial intolerance and emphasized the ethnological unity and equality of all races, thus destroying the heinous monstrosity of racial discrimination. It ordained one immutable standard of virtue and excellence, having nothing to do with the colour of the skin, birthplace, or family genealogy. Fear of God and good deeds were made the criterion of excellence for man on earth and in the Hereafter. The Qur’an says:

“O Mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Surely the noblest of you with God is the best in conduct. Surely God is Knowing, Aware” (49:13).

Heterogeneous races, colours and languages have lived in peace for many centuries in the Islamic homeland, while other human societies are still suffering from ugly racial intolerance. The problem of the coloured communities in South Africa, and partly in the United States of America, is still a glaring affront to human conscience. Years ago, a Nazi philosophy was based upon the racial superiority of Aryans. Today, Israel exists upon the myth of God’s “chosen people”.

And lastly, the birth of Islam represented a revolution against class distinctions, as well as against tyrannical rulers; for it divested the ruling classes of all privileges and personal powers. Divine Law became the source of all legislation, and the selection of those in charge of implementing the law was vested entirely in the people. Thus, by depriving human beings of the right to lay down basic legislation, and by recognizing God as the sole legislator, no group or class of persons is afforded an opportunity to rule arbitrarily. Sovereignty in Islam is recognized only in God, and to the rulers in an Islamic State is assigned merely the implementation and execution of the Divine Law. Consequently, Islamic legislation is free of discrimination; and no one will feel that in submitting to the law he is submitting to the will of another person. The ruler also derives his authority from the people who choose him; and obedience is given only to the law with the implementation of which he is entrusted. His right to obedience is forfeited if he oversteps his jurisdiction.

The individual’s responsibilities to his self

Social life in Islam is based upon social co-operation and cohesion amongst its constituent elements, and upon the cultivation of individual conscience and the preponderance of moral imperatives in society.

In discussing social co-operation and the role of religious belief therein, many are inclined to cite such words as charity, philanthropy, and, most of all, the institution of zakat. But these words do not represent the true role of the Islamic creed in the field of social cohesion. Social cohesion in Islam is a full-fledged social system. It is not concerned merely with financial aid in its various forms, as is implied in such concepts as “social security” and “social insurance”. It implies a system for training the spirit and the conscience of the individual, and the cultivation of his personal endowments and capabilities for useful and productive endeavour; and it covers financial and economic relationships within society. Thus, the connotations of charity, philanthropy, and even zakat, are dwarfed in comparison with this all-embracing concept of social cohesion as laid down by Islam and observed as a living reality once upon a time.

Islam makes the individual responsible for his self before God. He is duty-bound to cleanse it from evil, to afford it the good things in life, to give it a fair share of work and rest so that it does not fall into disuse from idleness, nor succumb to exhaustion from overwork.

This equilibrium within the individual and his inner self is designed to awaken the individual’s conscience and sensitivity and enable him to assert his personality and will. Freedom and obligation are the prerequisites of an independent personality. But this apparently individual cohesion is in reality a social one in the wider sense of the concept in Islam, for the training of the individual in this manner is a preparation for the part which he is called upon to play within the social matrix.
The structure of the family

The family structure in Islam is also based upon solid cohesion, in which advantages and liabilities, rights and obligations, are balanced. By basing the edifice of the family upon this principle of cohesion and balance, the social obligations of the State are reduced, because a substantial portion of such obligations is shouldered within the orbit of the family. Such cohesion in the family does not pertain merely to economic affairs. It is all-embracing in scope and includes protection of motherhood, the duty of caring for the children, their adequate preparation and nurturing physically, mentally and spiritually, and the duty imposed upon the offspring towards their parents in their old age and senility.

With a view to safeguarding motherhood, and in order to maintain a healthy home atmosphere, Islam has imposed the financial duty of maintenance upon the man and has exempted the woman therefrom. This is designed to afford the mother the time and energy needed for properly rearing her children. But Islam does not forbid the woman to work. It recognizes her right to gainful employment if she so desires. It also safeguards her inheritance rights, her right to unrestricted financial dealings, her right to choose her life partner, and her right to revoke the marriage contract in appropriate cases.

The relationship between the individual and the group

In Islam there is a reciprocal relationship of interdependence between the individual and the group as regards both rights and obligations. Every individual is duty-bound to perform his own job satisfactorily, because the fruits of his toil would register their impact upon the community as a whole. He is also entitled to certain rights against the community, e.g., the right to be afforded training — both theoretical and practical — for gainful and productive employment. He is also entitled to proper housing, clothing, food, and transportation, commensurate with the needs of the time. If he wishes to get married, and does not possess the means to do so, the State is duty-bound to help him.

It is thus clear that social cohesion in Islam is not merely a system of philanthropy and charity, but a system designed to prepare the citizen for productive endeavour. Only those who are partially or totally incapacitated, whether temporarily or permanently, qualify for help from zakat or charity funds. Zakat is tax collected by the State and spent on the members of the community, without distinction of race or creed, in ways very similar to those which in modern times come under “social security” and “social insurance”.

Islam is a comprehensive way of life

Islam is not a mere religion in the sense denoted by this term in the English language. It is a comprehensive way of life both spiritually and materially, governing the individual as well as the group, and including the principles of individual and State rights and duties, and dealings of all sorts — economic, political or international.

Such expressions as “religion and State” and “ethics and politics”, as understood in the West, have no equivalent in the Islamic lexicography. The term “Islam” embraces all these concepts integrally and indissolubly. When the Muslim performs his prayers in the mosque, or sells his commodities in the market, or decides between litigants in a court of law, or manages the affairs of State, or concludes treaties and covenants with other States, or fights in the name of justice and right on the battlefield, he looks to the Qur’an and to the Practices of the Prophet Muhammad for guidance, and is mindful of the vigilant eye of God.

Islam seeks to save mankind from the evils of usury

Islam categorically and unconditionally prohibits usury, and aims at safeguarding mankind from the bitter fruits of a system based upon usury. Such a system is alien to the concept of social cohesion upon which Islam is based. Money may be invested in production either individually or through stock-holding companies. The surplus may be loaned freely for consumption or for investment. This is compatible with the Islamic concept of social cohesion.

The practice of usury inflicts an injustice upon the borrower of money for productive purposes, because it always places him in a weaker position vis-à-vis the moneylender. The latter always stands to gain from all the loan transactions, because his profit is assured. The borrower, on the other hand, may gain or lose. By mathematical calculation, it becomes apparent that after a sufficient number of such transactions, all the gains pour into the hands of the moneylender, and the efforts of the producer go practically unrewarded. The result would also be the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and the deprivation of most of the inhabitants of the world of their share, thus reducing them to the level of mere wage earners. During the last five centuries this frightening result was almost realized, and money made its way to the coffers of the few moneylenders in the world. Unless mankind destroys this unjust and distorted system, it will be devoured by it and fall an easy prey to the moneylenders. This is what Islam desired to avoid thirteen centuries ago, before mankind had been alerted to the danger.

We need not dwell upon the colonial wars arising from the present interest-rate system. Russia had done away with it, and Germany was on the way to dispensing with it before her defeat in the last war. The system had not escaped criticism from such eminent economists as Harrod, Shackles and Hicus. When there is a sufficient determination to save mankind from this anathema, economists will not find it impossible to base world economy upon some other basis which will establish a direct link between capitalists and producers in a joint and direct enterprise through companies, but excluding the intermediary — namely the banks and other moneylenders. All transactions, however, which lend themselves to gains or losses and in which there is no fixed profit are non-usurious enterprises approved by Islam. In the course of establishing this sound and interest-free economy, Islam does not object to the necessary transition period for readjustment and consolidation.

This is Islam, and this is the ideology which was born in Arabia and brought to mankind by Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdullah.
CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM AND SCIENCE

By Dr. S. M. ‘Abdullah, M.Sc., Ph.D.

The claim of the Christian missionaries

Even today, in an age of light and learning, the Christian missionary is thinking that all the credit for the modern achievements in science and technology is due to Christianity alone.

But the truth about this claim, as recorded by history, is that no thanks are due to the Church for any achievement or advance in science. On the contrary, the greatest opposition that the advancement of culture and progress had to face in the West came from the Christian Church. The Christianity of those days was, and orthodox Christianity even today is, deadly against any freedom of thought. And whenever and wherever any new idea sprang up, the Church invariably rose against it and condemned it as blasphemy, sacrilege, or heresy. The picture of the Holy Inquisition in the pages of European history is too black for any sort of vindication. (For full account see A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe by Draper, and Lecky’s History of the European Morals.)

The Muslims in Spain

The edifice of what is now known as modern Western science, culture and civilization, was established on the basis first laid down by the Muslims in Spain, which they civilized at a time when the other parts of the Western hemisphere were deep in barbarism and ignorance. A Christian writer, Sir Edward Thorpe, in his book, History of Chemistry (p. 20), says:

“A knowledge of Aristotle's works was transferred by Byzantine writers to Egypt; and, when that land was overrun by the Arabs in the seventh century, they adopted his system, spreading it abroad wherever their conquests extended. In the eighth century they carried it into Spain, where it flourished throughout their occupation of that country. From the ninth to the eleventh century the greater part of Europe was in a state of barbarism. The Muslim caliphate in Spain, under the beneficent rule of Yusuf and Yakub, alone preserved science from extinction. Cordova, Seville, Granada and Toledo were the chief seats of learning in Western Europe; and it was mainly through the "perfect and glorious physicist", the Muslim Ibn Rushd, better known as Averroes (1126-1193), that Christian scholastics like Roger Bacon acquired their knowledge of the philosophical system of Aristotle, and mainly through the Muslim Geber and Avicenna that they gained acquaintance of the East.”

The Church and the scientists

If anything besides the impetus given by the Moors is responsible for the present-day progress, it is the natural evolutionary development of the human intellect and not the dogmatic religion, passed for Christianity. No doubt personalities like Vannini, Bruno, Columbus, Galileo, and hundreds of others, were born in Christendom. But did the Holy Bible or the Christian Church give any impetus to their noble achievements? On the contrary, it is an historically admitted fact that most of these great men received the most inhuman treatment at the hands of the Holy Fathers, simply because these great men of science dared to bring about something that was thought by the Church to conflict with the teachings of the Bible. Many were victims of the Holy Inquisition of the Christian Church for believing in the simple truth that the earth is round. In 1316, Peter of Abano was called to account, but fortunately he escaped torture by the intervention of a natural death. In 1327, Cecco d’Ascoli was burned alive at Florence, Giordano Bruno of Italy was hunted from country to country, and finally burnt alive by a slow fire in order to increase the torture. Galileo was another of the numerous victims who suffered at the hands of the Church for their science.

Columbus was a Christian; but the world of culture is today not ignorant of the fact that Columbus was indebted to the Muslim Universities in Spain for his knowledge of the sphericity of the earth, and to another Muslim, who, with his mariner's compass, was his invaluable guide during his epoch-making voyage. But Columbus, too, did not escape the ridicule and derision of the Christians. He was called a fool by the Church for believing that the earth was round. The idea that there were people on the opposite side of the earth had long before been taught by Cicero and Pliny and believed by many in Greece and Rome, but when it was taught in Christendom it met with very severe criticism.

Another scientist of note was Copernicus, who undoubtedly was a Christian. It is noteworthy, however, that his book, The Revelation of the Heavenly Bodies, was first published in the year 1543. So powerful and oppressive was the Church in those days, and so heavy was its hand against the scientists, that this great astronomer had not dared to publish his important treatise until about thirty years after it had been written. Such was the fate of almost every man of science born in that early era when the Christian Church busied itself with fighting scientific progress.
The Prophet Muhammad and Science

Let us now turn to the other side of the picture and see what Islam has done for the advancement of science and the furtherance of civilization and art.

The Qur'ān expresses the innermost desire of the Prophet Muhammad, and thereby that of every Muslim, by the following words: "Qul Rabbi zādān ilmān — "Say: O my Lord, increase me in knowledge" (20:114). The Prophet created an insatiable thirst for knowledge in the Muslims. The following selection of Sayings by him illustrate his views on this subject:

"He dieth not who taketh to learning."

"To listen to the words of the learned and to instil into others the lessons of science is better than religious exercises."

"Whosoever revereth the learned, revereth me."

"The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr."

"He who leaveth home in search of knowledge walketh in the path of God."

"The acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent on every Muslim, male or female."

"Seek after knowledge though it be in China."

The Muslim scholars

In the Middle Ages, when Europe was far from civilization and learning, Muslim scholars and scientists held high the torch of culture. They translated Greek and Roman classics, and taught medicine, science, art, poetry, history and philosophy. A student of science knows that Jabir was a great chemist: he discovered nitric acid, sulphuric acid, and aqua regia. Words like "alembic", "alkali" and many others used in chemistry were derived from Arabic. Abu Musa wrote on spherical trigonometry. Al-Bayruni distinguished himself as a botanist, and was in India for a long time to collect materials for his scientific studies. Muslim scientists established observatories. Nur al-Deen wrote a classical work on the "sphere". Muslim kings established free libraries and colleges. Harun al-Rasheed attached a school to every mosque he built. Cairo had a college of science and a free library on a grand scale. Cordova, Seville and Granada had famous Universities.

Islam annulled fortune-telling, magic and other obsessions which were predominant at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Reason and the laws of nature took their place.

A prophecy about the role of Islam in the future

The whole of Europe today, though far advanced and enlightened in science and learning, is still sinking deep in social, economic, political, religious and other complications and difficulties. Islam, and Islam alone, gives the practical solution of these intricate problems of life. It is not a matter of faith and belief that a Muslim entertains such an idea, for in the non-Muslim world eminent thinkers like George Bernard Shaw made a prophecy about Islam's great role in the future. In his book, Getting Married, he said:

"I believe the whole of the British Empire will adopt a reformed Muhammadanism before the end of this century."

When asked to elaborate on this statement, Shaw wrote the following:

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilative capability to the changing phases of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. The world must doubtless attach high value to the predictions of great men like me. I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to Europe today. The medieval ecclesiastics, either through ignorance or bigotry, painted Muhammadanism in the darkest colours. They were, in fact, trained to hate both the man Muhammad and his religion. To them Muhammad was anti-Christ. I have studied him, the wonderful man, and, in my opinion, far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the saviour of humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness. Europe is beginning to be enamoured of the Creed of Muhammad. In the next century it may go still further in recognizing the utility of that Creed in solving its problems, and it is in this sense that you must understand my prediction. Already, even at the present time, many of my own people and of Europe as well have come over to the faith of Muhammad. And the Islamisation of Europe may be said to have begun."

This is indeed outspoken and fearless testimony from a great man.
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HYGIENE

The Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad as a Guide to Modern Man

By Ahmad Mazhar al-'Azmeh

"An examination of the life of the Prophet Muhammad reveals to us the exemplary attitude which he followed in caring for his health and in protecting himself from disease. In his food, in his dress, in the physical exercise he took, and in the manner he travelled, as well as in his other habits, he gave us hints of great value for the preservation of good health."

The pressing need for the promotion of public health in the Muslim world

Public health and hygiene are subjects of great importance to which conscientious governments and international organizations are devoting very serious attention in modern times. Programmes for development and reform lay as much emphasis on the promotion of public health as they do on the question of combating poverty and ignorance, because all these three problems are closely interlinked. In the Muslim world the problem of the promotion of public health is of grave and pressing importance. In this respect, the attitude of mind of the majority of the people in the Muslim countries is the main worry of reformers. As a result of ignorance of the teachings of their religion, many Muslims neglect to take active measures to protect their health, in the belief that God's will will prevail and that nothing done by man will avert the wishes of God. This doctrine of fatalism and pre-destination - i.e., that if a person suffers from a disease nothing will cure him unless God wanted him to be cured - is taken to extremes and is wrongly applied. The religion of Islam, more than any other religion, is one that requires its followers to take active measures to protect their health and to resort to medicines and all other scientific means to cure themselves of maladies and diseases which affect them. Islam does not teach that the Muslim should trust everything to God and let God do everything for him. The Muslim must help himself before he can expect God to help him.

Islam desires the physical strength of its followers

The Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad embody all the rules which, if followed by individuals and communities, would uplift them to the highest stages of material happiness and bliss. One of the doctrines preached by Islam is that of the physical strength of its followers. The Muslim must equip himself with all the attributes of strength in order that he may be able to render better service to the cause of God. God says:

"One of them said: O my father, employ him; surely the best of those that thou canst employ is the strong, the faithful one."

"And their prophet said to them: Surely God raised Saul to be a king over you. They said: How can he have kingdom over us while we have greater right to kingdom than he, and he has not been granted abundance of wealth? He said: Surely God has chosen him above you, and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique."

The Prophet Muhammad said: "The believer who is strong is more loved by God than the believer who is weak; and in both there is good. . ." "God has a right over you, and your body has a right over you." He exhorted his followers to strengthen not only their spiritual beliefs but also their physique.

The Prophet Muhammad was strong both mentally and physically. He was reared in the desert where the air was pure and healthy, and he lived a life of moderation. He enjoyed very good health and unusual physical strength. It is reported that he once wrestled with Rukana (who was a famous wrestler in Mecca) and beat him. Rukana then asked for a return match, and the Prophet again beat him. Rukana then said to the Prophet: "You are an unusual man!"

An examination of the life of the Prophet Muhammad reveals to us the exemplary attitude which he followed in caring for his health and in protecting himself from disease. In his food, in his dress, in the physical exercise he took, and in the manner he travelled, as well as in his other habits, he gave us hints of great value for the preservation of good health.

The Prophet Muhammad condemned over-eating

One of the most important rules which the Prophet Muhammad observed was the practice of giving his stomach a rest. He is reported to have said: "A human being never filled anything more evil than the stomach . . . and when he eats he must fill only one-third of his stomach with food, and the other third with drink, and the remainder he must leave for himself."

He also used to say: "It is wasteful to eat all that you desire . . . and: "Fast, and you will become healthy."

The Prophet Muhammad also "used to consider the nature and quality of the food he ate, and used to mix foods in accordance with a recognized rule. If one of the things he ate needed to be moderated or toned down, he used to do what was necessary for this purpose." This, of course, is a practice which is recognized by modern medicine. "Thus the Prophet Muhammad used to eat dates with cucumber, and dates with melon, and used to say: 'The heat of this would counteract the cold of that . . .'."

7 Reported by Ibn Majah and Ibn Abi Al-Dunya in Kitab Al-Ju'; and also by Al-Buhari.
8 Ibid.; also reported by Al-Tabarani in Al-Awsat.
9 Al-Tarateeh al-Idariyyah by Al-Kittani (p. 465).
10 Ibid., p. 455; also reported in al-Akhaam al-Nabawiyah by Abi Al-Hasan Ibn Tarkhaan Al-Hamri, who says: "The Prophet Muhammad was very careful both when he was in good health and when he was ill . . . When he was in good health he used to take protective measures by giving himself sufficient physical exercise, by eating in moderation, and by consuming a good quantity of cold foods . . ."

1. The Qur'an, 28: 26. These are the words of the daughter of Shu'aib (Jethro).
2. The Qur'an, 2: 247.
3. Reported by the Imam Muslim.
4. Reported by the Imam Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab.
5. Reported by Al-Zargani in his commentary on Al-Mawahib (Vol. IV, p. 291). This volume contains many other reports about the Prophet Muhammad's physical strength.
Forbidden foods

The teachings of Islam forbid the Muslims to eat certain foods because of their harmful effect on their health. God says:

"Forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of God has been invoked, and the strangled (animal), and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall, and that killed by goring with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten — except what you slaughter; and that which is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols), and that you seek to divide by arrows; that is a transgression.

Perhaps one of the most obnoxious and harmful habits of the non-Muslim world is its love of eating pork. So much sought after is pork in the non-Muslim world that its price is higher than most other meat. And the unusual aspect of this is that pork is known to be the cause of the disease of trichinosis in man. Science has also proved that the tissues of pork are so closely knit that it is difficult for the digestive fluids in the human stomach to get between them. The germs that are found in the tissues of pork cannot be destroyed except by excessive boiling, which would destroy the nutritious value of the meat. It is also known that pork fat is converted inside the stomach into chloric juices which impede the digestion.

Another rule which the Prophet Muhammad observed was the purity of the food and drink which he consumed. 'Ayisha (the wife of the Prophet Muhammad) is reported to have said: "The Prophet used to like very much drinking from watering places". Abu Ayyub (one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad) used to give the Prophet, when he came to visit him, water from the well of Malik Ibn al-Nadir, the father of Anas Ibn Malik. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have written to Sulaiman Ibn 'Umar in these terms: "If my letter reaches you at night, then you must not sleep, and if it reaches you in the daytime, then you must not let darkness fall, until you have arranged to send me water from the well of Zamzam". The Prophet also advised against drinking from the broken edge of a cup, and also against blowing on a drink to make it cold. He also advised against drinking from the mouth of fountains. One of the cups which the Prophet Muhammad used for drinking was made of glass. He also used to soak dates in water and drink the juice as an aid to digestion.

The scourge of alcohol

Islam at first advised its followers against consuming intoxicating liquor, and later forbade them altogether from consuming it. God says:

"O you who believe, intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness, and devil's work; so shun it that you may succeed."

With regard to intoxicants, the non-Muslim world follows the same misguided policy as that which it follows with regard to eating pork. Indeed intoxicating liquor plays an even more important part in the life of the non-Muslim world.

In an article by Lawrence Klingman entitled "Some Myths about Drinks — and some Truths", the harmful effects of alcoholism and the vigorous campaign that is being waged in the United States of America to combat this terrible social scourge are discussed very lucidly. The author says: "More than a dozen American States, realizing that it is cheaper to convert the alcoholic into an abstainer than to pay his jail bills, are now attacking the problem. So is the liquor industry; the alcoholic of high estate or low is a bad advertisement. Universities, laboratories, clinics across the United States, financed in part by the alcoholic-beverage industry, are probing the why and hows. This research has exploded many popular myths about alcohol. It has shown that alcohol is not a stimulant; it is an anaesthetic... We know now that no alcoholic can be cured. He can, however, be converted into a total abstainer. But the transformation must be complete or it is worthless. If after twenty years of sobriety, he tries a thimbleful of beer, he will proceed, as inevitably as gravity draws the fluid from the tilted, uncorked bottle, to drain first the bottle and then the case... Psychiatry has successfully treated alcoholics who drink because of a psychological problem, but in most cases it fails."

The Prophet Muhammad's love of cleanliness

The Prophet Muhammad constantly warned his people about germs and other harmful matter carried in polluted air. His warnings against the danger of infection by the medium of air was given long before Pasteur, the eminent scientist, was heard of.

The Prophet also disliked dirty clothes, and he never wore a garment which was not spotlessly clean. Most of his clothes were made of cotton, to suit the hot climate of Arabia, and he changed clothes at very frequent intervals.

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11 Al-Sa'adah, by al-Fairouzabadi, p. 144.
12 The Qur'ān, 5:3.
13 Al-Tarateeb al-Ibariyah by al-Kittani, p. 99; also reported by Al-Ashshani in his book Akhlaaq al-Nabi, and by the Imam Abu Dawood. Qutaiba is reported by al-Kittani to have said that the place referred to was a spring which was a two-day journey from Medina, but al-Mutari says that it was the last watering stage to the left on the journey to the Well of 'Ali at Muharram.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 101; also reported in Al-Isbah by Ibn Hajar in the chapter on Uthahil al-Khuza'i.
16 Al-Targeeh wa al-Targeeb, reported by Abu Dawood and Ibn Habban.
17 Ibid., reported by the Imam al-Bukhari.
18 The commentary of al-Zarqani on Al-Mawahib (Vol. IV, p. 353).
19 Sifr al-Saadah, p. 144.
20 The Qur'ān, 5:90, 91.
21 When I was in Brussels in the summer of 1950 to attend a meeting of UNESCO, a Swiss friend of mine remarked, after seeing that I had consumed no intoxicating liquor, "Why do you not drink any alcohol?" I answered, "Every country has its customs, and it is not one of the customs in my country to drink alcohol". He then said, with a glass of alcoholic drink in his hand, "You are very reserved in your words, why do you not say that every country has its obnoxious vice?" He was conscious of the fact that the consumption of alcoholic beverages was both obnoxious and harmful.
22 Courtesy, the Editor, The Reader's Digest (British Edition), November 1952 (condensed from Park East).
23 Sifr al-Sa'dah, p. 116.
'Ayisha is reported to have said that she knitted a woolen garment for the Prophet, and that after he wore it for a short time he noticed the smell of perspiration in it, and discarded it at once.\textsuperscript{24}

The cleanliness of the house in which he lived was also a matter on which the Prophet Muhammad was very meticulous and exacting. He is reported to have said: "God is good and He likes good things; He is clean and He likes cleanliness; He is generous and He likes generosity; He is munificent and He likes munificence... so you must clean your rooms and courtyards and not keep your sweepings and rubbish in the house."\textsuperscript{25}

The seeking of proper medical treatment

Medical treatment was also a subject which the Prophet Muhammad considered to be of great importance. It is reported that one of his Companions was wounded and developed gangrene, whereupon the Prophet sent for two men from the tribe of Amur to treat him. When these men arrived the Prophet asked them: "Which of you is more proficient in medical treatment?" The Companion then asked: "Is there really any good in medical treatment?" To this the Prophet answered: "God, who has allowed disease, has also given the medicine."\textsuperscript{26} Sa'd, one of the Companions of the Prophet, is reported to have said: "I became ill and the Prophet Muhammad came to visit me on many occasions during my illness. At one time he put his hand on my chest and felt my temperature. He said: 'You are a very sick man, so send for al-Harith Ibn Kaladah of the tribe of Thuqaq, for he is a man who is proficient in medicine.'"\textsuperscript{27}

Quackery condemned

The Prophet Muhammad was against quackery, and condemned it very strongly. He emphasized the importance of careful and proper diagnosis of disease by skilled physicians. He is reported to have said to al-Shamardal Ibn Qubab al-Kabi al-Najrani (who was a physician): "Do not treat anyone for a malady until you make sure what the malady is."\textsuperscript{28}

The Prophet was himself fairly knowledgeable in medicine. In \textit{al-Musnad} of the Imam Ahmad it is reported that "the Prophet Muhammad came upon 'Ayisha and found her with a boy whose nose was bleeding profusely. He enquired what was the cause of this bleeding and was told that the boy was suffering from laryngitis or from some incurable disease of the head. He then said: 'Beware, or you will kill your children... A woman whose child suffers from laryngitis or from a headache which causes bleeding of the nose must take a piece of Indian costmary and soak it in water and then make the child sniff the water.' 'Ayisha did this and the boy was cured."\textsuperscript{29}

The psychological and other causes of disease were also recognized by the Prophet Muhammad. He warned against worry and against feigning illness, which, as modern science has proved, often results in psycho-pathological illness. He is reported to have said: "Do not look too much at people suffering from elephantiasis."\textsuperscript{30}

Protection against the danger of infection

The Prophet Muhammad advised his people to take precautions against the danger of infection. He is reported to have said: "Contact is the source of infection."\textsuperscript{31} Also: "Run from the one who suffers from elephantiasis like you run away from a lion!"\textsuperscript{32} and: "Speak to the person who suffers from elephantiasis only when there is between you and him the length of one or two spears."\textsuperscript{33} It is also related that the Prophet Muhammad was very careful to apply rigid measures for safeguarding against the danger of the spread of infectious or contagious diseases and that he used to order the complete isolation of persons who suffered from such diseases. He is reported to have said: "If you hear that there is a plague in a country, then you must not enter it; and if a plague invades a country in which you are, then you must not leave it."

The Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad which are thought by some jurists to deny the possibility of infection, such as the Saying, "There is no infection and no superstition," relate solely to physical deformities and other non-infectious and non-contagious diseases. These Sayings were also uttered by the Prophet Muhammad in another context, to give proof of the existence of God. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, in answer to those who maintained that a camel which was infected with seb had contracted the disease by mixing with infected camels, "Who infected the first camel?"\textsuperscript{34}

Islam's comprehensive pronouncements on matters of personal hygiene

There are many verses in the Qur'an, and a great number of Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, which give the Muslims express advice on the cleanliness of clothes and body, gargling, sniffing of water by the nose, cleaning the teeth, combing the hair, trimming the moustache, removing pubic hair and the hair in the arm-pits, circumcision, and the pruning of the nails. The requirements of Islam as to ablutions as an essential prerequisite of the preparation for prayer is a unique example of the wholesome directions which this religion embodies as to personal cleanliness and hygiene.

It was in the light of these useful teachings of the religion of Islam that hospitals and medical schools flourished during the heyday of the Muslims. Many Muslims at that time devoted careful attention to the study of medicine and science and to the writing of important treatises on this subject which remained unchallenged authorities in the Western world until the nineteenth century. What better testimony can there be of the wisdom of Islam and its Prophet?

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Sifr al-Sa'adah}, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}; reported also in \textit{al-Musnad} of Bazzar.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}; reported also by al-Tarmidzi.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}; reported also in \textit{al-Sunan} of Abu Dawood.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ta'riekh al-Bimaristanan fî l-Islam} (The History of Hospitals in Islam) by Ahmad 'Isa; reported also in \textit{al-Isabah} by al-'Asqalani.
\textsuperscript{29} Reported in \textit{Sifr al-Sa'adah} that this report is found in \textit{al-Musnad} of the Imam Ahmad. In the commentary of al-Zarqani on \textit{al-Mawahib} (Vol. IV, p. 54), the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad on medicine and medical treatment are dealt with in detail.
\textsuperscript{30} Reported in \textit{Sifr al-Sa'adah} that this Saying was reported by Ibn Majah in his book \textit{al-Sunan}.
\textsuperscript{31} Reported in \textit{Kashf al-Khaqaf}'; also reported by Abu Dawood.
\textsuperscript{32} Reported by the Imam al-Bukhari.
\textsuperscript{33} Reported in \textit{Zaad al-Ma'ad}.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Kashf al-Khaqaf}'; also reported by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar and by Ibn al-Salah.
ARAB EDUCATION
UNDER THE CALIPHATE

By Dr. A. L. Tibawi, B.A., Ph.D.

Literacy was a luxury before Islam

There is ample evidence to show that the vast majority of the Arabs before Islam were illiterate. Those who were able to read and write were very few, and their achievement was regarded with special esteem. There is, however, some reference in the sources of Arab history to “schools”, and to pagan, Jewish and Christian “teachers”; and we know the names of certain literate men and women who became famous in Islam. All this evidence tends to prove that there existed some measure of literacy. But on the whole it is clear that ability to read and write was a rare luxury, restricted to some town dwellers, merchants and certain types of thinkers.

At the advent of Islam, the number of men in the tribe of Quraish who were able to read and write was under twenty, and the number of women so blessed was about seven. But the Prophet Muhammad immediately realized the need of reading and writing for the preaching of the new Faith. He stipulated that, for ransom, each literate prisoner of war should teach reading and writing to ten Muslims. Though he himself is reputed to have been illiterate, his mission started a movement, first for acquiring literacy and later for learning in general, on a scale unprecedented in the history of the Arabs.

The Qur'an as a basis of education

The Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad abound in injunctions to the Muslims to acquire knowledge. Both sources stress the importance attached to men of learning and to their quest for knowledge. Learning comes next in importance to belief in God, and men of learning are mentioned in the Qur'an after God and His angels. Men of learning are the "successors of prophets", and the path of the seeker after knowledge is a "path to paradise". The Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors used to send to every community or tribe which embraced Islam a reader to teach them the Qur'an, and this teaching was invariably done in the mosque. In this way the Qur'an reader became the first teacher, and the mosque the first school.

But the Qur'an reader was essentially a reciter who, like the rawi of pre-Islamic poetry, committed the verses to memory and recited them as occasion demanded. His knowledge of writing, though desirable, did not always form part of his qualifications. But as memory could not remain the deciding factor of accuracy all the time, the believers were encouraged to gain proficiency in reading and writing. For this purpose, pious literate Muslims started a spontaneous movement to teach reading and writing and some other auxiliary subjects such as arithmetic, poetry and legends. Since all this was intended to facilitate the study and understanding of the Qur'an, no remuneration was taken by the teachers for their efforts.

This auxiliary curriculum was probably a revival of the pre-Islamic practice in this respect, for during that period the three R's, poetry and legend formed the main educational pursuit of the pagan Arabs. The same subjects constituted the secular, while the Qur'an (and later also the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) formed the religious part of the Muslim educational syllabus. Judging this system by its results, it can safely be said that, while it produced no great learned men, it put on the stage of Arab history an impressive galaxy of great men and women.

A new aim of education

With the eruption of Arab tribes into Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, and the establishment of a more organized State under the Umayyads, education made another advance. The subjects that were taught remained the same as during the days of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors; but several new factors came to influence the course of education during this period. The rules of Arab calligraphy and some of the rules of Arabic grammar were laid down; and Arabic became the language of Government records, replacing Greek, Coptic and Persian. The demand for literate Arab recruits to the Government service became great, and the movement to achieve literacy, which had religious motives behind it, received an added impetus by this worldly motive. It is at this time that we hear of the professional teacher who may have been very pious, but who was not deterred from demanding remuneration for his labours in this world. We also hear of the kuttab (small school), where the self-appointed teacher taught reading and writing and some rudiments of knowledge, both secular and religious, Hajjaj, the famous Arab general and viceroy, started his career as a teacher of this type, and was later derided by his enemies for this reason. The children of the higher social classes, however, were sent to the Arabian desert to learn correct Arabic and to acquire a stronger physique. Later, they were committed to the charge of a tutor (mu'addib) or to a Qur'an reader, or to both. Mu'awiya, the first Umayyad Caliph, sent his son Yazid to the desert to learn Arabic. 'Abd al-Malik hesitated to name his son, Walid, as his successor to the Caliphate, because the son's knowledge of Arabic grammar was deficient.

The content of education under the 'Abbasids

The laying of the foundation of Arabic grammar, the rationalization of Arabic calligraphy and the adoption of Arabic as the official language of State records made the business of the pupil and teacher much easier, and encouraged the beginning of recording (tadwin) of oral traditions, both religious and literary. The reforms in grammar and calligraphy may have been prompted by the need for officials proficient in the art of recording and drafting, but they also contributed to the movement of writing down oral traditions, the beginning of translation from Greek and Persian and the production of original writings. This, in turn, contributed to the flourishing, particularly at Basra, of religious, mystic, philosophical and literary move-
ments which had far-reaching influence on the course of education during the first century of the ‘Abbasid rule.

Under the ‘Abbasids there were not many wars to be waged, and the wealth of the Arab Empire in agriculture, commerce and industry was considerable. The policy of the Caliphs was on the whole tolerant and liberal. Settled order, material prosperity and liberal government inspired the subjects of the ‘Abbasids, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, to plunge themselves deep into the luxuries of body and mind. In the latter sphere it appears as if every member of the whole nation, from the Caliph to the humble bedouin, was either learning or teaching. This enthusiasm for learning, which was originally inspired by the desire to understand the Qur’ān and to defend Islam, has many points of resemblance to the fourteenth century renaissance in Italy. It took the form of a systematic revival, through translation in the first instance, of the heritage of Greece and Persia, and it ensured, after a period of digestion, a freedom of discussion in linguistic and literary as well as in theological and philosophical subjects. Within about one hundred years of the assumption by the ‘Abbasids of the Caliphate, teacher and pupil had to grapple with, among other subjects, grammar, rhetoric and literature on the one side, and Qur’ānic exegesis, jurisprudence and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad on the other. To this impressive array of subjects were added philosophy, geometry, alchemy and music.

This rich material, traditional and acquired, became the unwritten syllabus of various institutions of learning, each attempting the part that suited its purpose and appealed to the particular interests of its scholars. For, parallel with the new learning, and partly due to the impact of this varied material on the Arab mind, a wave of sects and schools of thought appeared on the scene: Shi‘ites, Kharijites, Murjites, Ascetics and Mystics. The new knowledge and the various trends of thought produced an immediate influence on the course of education. The teacher who was able to teach only the three R’s became a subject of ridicule. The demand was decidedly for the “educator” who could teach also Qur’ānic subjects, the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, grammar, literature, philosophy and alchemy.

During the ‘Abbasid period another important factor came to exert its influence. Up to the beginning of the third century of Islam, and in the absence of paper (papyrus was not then available for large-scale use), parchment, bones and cloth were used for writing. We are told that paper manufacture was learnt from some Chinese prisoners of war, and that paper was at once used for government records and for academic purposes during the ministry of the Barmecides. It proved to be of tremendous importance in facilitating the work of author, teacher and copyist.

Facilities for education under the ‘Abbasids

Let us now consider some of the new media of education that were open to the public during the first two hundred and fifty years of ‘Abbasid rule. It will be recalled that, during the Umayyad period, resort to the “tutor” and the “desert” was the main novel feature necessitated by life outside Arabia and required by the new form of government. But in the tumult of races, creeds and civilizations under the ‘Abbasids, a more complex form of education was demanded, which was intended to supplement rather than supplant the kuttab, mosque, tutor and “desert.” A passing mention of these new features will be given below. But it may be useful at this juncture to summarize the general aims of education during the period. If we take a famous passage by al-Hasan Ibn Sahl as indicative of this general aim, we find that an educated person was expected to know the traditional academic subjects as well as geometry and medicine. He was expected to know how to ride a horse, and to play the flute and chess. He also had to be a good conversationalist.

Some of the means of achieving the purely educational part of this ambitious programme were:

(1) “Kuttab” or “Maktab” Education. The kuttab remained the main instrument for removing illiteracy, and items tackled continued to be reading, writing, arithmetic, and linguistic and literary subjects. A good number of teachers kept up the practice of giving gratuitous instruction, but it became a recognized custom to demand fees, which some-

A view of the eastern part of the Prophet Muhammad's Mosque at Medina. It was the first mosque in Islam to be used for teaching
times were collected in the form of loaves of bread. Abu Nuwas immortalized the *kuttab* of a certain Haf in a satirical poem describing, among other things, the infliction of corporal punishment on a stupid inmate. It is interesting to note that girls learned in the *kuttab*, and that some of the teachers were women.

(2) *Mosque Education*. The first mosque in Islam to be used for teaching was the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. But removal of illiteracy was not necessarily accomplished in the mosque, which was principally for the more advanced stages of learning. Removal of illiteracy was, in fact, accomplished anywhere at the convenience of teacher and pupil. In the mosque of Basra, for example, circles of scholars were held that resembled seminars in modern universities. Each teacher within his speciality lectured to learners, discussed with equals or disputed with rivals. The fact that all these activities took place in a mosque put no restriction on the subjects covered, for we know they were not restricted to merely religious subjects.

(3) *Tutor and Desert Education*. The 'Abbasids perfected the system of entrusting children to tutors. They took special care to insist on the building of character and the training of the body over and above the usual instruction calculated to awaken the mind. Al-Mufaddal was the tutor of the Caliph al-Mahdi, and one of the best anthologies of Arabic poetry was prepared by this tutor for the benefit of the future Caliph. Al-Kisa'i, the famous philologist, was the tutor of al-Ma'mun. We know also that sons of the members of the higher social class were mainly taught by tutors, and only very rarely availed themselves with the general public of the *kuttab* education. Resort to the desert became an acknowledged method, not merely for acquiring correct speech and strong physique, but for verification of philosophical, literary and even religious traditional subjects.

(4) *Literary and Mystic Circles*. The Caliphs of Damascus, and later those of Baghdad, encouraged men of learning to dispute subjects of interest in their palaces and under their personal supervision. But this was a very limited field as far as the education of the masses was concerned. The rise of various societies and trends of thought, however, was calculated to be of tremendous importance to the course of education because it contributed towards the dissemination of culture among the masses. This started with the two famous schools of grammarians and the four schools of jurisprudence. The marvellous synthesis of cultures and the diligent endeavour of the Arab mind both produced a host of schools in practically every field of thought. A notable example of those who took interest in knowledge and undertook to spread it by teaching, preaching and writing is to be found in the "Brethren of Purity" of the tenth century. The mystic schools which flourished, partly as a reaction to the new luxurious life of the Arabs, partly as a result of a profound study of the Qur'an, and largely through contact with ancient cultures, were more effective than the Brethren.

(5) *Libraries and Institutes of Higher Studies*. In the absence of professional schools above the *kuttab* level, some modern writers were tempted to consider the *Bait al-Hikmah* of the 'Abbasids, and the *Dar al-Ilm* of the Fatimid, as schools or even universities. But the available information about these institutions seems to warrant no such description. The reference to them in the original sources seems to indicate that they were institutions with libraries, where men of learning met to discuss, to read, to translate and to copy. It is true that some study of geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and logic was done, for instance, at the *Bait al-Hikmah*. The same or similar subjects were studied at the *Dar al-Ilm*, which served also as a centre for propagating the official faith of the Fatimid dynasty. In a sense, therefore, both establishments performed some of the functions of institutes of higher studies; but they cannot be regarded as schools in the strict meaning of the term. On the other hand, libraries not attached to such institutions were very numerous and served to promote higher studies; their endowment by caliph, prince and notable was a frequent practice.

(6) *Travel in Quest of Knowledge*. Students of the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad were the first to start the practice of travel to acquire knowledge. Paper was scarce, and duplication of books was a tiresome and lengthy affair; and those who committed knowledge to their memories were scattered all over the Arab empire. For example, it was necessary for al-Khalil to go to the desert to settle many a linguistic problem, and it was not too much for al-Laithi to travel from Spain to the Hijaz in order to learn from Malik at Medina. Al-Bukhari travelled in Khurasan, Iraq, the Hijaz, Syria, and Egypt, in order to establish the authenticity of his collection of the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Nor was this practice restricted to famous men. It appears that making a tour of some sort was indispensable to anyone who laid claim to education.

The lack of precise standards

It is thus clear that, beyond the *kuttab* and the mosque, there is no distinct indication of either educational institutions or curricula. Diversity rather than uniformity was the general rule. It appears that the education of the great majority stopped at the *kuttab* or mosque level, and that those who were able and willing to pursue "higher" education followed various ways. A prince or a member of the higher social classes probably went to a *mu'tadib* (private tutor). A passionate scholar, whether Arab or non-Arab, journeyed from one country to another in quest of knowledge. There was no particular type of State school to compare with what we now call secondary, college or University education. Not only were there no discernible grades of schooling, but there was no trace of a recognized standard of knowledge at any stage of the educational ladder. The subjects of pursuit varied according to chance of teacher and country, and there was no apparent design to unite or co-ordinate the work of the numerous trends. Further, those engaged in teaching were known by a host of titles. There was the teacher (*mu'allim*), the tutor (*mu'addib*), the lecturer (*mudarris*), the savant (*shaikh*), the professor (*ustaz*), the learned (*alim*), and the leader (*imam*), and many others. There is no clear definition of any of these terms. The claim of any particular scholar to any distinction depended upon, among other things, his ability to dispute with opponents, to attract large numbers of students around him, and to show that he had learned from most of the famous men of his age. No scholar could produce any particular certificate of a standard attained, and no one could be proud of any *alma mater*. The utmost he could do was to produce a *barda* or *ijaza* from the teacher or teachers under whom he studied. A certificate of this type merely stated that "X" received from "Y" instruction in a named subject and that he was proficient to teach it to others. The precision of standard of learning and the issue of certificates did not come until the opening of State schools.

The State and education

State schools were first established in the second half of the eleventh century, and at any rate not earlier than the tenth century. Until then, the various Muslim States
school of thought by compulsion. This interference by the Caliph proved to be a very dangerous precedent. Under al-Mutawakkil, the policy of al-Ma'mun was reversed in favour of scholasticism. State interference in matters of dogma resulted in two important phenomena in the development of Arab education. Firstly, it encouraged the formation of secret scientific and literary societies. Secondly, it prompted the State to establish schools in which only certain "approved" branches of knowledge were taught.

The formation of the eclectic society of the Brethren of Purity in the tenth century is an excellent illustration of the first phenomenon. The society, in its membership and beliefs, represents, as no other society does, the age of the maturity and synthesis of cultures. Among its founders we know there were Arabs and Persians, men of letters, philosophers, mystics and theologians. The tracts of the Brethren stress that "we do not forsake any science, and we harbour no fanaticism against any creed, and we neglect no book of the sages and philosophers... our creed comprises all creeds and unites all sciences". Education was their weapon. They sought to eradicate political and social corruption through patient teaching and preaching of knowledge. The material used for the instruction of newly-admitted members was a simplified summary of all the knowledge of the age. It represented, in the words of the Brethren, "a compromise between Greek philosophy and Islam". The teaching method adopted was to give the new recruit information on concrete things within his reach, and to arouse his interest to seek more information, thus leading him by stages from the concrete to the realms of reason and, finally, to the blessing of revelation.

The emergence of State schools

Schools in the history of Arab education did not appear until the fourth century of Islam. The meaning of the term "school" in this connection has no relation to any of the institutions already noted. In its new form the school was a State creation, endowed by the Government, and its organization and teaching was under direct Government control.

Nizam al-Mulk, the vizier of the Seljuks, is generally accredited with introducing this system by opening schools in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Nishapur, Herat, Isfahan, and other cities. But we know that other princes, who lived not long before Nizam, also established State schools. However, it appears that the credit of starting the system is given to Nizam because he introduced it on a large scale, and many of his schools survived long after his time.

These schools were, strictly speaking, colleges. This fact is very significant. It shows that the introduction of a State system of education was made in an abnormal manner. It started with the University, and was destined, in the course of time, to degenerate into the worst type of the shaikh's kuttab and the dervish's zawiyah. Neither Nizam nor any of his immediate predecessors or successors made allowance for a State system of elementary or secondary education to feed the University.

The curriculum of these schools was by no means free or inclusive. It was mainly concerned with linguistic and religious subjects, with some adaptation of the methods of philosophy and logic. It appears, however, that pure philosophy and astronomy were banned. This is symbolic of the victory of the theologians over the philosophers. We noted previously that some institutions of higher studies were reputed to facilitate that study of philosophy and science under the 'Abbasids and the Fatimids. These institutions disappeared in the face of the strong reaction sponsored by the State.

exercised no control over education. It is true that the Prophet and his immediate successors sent Qur'an readers (who also turned out to be teachers) to the countries that embraced Islam; but this move was not followed up to its natural end, and no system of State schools developed therefrom. Nor was the love of learning, exhibited by the Umayyad and 'Abbasid Caliphs, translated into the concrete form of establishing State schools. In the pursuit of knowledge, therefore, there was almost complete freedom as far as the State was concerned. But this freedom was not always absolute, at least in the sphere of religious belief.

Al-Ma'mun, himself the champion of free thought and rationalism, chose to impose the beliefs of his particular
In his schools, Nizam, like the Brethren of Purity, endeavoured to achieve political and social reform through education. The idea was not only to provide the State with able and loyal servants, but also to ensure for it obedient and contented subjects. Nizam was a non-Arab and an agent of a non-Arab dynasty. It was indispensable for them to appeal to the public sentiment, and in so doing they established schools which, while serving usual secular needs, demonstrated to the public the supremacy of scholasticism over rationalism. The service rendered by these schools to the State can be gauged from a statement by Shirazi, the Dean of the Nizamiyya school of Baghdad. He said that he travelled from Khurasan to Baghdad, and he hardly passed a place without finding one of his former pupils in charge of an important State service.

School buildings and teachers

A school of the new type consisted of several houses, each house assigned for a special purpose, such as study, lodging, feeding, and medical treatment. The school campus included a mosque, a library, and halls for lectures and discussions. A kitchen, ablution rooms, and a hospital were usual features in most schools. A large number of students, including women, attended these schools.

With the establishment of schools endowed and controlled by the State, the teachers became Government servants receiving pay from the State treasury. This practice, far from reviving one of the ideals of Islam in education, which insists on gratuitous teaching, was considered by pious people as an abuse. The scholar who received free tuition, free board and lodging, free medical treatment, and free paper and pens, received also some fixed sums of money called ma'adalim. There was a wave of protest against this "profane" practice. It was argued that hitherto knowledge (ilm) was sought "as the honour it bestows on the scholar and the perfection it produces (in human life). With these innovations it would be coveted by the feeble-minded and the lazy". It is related that a symbolic mourning ceremony was held by the learned to mark their feeling of anxiety over the future of knowledge as a consequence of this innovation.

The Universities

It is necessary now to make some mention of three or four such schools, called Universities by modern writers. The school of Cordova, al-Azhari of Cairo, al-Nizamiyya of Baghdad, and al-Mustansiriyya of Baghdad, are representative of the system. The first three were established within one century, not earlier than the middle of the tenth, while the fourth was established during the first third of the thirteenth century.

Cordova. The Arabs who conquered Spain came into contact with barbarous people without a civilization to compare with that of Byzantium or Persia. But the Muslim conquerors, Arabs and Berbers, were quick to achieve physical assimilation with the people of Spain; and soon was developed an Andalusian nation under Muslim rule permeated with Arab-Muslim culture.

To a large extent Arab Spain remained, even during its golden age, dependent upon the Arab East for cultural inspiration. It is not recorded when a system of public education was started in Spain, but it appears that the study of Arabic and Muslim religious subjects was started just after the conquest. The climax was reached under 'Abd al-Rahman III and his son al-Hakam II. We are told that al-Hakam built twenty-seven schools in the capital, and paid the salaries of the staff from his private purse. He collected some half a million books in a library in his palace. He is said to have read most of the books himself and to have made marginal notes on them.

The opening of the school of Cordova in the city's mosque was the natural result of this love of learning, shared alike by the rulers and their subjects. Dozy says that this school became one of the most famous Universities of the time. The number of its students reached thousands, and among its professors were many famous men in the history of Arab culture, such as al-Qali (Literature), Ibn Qutiyya (Grammar) and al-Quraishi (Traditions). In the following two centuries a large number of philosophers, men of letters, and writers appeared on the scene, and other higher schools of University standard were established all over Spain. The reputation of these institutions was so high that even some of the Christian dignitaries, in and outside Spain, came to them to seek knowledge, so much so that protests were made that this torrential Arab-Muslim culture was dangerous to Latin and indeed to Christian literature.

Al-Azhari. Al-Azhari was established towards the end of the tenth century as a mosque, at the instance of Jawhar, the Fatimid general, immediately after capturing Cairo. But it was also used as a school during the reign of al-Aziz in the beginning of the eleventh century, when the idea of State schools was the accepted custom in the Muslim world. The Fatimids did not hesitate to use al-Azhari as a centre for the propagation of their own creed: but it seems that a larger measure of tolerance was accorded to philosophy than was possible in the Nizamiyya schools. We know that the tracts of the Brethren of Purity — an encyclopedia of philosophy and science as known in the tenth century — were popular under the Fatimids, and that Ibn al-Haitham, a well-known student of Greek philosophy and an authority on mathematics, physics, Aristotelian logic and the medicine of Galen, fled from Iraq and came to teach in al-Azhari during the reign of al-Hakim. The Fatimids, true to Shi'a tradition, encouraged scholarship in general and, unlike the Sunnites, were patrons of free thought and philosophy.

Apart from this traditional view which Shi'ism took of philosophy, the Fatimids in Egypt found themselves in an atmosphere saturated with Hellenistic thought, and were consequently tempted to follow their bent without hesitation.

Al-Azhari is too well known in the history of Islam and still plays an important part in the educational and religious life of Islam to require more detailed mention.

Al-Nizamiyya. This school was opened by Nizam in the second half of the eleventh century in Baghdad with Abu Is-haq al-Shirazi as the first Dean. Nizam himself supervised the organization and functioning of this school, which became famous for teaching the Shi'ite theology and Arabic linguistic subjects. There is no evidence, however, that "sciences" were taught in it.

Among its famous professors was al-Ghazali ("the proof of Islam"). The traveller, Ibn Jubair, describes one of the circles of al-Qazwini in this school which was devoted to exegesis and Tradition. The historian, Taghri-Birdi, speaks of the preaching of 'Abbadi in it, and says that thirty thousand students, male and female, attended the lectures. This school remained in existence for some three hundred years.

Al-Mustansiriyya. This school was built by the Caliph al-Mustansir in the first third of the thirteenth century in Baghdad. It seems that it represented the last attempt by the Arabs in the East to establish higher schools while they held political power. It was also a departure from a system which was clearly partisan and even sectarian. Firstly, it was open to teach the canon law not of one but of all the four
Suni schools, on an equal footing. Secondly, some of the “banned” sciences were taught in it.

Many of the eminent theologians and grammarians of the time were on the staff of this school. The chief Qadi of Baghdad, Mahmud Zanjani, was teaching in it as well as in the Nizamiyya. The sack of Baghdad at the hands of Hulago in 1258 resulted in the murder of a number of its teachers and the destruction of its library, the books being thrown in the Tigris. The building still survives to the present day.

Decay followed by revival

The history of Arab thought, from the beginning of the eleventh century to the sixteenth century (and in certain other respects to the present day) is governed, in the educational as well as in the theological aspects, by the giant mind of al-Ghazali. It was he who, similarly to Thomas Aquinas, effected a compromise between theology and mysticism. He banished philosophy only to adopt its methods in the cultural synthesis which he achieved. His insight into the theory and practice of teaching is that of one who himself was a teacher, besides being a great thinker. Practically all those who wrote on education after him were adopting his dicta.

But during the three centuries from 1258 to 1517 the political decay of the Caliphate ended in a total eclipse. Arab-Muslim culture descended gradually from the zenith of its glory to suffer stagnation and barrenness. Politically, the Arabs were supplanted by the Mongols, the Turks, the Persians, the Mamluks, and the Berbers, and they held some sway only in Arabia and Granada. Culturally, writers and men of learning were, with certain notable exceptions, mere imitators and poor commentators.

The Arabic language suffered severe setbacks. It ceased to be the official language in Persia, and, as a spoken language in the Arab world, it degenerated into several colloquial dialects. The literary style became sterile, diffuse, and overburdened with foreign bombastic verbiage. Consequently the command of literary Arabic became a tiresome and often a futile pursuit for the scholar, let alone the general public.

Schools that were of a University standard soon lapsed, and those of the kuttab type gained ascendency. The number of State schools in the various Muslim countries was indeed very large, but the academic standard and the administrative machinery seem to have sunk to a low level. The non-Arab Sultans and petty rulers continued the practice of establishing new schools and endowing existing ones, but, with the exception of the schools and circles of learning in Granada, Qairawan, Cairo and the Hijaz, these schools were no match to any of the Nizamiyyas or their counterparts. Limited in their scope to linguistic and religious subjects, the shaikh’s kuttab and the dervish’s zawiya of the period provided very poor substitutes for the colleges of the golden age.

The destruction of the temporal power of the Caliphate, and the successive waves of campaigns by the Crusaders, the Mongols and the Turks, coupled with the consequent devastation and impoverishment, sapped the life of the Arab countries and gave the danger signal of the final extinction of Arab culture. But destiny decreed otherwise. After a dormant life of three centuries under Turkish rule, an Arab awakening in the political, religious and cultural spheres was started early in the nineteenth century. The results of this awakening are now visible in the form of a vigorous and comprehensive renaissance.

A view of the interior of the Mosque of Cordova.

Here flourished one of the most famous Universities in Islam. The number of its students reached thousands, and amongst its professors were many men famous in the history of Arab culture.
HOW I CAME TO ISLAM
By Muhammad al-Nasir

A choir-boy

I was brought up in the Church of England denomination of the Christian faith. When I was about five years of age I started Sunday School, and from there graduated to Bible Study classes. I attended these classes regularly, and I still possess a Bible presented to me in recognition of good attendance. I was also a choir-boy, which involved my attendance at morning and evening service. I thus had ample opportunity of learning the teachings of Christianity.

When I reached the age of fifteen or sixteen I had some doubts regarding my faith, and started to think more for myself instead of accepting the teachings of the clergy. I had on a few occasions attended Chapel meetings with some of my young friends and heard a slightly different version of the Christian faith. One of the boys at my school was a Jew, and from him I learned the outline of a completely different religion.

My criticism of both clergymen and church officials made me decide to leave my church. This worried and disappointed my mother, who wanted me to be “confirmed” in the Church. She did all she could to persuade me to change my mind, but without success.

What I found in the Qur’an

My Army service took me to India, Malaya, Java, Palestine, and Egypt, where I came into contact with Muslims and talked with them of their religion. Doubts crept into my mind regarding my atheism. “Perhaps, after all, there was a God, and a logical way of worshipping Him,” I began saying to myself.

For some time after I left Palestine in 1947 I gave this problem much thought. But I could not reach a definite conclusion. Last year, however, I decided to make a serious study of the Qur’an. I bought an English translation of the Qur’an, and although the footnotes to the translated text often appeared biased against Islam, I felt that I had found in the Qur’an the true message of God.

I wrote to the Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, and from him obtained information, advice, and valuable Islamic literature. A study of this literature soon convinced me that Islam was the right way to God, and that it was the one faith which responded to a logical approach. It explained the fallacy of modern Christianity; and encouraged the desire for knowledge by explaining not only the difficult points regarding religion but also the matters of everyday life.

An atheist

Gradually I learned more of the differences between the various Christian denominations, and I came to the conclusion that they could all be right. Surely there could only be one correct way to worship God? But how could I discern the correct way? It seemed too great a problem for me at that age, and I eventually let the matter rest there and did nothing about it for some time.

In the last war I joined the British Army, and as a matter of form gave my religious denomination as “C. of E.” (Church of England). But I soon discovered that for many to say “C. of E.” was a convenient way of saying “Not really interested!” It was not long afterwards that I decided that the whole idea of religion was false, and so became an atheist.

The charm of Islam

Perhaps one of the most important aspects from my point of view is the way the Qur’an enjoins tolerance — “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256). I stress this point because one of my objections to Christianity is that there is little tolerance practised by the various Christian denominations. Each holds that only belief in its particular dogmas is the way to salvation for man.

These are not the only attributes of Islam which made a great impression on me. I have recently openly declared my conversion to Islam, and I hope, with God’s help, to model my life on the Muslim pattern.
TOWARDS
UNIFICATION

His Majesty King Sa'ud
and Pakistan

In his State visits to Egypt (14th-24th April) and to Pakistan (14th-24th April), King Sa'ud rendered great service to the cause of unity and solidarity of the Muslim world, and acquainted himself with the problems towards progress and development. He visited the towns, statesmen and politicians, and the population. In Pakistan, he presented a munificent gift of £100,000 for a new hospital.

There was a tremendous welcome wherever he went, and a

King Sa'ud and General Muhammad Najeeb, President of Egypt, greeting cheering crowds at a military parade in Cairo.

King Sa'ud arriving in Karachi after making a tour of the outlying districts of Pakistan. He was received at the airport by Mr. Ghulam Muhammad, the Governor-General of Pakistan, and Mr. Muhammad 'Ali, the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

A group of Sa'udi Arabian students greeting King Sa'ud on his arrival. The Arabic words on the banner read: 'Greet His Majesty King Sa'ud — the hero and the symbol of the renais...
ISLAMIC

SAUD 1 visits Egypt

(20th-29th March 1954),

April 1954), His Majesty

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a wealth of affection.

King Sa'ud with General Muhammad Najeeb, President of Egypt, witnessing a military parade in Cairo

King Sa'ud at a garden party given in his honour by the citizens of Lahore. The picture shows (from left to right): Sayyid Hadi Shah, the Mayor of Lahore; Begum Aminuddin; King Sa'ud; the Governor-General of Pakistan, and Begum Noon

Sa'udi Arabian students at a parade in Cairo. The Sa'udi Arabian students are the embodiment of their hopes for the future of the Arab world.
MUHAMMAD ‘ALI,
THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN
“A Friend-Maker”
By Rafiq M. Khan

The makers of Pakistan

“We are a dynamic people, throbbing and pulsating with life and vigour.” I do not know of any other words which could more aptly describe Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Mr. Muhammad ‘Ali, than these words which he has used to describe his own people, for events have proved him to be the epitome of the spirit of Pakistan.

Providence was indeed kind to Pakistan in its days of political infancy, for the guidance of its affairs has throughout been in the hands not of adventurers or self-seekers, but of men of sterling character and flawless patriotism. The names of Muhammad ‘Ali Jinnah, Liaquat ‘Ali Khan, Ghulam Muhammad, and Khwaja Nazimuddin, commend not merely the gratitude of their compatriots, but the admiration and respect of the whole world. To this list, posterity will add the name of Muhammad ‘Ali. If Jinnah was the actual architect of Pakistan, Liaquat ‘Ali Khan its first artificer, Ghulam Muhammad its devoted custodian, and Khwaja Nazimuddin its sturdy worker, it was Muhammad ‘Ali’s destiny to rescue the country from unexpected dangers which had silently gathered around.

For the first five years after the foundation of Pakistan in 1947, all had gone well — so well, in fact, that many of her people became over-confident. The vigorous leadership of Liaquat ‘Ali Khan, however, had meanwhile been removed by the foul hand of an assassin, and there was as yet no one of the required quality and strength to give the same standard of confident leadership.

Pakistan’s days of anxiety

In a democracy, national strength does not depend upon an individual. It is teamwork, based upon full national cooperation, that determines the success of the Administration. Somehow, there came a weakening in the teamwork of Pakistan’s day-to-day life. Perhaps five years of success had gone to the heads of many people, and complacency had weakened their tenacity of purpose. The significance of economic and political omens had begun to be overlooked. Almost before this inexperienced nation could realize what was happening, it found itself staring almost helplessly at perils which suddenly loomed before it. The spectre of famine stood starkly before the eyes of the people — and it became known that the country’s reserves of money and food were insufficient. To add to the anguish, political dissension had reached uncomfortable dimensions, the shadow of the Kashmir dispute lingered close, and the masses were shocked and alarmed at the rise in the cost of living. With an adverse trade balance and seriously diminished reserves, here indeed was a crisis — and the Central Cabinet could think of no remedy to check the increasing danger.

Fortunately, in Ghulam Muhammad there was a Governor-General possessed of deep economic and political insight, who in previous years had built up a solid financial position for the country and who realized fully the gravity of the situation. Already, at the end of March 1953, he had taken the important step of seeking a fresh and impartial mind to review the crisis, and it was to Muhammad ‘Ali, Pakistan’s Ambassador in New York, that he turned. Abandoning plans for another of his long tours of the United States, Muhammad ‘Ali caught the first available plane for Karachi.

To the Governor-General his presence brought immediate relief. One can well understand the effect which this new vigorous personality produced upon Ghulam Muhammad. Here was a mind which was unprejudiced, free from involvement in the weakness and vacillation of the past, and imbued with a selflessness and sincerity which could not fail to inspire confidence. Within a fortnight the Governor-General decided to act; and with characteristic resolution he dismissed the entire Cabinet. To Muhammad ‘Ali he entrusted the task of reconstructing the


Mr. Muhammad ‘Ali, the Prime Minister of Pakistan (right), with the Governor-General, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad, and the Foreign Minister, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
Central Cabinet. The ex-ambassador was no “new broom” to make a “clean sweep” of all: he dropped only those who had clearly failed, retaining the efficient and the successful. So sound was his judgment on 17th April 1953 that not a single Cabinet change has since been necessary and the picture has been completely transformed into one of brightness and hope.

Muhammad ‘Ali’s background

Muhammad ‘Ali served Pakistan abroad for far longer than he has spent in his country since its foundation as an independent State. Most of his administrative experience was acquired in the province of Bengal under pre-partition India. He was born at Bogra, in Eastern Bengal, in 1909, and started life with the advantage of belonging to a family of landed gentry, who had for several generations played a prominent part in the political life of Bengal. His grandfather, Nawab ‘Ali Chaudhri, had the distinction of being the first Muslim to become (in 1921) a Minister of the Bengali Government under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform system, and later a member of the Governor’s Executive Council.

It was almost immediately after graduating at Calcutta University at the age of 21 that Muhammad ‘Ali first entered public life on local bodies in his home town and district. In 1937 he was elected to the Bengali Legislative Council, and six years later he was appointed a Parliamentary Secretary. He began to attract attention by the initiative and vigour he showed in establishing an Arts College in his native town, Bogra, the Lake Hospital in Calcutta, and a Medical College in Dacca (now Eastern Pakistan’s capital). His progressive outlook and organizing ability inevitably led to his selection in 1946 as a minister of undivided Bengal; and with the portfolio of Finance and Health under his charge he had abundant scope for developing his initiative and talents during the difficult post-war era. It was a valuable experience for him, for Bengal was suffering from famine and he learnt enough about the meaning of drought and scarcity to realize, seven years later, the extent of the danger confronting Pakistan.

The creation of Pakistan as an independent State interrupted Muhammad ‘Ali’s career as an administrator. But it opened the door to important new experiences for him. For a short interval he was a member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. 1948 found him in Burma as Pakistan’s Ambassador. A few months later, he was sent to Canada as Pakistan’s first High Commissioner; and in February 1952 he was appointed Ambassador to the United States of America.

“An approachable and sympathetic man”

The five years in his country’s diplomatic service abroad were never regarded by Muhammad ‘Ali as an interlude for mere social recreation. They brought a new meaning into his life, and he revelled in his usefulness as representative of a young and progressive nation. At the same time it was not enough for him to interpret his country passively to callers at his office. He felt the urge to go everywhere and tell the people of Canada and the United States all about Pakistan. He travelled tens of thousands of miles throughout North America, addressing large audiences and broadcasting frequently. A true democrat himself, nothing pleased him better than to make contact with people of the humblest, as well as the highest, stations in life — from the President of the United States to 16-year-old “Billy Brown” of New York City. Muhammad ‘Ali has that most priceless of human gifts — the capacity to make friends with all and sundry. He succeeds in making friends because he is so obviously sincere, so interested in life, so vital in speech and action.

Essentially an approachable and sympathetic man with a cordial smile and genial manner, he has the personality that comes from a true understanding of others and from a sense of justice as well as toleration. He is not merely a lover of fame, but is imbued with a keen appreciation of good sportsmanship; and his own physical fitness, alertness, and placid temperament, all contribute to his greatness.

He took the people of Pakistan into his confidence

In directing the restoration of Pakistan’s prosperity and happiness within twelve short months, Muhammad ‘Ali has achieved a Herculean feat. From the outset he realized that the only way to retrieve Pakistan’s position was to secure the trust and support of its people. To the perpetual credulity of Pakistanis, it must be recorded that they responded wholeheartedly; and voices which were once raised in acrimonious dispute have grown in grateful acknowledgment. It was by a personal approach to his countrymen that he succeeded. From the day he assumed office he has spoken plainly on the first day of every month to the man in the street, addressing the whole nation by radio, in a series of admirably clear broadcast talks. Nothing was allowed to interfere with this personal touch; even when severely ill, he saw to it that the microphone was set up in his room so that he could speak from his sick-bed. All Pakistan thus knew what was being done for the country, and the reasons for every step.

How he tackled Pakistan’s menacing problems

One of Muhammad ‘Ali’s first actions as Premier was to dispel the spectre of famine. Here it was that his genius for cultivating friendships brought such a harvest of reward to his country — literally a “harvest”, for, in immediate response to his appeal for food, the Government of the United States made a free and unconditional gift to Pakistan of 1,000,000 tons of wheat; Canada also gave 100,000 tons, and Australia 40,000 tons.

The effect was immediate: not only was the food shortage relieved, but the proceeds of sale became available for the execution of development plans in all the provinces of Pakistan. This has led to a vast improvement in the economic and financial situation, restored to Pakistan the large favourable trade balance which she enjoyed in former years, and paved the way to speedier industrial development. This process has been rendered still easier by the recent military aid pact with the United States, whereby large sums for Pakistan’s defence requirements have been freed for the purpose of making the country more self-supporting in the manufacture of consumer goods.

The third problem — that of Pakistan’s constitution as an independent Islamic republic — has also reached a virtual settlement. Here the keynote to Muhammad ‘Ali’s policy was an appeal to his people to place the interests of the nation as a whole in the forefront, and not to allow provincialism to weaken that ideal.

Only one of Pakistan’s original perplexities remains unsolved: Kashmir’s future. This problem has put all Muhammad ‘Ali’s talents for negotiations to the test. He has discussed the problem with the Prime Minister of India, and has thereby raised hopes of a settlement.

A recent achievement of Muhammad ‘Ali has been the conclusion of pacts of friendship and co-operation with the United States and Turkey. The recent State visits to Pakistan of King Feisal of Iraq and King Sa’ud of Sa’udi Arabia have spun closer ties of friendship between these countries and Pakistan. All this has enforced Muhammad ‘Ali’s claim to the title of “The Friend-Maker of Pakistan.”
MUSLIM PROPAGANDA IN THE WEST:

MUSLIM PROPAGANDA IN THE WEST:

A Plea for a More Concerted Effort

By “M. E. M.”

“It is high time that the Muslim countries made an effort to remedy this intolerable situation. Viewed in the light of what they have suffered from this lack of good propaganda, delay in starting an energetic propaganda campaign in the Western world is unforgivable. The ideal would be set up a network of information centres in the Western countries under the control of a joint organization financed by all the Muslim States. The money needed for such a project would not be too much — and there are some Muslim States with far more money than they can find immediate use for. The voice of Islam and the people of Islam in the Western world must not be dimmed, as it now is, for the sake of a few pounds, dinars, or rupees.”

The British Government wants a settlement with Egypt but is afraid of the wrath of misinformed public opinion in Britain

An influential Sunday newspaper in London, commenting recently on the lack of progress in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations over the Suez Canal dispute, said that the British Government was known to be in favour of accepting the terms offered by the Egyptian Government, but was hampered in its desire to conclude a final agreement by the fact that the British public was grossly misinformed about the real nature and implications of the Suez Canal dispute. There has been a great deal of propaganda by members of Parliament and other politicians in England (mainly of Conservative leanings) that an acceptance of the Egyptian terms would be tantamount to a “humiliating and defeatist” surrender by the “British Lion” to the “Egyptian Mouse”. There has also been the intensive propaganda, emanating from Zionist sympathizers in Britain and elsewhere, that to allow Egypt to enjoy her natural sovereign rights would be tantamount to “stabbing Israel in the back” and giving Egypt an opportunity to get at the throat of Israel.

That both these conceptions and fears are completely unfounded is known to all Muslims and sympathizers with Egypt. The Egyptian Government has been at pains to explain to the British public that by handing the Suez Canal to Egypt, Britain would not be charitable but would merely be doing justice to Egypt, since the Suez Canal zone has always been Egyptian soil from which Egypt had been deprived for many years by the power of the British sword. General Nageb, on behalf of the Egyptian Government, has also emphasized that Egypt was not contemplating a “second round” with Israel.

The evil consequences of the lack of propaganda

But does the British public know of these important utterances by responsible members of the Egyptian Government, and does it appreciate their significance? No! All that the general public in Britain knows about Egypt’s cause is derived mainly from distorted and “slanted” reports in the British Press. The real voice of Egypt never reaches the man-in-the-street in Britain, and he thus remains amazingly ignorant of the Egyptian point of view. What is true of the general public in Britain, with regard to their appreciation of Muslim national causes, is true of the general public in other non-Muslim countries.

Is this general ignorance of the Egyptian point of view doing the Egyptian cause any harm? There can be no doubt whatsoever that it is doing untold harm. The British Government today, perhaps more so than its predecessor, is not bold enough to take unpopular measures. It has a slender majority in Parliament, and any loss of prestige or popularity in the public’s eye will almost certainly cause its defeat in a general election.

It is thus no exaggeration to say that the fate of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations at present depends more on the opinion of the man-in-the-street in Britain than on the considered and informed opinion of the British Government. Until the man-in-the-street in Britain has been converted to the truth about the Egyptian cause, the British Government will continue to procrastinate in the Suez Canal negotiations. And the Egyptian temper will continue to rise progressively until a stage is reached when a catastrophic showdown between Egypt and Britain would be difficult to avoid.

Is Egypt to blame?

Who is to blame for this malaise? Few British politicians and newspapers are willing to go out of their way to publicize the Egyptian point of view. But who would blame them for this? Their attitude is only natural — they are not the appointed publicists of Egypt.

But Egypt is to blame. Has she done all she could to put her point of view lucidly and forcefully to the British public in Britain? The Egyptian Press has consistently carried banner headlines about the Egyptian point of view in these negotiations. There have been many “open letters” and vociferous leading articles in Egyptian newspapers, designed to acquaint the British Government and public with the Egyptian cause. But the British public do not read Egyptian newspapers. Whenever a British politician utters anything that is favourable to the Egyptian cause, his statement is given great prominence in the Egyptian Press and in the Press in the Arab world generally. His statement may even be printed in a special pamphlet in Arabic and widely distributed to the Arab public. But the Arab public are firmly convinced of the justice of the Egyptian cause. They need no preaching, they are already converted! Egyptian preaching must be directed to those who need it — to the British public and to the public in the Western world generally. It is they who need to be acquainted with the Egyptian point of view on this matter.

The Muslim countries’ information services are weak and inept

It is perhaps unfair to single Egypt out as the country which does little to publicize itself and its national causes in foreign countries. The criticism here directed against Egypt’s failure to make good propaganda in the non-Muslim world
applies equally, and often even more strongly, to the other Muslim countries — with the notable exception of Pakistan, Turkey and Indonesia.

The Muslim embassies in foreign countries are, on the whole, dejected and ill-equipped as far as the spreading of information and propaganda is concerned. They are rarely able promptly and without much ado to supply journalists, and other people who seek information, with proper statistics and documentation, or with such things as translated or original versions of their Constitutions, or texts of important speeches by their Prime Ministers, or with photographs of important events or personalities in their countries. Not only do these embassies fail to seek out people who can use such information to advantage, but they even cause frustration and disappointment to those who come to them expressly for enlightenment. For their failings they often blame their Governments at home; and this blame may be legitimate, for the Muslim States as a whole have not yet grasped the value and paramount importance of propaganda. They also blame the hostile attitude of the Press in the non-Muslim countries, and say that the Press often ignores their letters and statements.

That the Press in the non-Muslim countries (and particularly in the Western world) is not willing to give Muslim pleas sufficient space is quite true. But it is equally true that the bulk of the statements, Press handouts and letters to the Press emanating from Muslim embassies are often badly styled and not sufficiently terse and succinct to make a justifiable claim on the columns of foreign newspapers as good “copy”. Only a few of the Muslim embassies in the West issue information bulletins at present. These bulletins come out at long and irregular intervals, and are nearly always addressed to a small section of the elite who are already sympathizers with Muslim causes. Consequently, such bulletins do little good, because they never reach the general public.

The reason for the failure of these propaganda campaigns is nearly always the fact that they are not in the hands of experienced propagandists — men who know the West sufficiently well, from the linguistic, social, cultural, historical, or religious aspects, to be able to put forward the cause of the Muslim countries in an appealing manner.

Ordinary folk in Western countries must be made familiar with Muslim causes

The Muslim world is surging forward towards progress and reform. It has yet, however, to achieve complete freedom from the bonds of direct or indirect political and economic imperialism. Its fate had at one time been tied to that of the West, and the fate of some parts of it, like North Africa, is still so tied. Nevertheless, the Muslim world on the whole still needs the West, which has a great deal to offer by making available to the Muslim countries its scientific knowledge and advice. The Muslim world thus stands to gain much, and to lose nothing, by maintaining friendly and enlightened relations with the West. But the Muslim world must take the initiative in this regard. The Muslim point of view must be explained with patience to the man-in-the-street in Western countries. The power of the ordinary man in the Western world is great. He makes and unmakes Governments. If he ever gives his Government a mandate to act in a manner that is in reality alien to his convictions and beliefs he always does so as the result of ignorance and not as the result of any wicked tendencies. There must therefore be a concerted effort on the part of Muslim Governments to reach the ordinary folk in the Western world — to reach them intimately and in their own surroundings, and by the medium of a language (the term is used here in both the literal and metaphorical senses) which they can understand.

The harm suffered by the Muslims

That the Muslim world has on the whole suffered a great deal from the lack of informed propaganda in the Western world is a fact which no Muslim can deny. The Arabs lost Palestine — because the average man in Britain and in the Western world generally had somehow been made to believe that Palestine was always the land of the Jews. Only a few realized that the Arabs had inhabited Palestine for almost fourteen centuries and that the Arabs constituted the majority of its inhabitants. The man in the West could see that the Jew who lived in his midst was a civilized person. But most of his information about the Arab was derived from Hollywood films in which the Arabs are shown to be of only two classes — either half-starved beggars living in tents, or fat princes living in glamorous palaces with lots of wives and concubines. Many in the West still think that the Arab countries are fabulous lands of corruption and nepotism, where the great majority of the inhabitants are mercilessly exploited by a very small minority. Indeed, one of the meanings of the very word “Arab” in the English dictionary is “a neglected and deserted child”!

Do the Arab peoples, for example, know that the only journals of any wide circulation in Britain which deal at any length with Arab affairs are the Jewish Observer and Middle East Review and the Jewish Chronicle? Can they, in the circumstances, blame the British public for being ignorant of, and unfriendly to, Arab causes?

A plea for action

It is high time that the Muslim countries made an effort to remedy this intolerable situation. Viewed in the light of what they have suffered from this lack of good propaganda, delay in starting an energetic propaganda campaign in the Western world is unforgivable. The ideal would be to set up a network of information centres in the Western countries under the control of a joint organization financed by all the Muslim States. The money needed for such a project would not be too much — and there are some Muslim States with far more money than they can find immediate use for. The voice of Islam and the people of Islam in the Western world must not be dimmed, as it now is, for the sake of a few pounds, dinars or rupees.

The Arab League has for the last two years been toying with the idea of setting up information centres in Western capitals. A few months ago a decision was taken to set up one such information centre in New York; but nothing was done about Europe. The decision has not yet been fully implemented. The hesitation shown by the Arab League in this affair is a mystery. Why can they not execute this project fully and speedily?

The time has now come when the Muslim and Arab Governments must give their attention to this matter without further delay and procrastination. Advertising the national causes of the Muslim and Arab world will not be a very easy task, nor one which will give immediate returns. But it is a possible task which promises to yield a very worthwhile prize — the laying down of the foundations of solid and lasting friendship and co-operation between the Muslim world and the Western world.
THE FRENCH AND THEIR RECORD IN MOROCCO

By Philip Deane

"So much for discrimination. Now for the French efforts to train Moors for self-government. Administrative expenses account for 80 per cent of the Budget. Only one Moor in 400 can hope to find employment with the Administration. For the French it is one in twenty. And the Moroccans are mostly doormen, sweepers, messengers. Nearly all the responsible jobs are held by the French. They have turned into a puppet show the old-time Moorish Administration which by treaty they undertook to renovate and improve. Thus the best training for responsibility — responsibility itself — is denied to the Moroccan. The French claim there are not enough educated Moroccans to produce sufficient numbers of people for the selection of suitable Civil Servants. That is true, yet a law of 1937 prohibits private schools for Muslims from teaching anything but the Qur'an and Arabic — not even arithmetic. These schools, which taught more children than the Government schools, were not allowed to open this year. Now only one Moroccan child in ten can get a primary education; but all European children in Morocco can go to school.

The suppression of news about Morocco

On 20th August 1953 there were reports of riots in Morocco. The mountain tribes were taking part in what some消息 described as a "French-sponsored rebellion." It was claimed that tanks had surrounded the Sultan's palace in Rabat for two days before the Moroccan sovereign and his two sons were flown into exile.

Since that day, and every day, there have been sabotage and assassination in Morocco, a country which had been peaceful since 1934. The radio stations in Arab countries play up these troubles. The French authorities tend to play them down as insignificant.

Are thousands of people being arrested — as Cairo Radio claims — and put in concentration camps? Are they given hard labour, without even appearing before a judge?

To what extent have Algeria and Tunisia, the other two French North African territories, experienced bloodshed in the past few years? Are the stories about massacres of Europeans by the North Africans at the end of the last war true? And were French reprisals as dreadful as the Arab League asserts?

These signs of troubles in North Africa come from an area recognized as strategically essential for the Western world. The area controls the Mediterranean at Tangier and Bizerte. It is already dotted with enormous air-force bases whose security might be threatened if the reported troubles grow.

Outside France little is said in the Western world about these events. It takes the deposition of a Sultan or an attempt against his successor for North Africa to appear in the news. Yet a whole group of countries, the Arab-Asian bloc, have been urging the United Nations for the past four years to investigate North Africa.

The economic ailments of Morocco

The people of Asia, experimenting with their newly-gained independence, are sensitive to what Western Powers do in other parts of the world. These people of Asia — to avoid economic disaster which would plunge them, through

anarchy, into Communism — need the help of technically advanced nations. The West can help, but the Russians can make this help palatable to the Asians by presenting it as a new attempt of the incorrigible Western imperialists to impose the old yoke once more, in a different form. To prove that the Western Powers are incorrigible imperialists, the Russians point to French policy in North Africa, and to the support this policy receives from Britain and the United States.

The French for their part have a lot to say in defence of this policy. North Africa, they claim, should not be treated as three separate territories but as a unit. It is an area with limited resources. There is little water. Erosion has done its worst for centuries. The mineral wealth is not so great as is generally believed. In any case, its rapid development requires enormous capital and knowledge. This the French can provide to some extent. They have also built the transport system necessary for development. Their health services have been so effective in saving life that the increase in the population of their North African territories is frightening. In the next thirty years, the population is expected to double. And already most North Africans go hungry, for their country cannot feed them.

To do something and to do it quickly, so as to prevent the repetition of dreadful famines which as recently as 1945 killed thousands of North Africans, a well-thought-out plan must be devised and applied by qualified personnel. That is what the French claim they are trying to do.

The nationalist opposition

Since their avowed aim is to raise the standards of the Moors (as the inhabitants of the three territories are called collectively), the French should logically find no opposition in North Africa. Yet there is opposition. It comes, according to the French, from a handful of extremist nationalists who want to throw out the 2,000,000 European settlers. And this opposition, by threatening the success of the development plan, threatens the future of the whole area. In a few years, if French statistics are correct, misery in North Africa might be so terrible that the Moors, having nothing more to lose, will try anything — Communist-fostered revolution, for instance.

1 Reproduced from The Observer, London, for 1st November 1953, by kind permission of the Editor. The article appears therein under the title of "North African Dilemma". The titles to paragraphs and the illustrations are ours.
To keep living standards from falling below their present deplorable level, the French Treasury is advancing more and more money each year to North Africa. The French claim they would love to get out of this uncomfortable and unprofitable position, if only they could be sure that by granting self-government they would not lose the positions they feel they have earned through their work; if only they could trust the nationalists not to victimize the settlers, and not to plunge the area into economic chaos through their inability to govern.

The French claim they cannot grant more self-government because the nationalist leaders of today are immature rabble-rousers who refuse to learn modern techniques of government by understudying the French. Moreover, say the French, the ordinary Moors still think as tribemen and not as citizens of a State. Their traditions, their corruption, and the shackles of Islam impede them from becoming good administrators and adopting modern techniques.

The Moroccan picture

That is the French thesis. Admitting this thesis to be true — and the French have impressive evidence to prove it — the question is what are the French doing about it? Are they trying to train the Moor for self-government, as they claim in their constitution, or are they trying to perpetuate Moorish incapacity for self-government — an incapacity which provides a convenient excuse for continued French domination?

In attempting to answer these questions I interviewed personalities in Paris for a fortnight and toured North Africa for two months, starting with Morocco. French Morocco is a breathtaking place. Beautiful roads cut through impressive scenery, pass over attractive bridges designed to blend with the landscape. Elegant white cities, well designed and well kept, enjoy a busy life. There are comfortable hotels, rich food, enormous shiny motor cars, and well-stocked shops. Care and architectural talent have been lavished on schools, hospitals and nurseries. To replace the shanty towns, Arab dwellings are being built in big batches by modern techniques. In the Atlas Mountains, lofty dams are being erected, and irrigation canals radiate from the artificial lakes. Out in the "bled" — the back country — dedicated young French officers selflessly serve the interests of the natives. They cure trachoma, dispense justice, build sewers, teach the use of weed-killers. And the natives obviously love those French officers.

Nowhere is there any evidence of discrimination on racial grounds. A near-Negro Moroccan can sit beside you in any hotel, and his wife might be a French girl.

The French dodge the main issue

All this the French are eager to stress with justifiable pride. And they point out the obvious deterioration that would follow if the natives were in command. "Nothing would work. The Moors are incapable," say the French.

They have carefully produced booklets, well-written briefings on all subjects, and they are willing to provide the visiting journalist with every facility, up to the loan of the Resident-General's plane. However, with traditional French hospitality, they make the business of living simple and pleasant for the visitor.

Meeting them in their spacious offices or well-appointed homes, watching them talk with evidently friendly natives, one has difficulty in believing that these Frenchmen can be guilty of discrimination or oppression. And one tends to
accept unquestioningly the picture they paint for you — that of benevolent paternal Frenchmen guiding the natives to political adulthood.

Yet something seems to be wrong with this picture. One first gets this feeling when one notices that they tend systematically to dodge one of the main issues. French officials do not like discussing whether they are doing anything to cure the "incapacity" of the Moors. They prefer to talk learnedly, if confusingly, of Maraboutism, Wahhabism, or the early Semitic Berber dialects. Nor do they like the subject of discrimination (other than in social relationships) examined. Yet their own statistics provide revealing information.

Glaring injustices

Only 20 per cent of the revenue for the Moroccan Budget comes from direct taxation on earnings. One form of direct taxation is tax on land produce. That is an important tax because Morocco is an agricultural country. Moroccan farmers pay 88 per cent of this tax; and they pay 20 per cent more per acre than the French farmers, although the latter have higher yields. Nearly 60 per cent of the Budget revenue comes from indirect taxation on consumer goods such as sugar or tobacco. The Moroccans consume 90 per cent of the sugar imported and they therefore pay 90 per cent of this tax.

What services do the Moroccans get from the State in exchange for such contributions to the Budget? Roads are built. It happens that the properties of the settlers are nearer the roads than the properties of the natives. These settle properties are the pick of Moroccan lands. Tribal lands were expropriated to make room for the settlers. The law has allowed settlers to buy land at nominal prices from the ignorant natives.

Habeas corpus which applies to Europeans in Morocco does not apply to Moors. They can be imprisoned without trial. They frequently are not allowed to see a lawyer. To make justice for the 400,000 Europeans speedy and careful, the Moroccan Budget spends £1 a year per person. For the administration of justice to 8,000,000 Moors, the Budget spends less than one shilling a year per person.

In wartime, French expectant mothers had extra rations: Morocan expectant mothers did not. There are other instances of inequality. Today, for instance, a Moroccan bus conductor with eight children receives less in family allowances than a French bus conductor with only one child.

"The Moroccans are mostly doormen, sweepers, messengers"


Administrative expenses account for 80 per cent of the Budget. Only one Moor in 400 can hope to find employment with the Administration. For the French it is one in twenty. And the Moroccans are mostly doormen, sweepers, messengers. Nearly all responsible jobs are held by the French. They have turned into a puppet show the old-time Moorish Administration which by treaty they undertook to renovate and improve.

Thus the best training for responsibility — responsibility itself — is denied to the Moroccan.

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As regards practice in the handling of democratic institutions — the French Resident-General expelled Moroccan members from his consultative council simply because they criticized the Budget.

Why the Sultan was deposed

Like many other Moroccans who have political consciousness, the now exiled Sultan Sidi Muhammad V objected to the discrimination against his own people and to the fact that the French were not doing anything to train Moroccans for self-government. To wrest concessions from the French, the Sultan refused to sign decrees, which according to the protectorate treaty must bear his seal before they become law. Faced with this royal "strike" which made day-to-day government almost impossible, the French could either (a) make concessions, (b) alter the treaty depriving the Sultan of this legislative prerogative, (c) threaten him into co-operation, or (d) depose him.

The French did not choose the first course. For the second they needed the agreement of the Sultan, and he
naturally would not give it. The third course did not work, because the Sultan would yield under pressure only to retract his promises later, claiming he had been coerced. For the French, who did not want to alter the pattern of their domination in Morocco by surrendering some of their privileges, deposition was the only course remaining.

How the French staged the deposition of the Sultan

I watched this being staged, during the first fortnight of last August. The governors of big or small towns and rural areas — the Pashas and Caids — who hold their lucrative appointments from the French, were encouraged to start a disidence campaign. Leaders of superstitious religious sects, who have enjoyed French support against orthodox religion, were also brought into the operation. Mass tribal meetings were held — although normally the French prohibit gatherings of more than three persons. The apolitical tribesmen followed their Caids, who pay out military pensions, collect taxes, distribute dole, act as judges and can therefore exact obedience.

In any case, obeying the Caid is a tradition that still lives in the tribe, together with a new tradition — that of obeying the French officer who runs the area, who is so kind, and upon whom so much depends. Then there was talk of sinister but not quite definite threats against what little the tribes have. Something “wicked” was being concocted by the townies, the rumours said. And perhaps there was the prospect of some loot, as in the “good old days” of razzias against the towns.

Finally, docile, smiling tribesmen, with ornamented muskets and in rags were told to march on the towns. The French governor of the city of Fez admitted before a group of journalists that he told the tribes to come to his city, promising them rations. The French Press of Morocco wrote of a “spontaneous mass movement against the Sultan”.

Then the three high French officials most antagonistic to the Sultan were sent to “convince” the “rebelling” Pashas and Caids not to insist on the deposition of Sidi Muhammad V. Later, without bothering to conceal their pleasure, the French at the Residency announced that the Pashas and Caids refused to change their minds. Rabat had no doubt the Sultan would be deposed — he was . . . on orders from the Government in Paris.

In the process, there were riots, a massacre of Europeans, and hundreds — some say thousands — of Moroccans were arrested and deported.

The problem is getting worse

Now the French say they have learnt from past mistakes and they are pushing through “the democratic reforms the country needs” — reforms which were opposed by the exiled Sultan. These reforms, the French say, will help democracy grow in Morocco.

The immediate effect of these reforms has been to strip the new Sultan of his legislative and judicial powers, transferring them to French-dominated bodies.

This deprives the Moroccans of the last legal way in which they could back their claims.

Meanwhile time presses. While the French try to retard the emancipation of the Moroccans and discriminate against them, the productivity of the soil has gone down since pre-war. There is a now chronic deficit of wheat. The olive oil crop is not enough for the needs of the country. Pastureland is dangerously overgrazed, and the available livestock is no longer sufficient even to satisfy the needs of the frugal Moors. In even greater numbers they flock to the cities to swell the ranks of the destitute, uprooted wretches who exist in the shanty towns. Always nearly in conflict with the law, away from the steadying influences of tribe and family, divorced even from religion, this growing Moorish proletariat of primitive men with a fighting tradition is becoming the ideal and ever-growing tool of agitators. . . .

The poverty and abject misery of these Moroccans is eloquent and damming evidence against their French rulers. . .
COMMUNISM AND ISLAM

By Professor Bernard Lewis

The competition to gain the support of the Islamic world

My purpose here is to try to see how far Islam and Communism are compatible — how far, that is. Islam predisposes those who have been brought up in it to accept or to reject the Communist teaching. I shall not attempt to examine Communist infiltration and propaganda in Islamic countries or the degree of their success or failure — that is a task calling for professional skills and sources of information other than those which are at my disposal. Rather shall I try to consider what qualities or tendencies exist in Islam, in Islamic civilization and society, which might either facilitate or impede the advance of Communism.

The obvious objection will no doubt at once be raised that Islam is after all a religion based on revelation, belief in which is clearly incompatible with Marxist ideology. That is undoubtedly true, and the same could be said with equal truth of Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant Christianity, of Judaism, or any other religion worthy of the name. Nevertheless, that doctrinal incompatibility has not prevented many former followers of these religions from becoming Communists. No doubt, the devout and pious Muslim theologian who has studied and understands the implications of dialectical materialism will reject that creed, but such a combination of circumstances is not of common occurrence, nor likely to be of far-reaching significance. The question before us should rather be put thus: in the present competition between the Western democracies and Soviet Communism for the support of the Islamic world, what factors or qualities are there in Islamic tradition, or in the present state of Islamic society and opinion, which might prepare the intellectually and politically active groups to embrace Communist principles and methods of government, and the rest to accept them?

Before proceeding farther I feel that a writer on a subject of this nature owes his reader some definition of his own political attitude. Let me confess right away that I lack one qualification which nowadays is generally accepted as conferring both authority and respectability — I am not an ex-Communist. I can, however, plead as an extenuating circumstance that I grew up in a generation which was deeply affected by what was happening in Russia, and which felt, generally speaking, that, with all the brutalities and crimes of the Russian revolution, it nevertheless represented something valuable and significant for humanity — “bliss was it in that dawn to be alive” — and I am therefore perhaps able to understand something of the attraction as well as of the repulsion of the Communist creed. Of my own political attitude let me say this, that I believe that parliamentary democracy as practised in the West, with all its manifest faults, is still the best and most just form of government yet devised by man. But at the same time I believe it to be the most difficult to operate, requiring certain qualities of mind and habit, of institution and tradition, perhaps even of climate, for its effective working. It has taken firm root only among the peoples of the northern and north-western fringes of Europe, and in the territories colonized by their descendants overseas. It has maintained, or maintains, a precarious existence in a few other regions, and is showing signs of promising but still immature growth in a few more, but otherwise it is unknown to the rest of the human race, in most of the world, and through most of recorded history.

Parliamentary democracy and the traditions of Islam

Knowing, then, that parliamentary democracy is far from being the common experience of mankind, I am, to my regret, by no means certain that it represents the common destiny of mankind, and I shall therefore try to avoid the too frequent practice, which has the fault of being both inaccurate and inexpedient, of representing the world’s dilemma as a straight choice between Communism and parliamentary democracy; of making, therefore, an appearance of parliamentary government the universal test of political and even moral virtue — in other words, of making our own present way of life the sole pattern of goodness, all deviations from which are necessarily evil, all alternatives to which are lumped together in a mass of undifferentiated wickedness. This principle, not even consistently applied, leads us to such logical and political absurdities as simultaneously courting the favours of some slave-owning and polygamous autocrat on another continent, while snubbing the Government of Spain — because of their disregard of civil liberties. The unfortunate and unpalatable fact is that it is we who are the exception in both history and geography, and that authoritarian and not representative government approximates most closely to the common experience of mankind. In most of the world autocracy, if less attractive, is more familiar and more intelligible than democracy, and even the arbitrary and capricious dictatorship of Moscow is neither as strange nor therefore as repellent to much of Asia and Africa — even much of Europe — as it is to us. We should certainly do our best to encourage the growth of free institutions wherever possible; but at the same time, we would do well to recall that for a great part of the human race, parliamentary democracy remains something remote, alien, and incomprehensible, an object sometimes of wonderment, even envy, more often, alas, of mistrust and hatred, which we must concede is not entirely unjustified when we recall the examples of democracy by which alone they can judge it. If the peoples of Islam are forced to make a straight choice, to abandon their own traditions in favour of either Communism or parliamentarianism, then we are at a great disadvantage.

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It is, however, fortunate, both for Islam and for the Western world, that the choice is not restricted to these two simple alternatives, for the possibility still remains for the Muslim peoples of restoring, perhaps in a modified form, their own tradition; of evolving a form of government which, though authoritarian, and perhaps even autocratic, is nevertheless far removed from the cynical tyranny of European-style dictatorship. I do not wish to be misunderstood—I would much prefer to see all Islam enjoy the benefits of constitutional government, democratic liberty, and the free development of the individual, and I by no means exclude the possibility of this desirable consummation, which in a few favoured countries is already in sight—but I wish to make clear my view that in large areas of the Islamic world this consummation is not in prospect, and furthermore, that the present circumstances, and indeed the ancient traditions of Islam, do not wholly favour us but, on the contrary, contain much which might incline the Muslim individual, class or nation which is ready to abandon traditional values and beliefs to accept the Communist rather than the democratic alternative.

The anti-Western motif

I propose now to select and discuss a few of what seem to me to be the more important elements favouring the success of Communism in the Islamic world, and to deal with them under two headings: first, the accidents, those that are part of the present historical situation, and then the essentials, those which are innate or inherent in the very quality of Islamic institutions and ideas.

The first and most important of the accidents is the anti-Western motif. The Communists are against the West, and for that reason can at once count on important elements of support in the Islamic world, just as the Nazis were able to do in their time—to a considerable extent the same elements of support and for the same reasons. Like the Nazis, the Communists are anti-Western in the double sense—they are against the Western Powers and they are also against the Western way of life, Western institutions and ideas. Under both headings they have a strong appeal. The present anti-Western reaction in the Islamic world is obvious and well known. After the period of admiration and imitation of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there is now a general and growing revulsion. Public attention has been focused in the main on a series of specific grievances of the Islamic world against the West—Morocco and Tunisia, Suez and the Sudan, Palestine, Abadan, and the rest, of which now one, now another, has been adduced as the main cause of anti-Western feeling. There are always those in the West who will seek to grind an axe or titillate a prejudice by attributing all troubles to the misdeeds of their favourite scapegoats—the French or the Jews, the Americans or the British—and they will always find enthusiastic agreement from somebody in the Orient. Muslims tend to stress the importance of any specific issue in the measure of their own involvement in it—Westerners, of their own freedom from involvement. In reality, all of them are symptoms or aspects of a fundamental and universal revulsion from all that is Western, and, as we have seen of late, even the revival of one or another grievance cannot bring more than a local and temporary alleviation. This movement is made up of various strains, of which I may mention the reaction against colonialism, which grows stronger as the latter is manifestly dying; against Western privilege and arrogance, economic, social and political; against the dislocations and upheavals resulting from the impact of the West, the changes brought about by Western influence and activities, by no means all of which are—as we like to flatter ourselves—beneficial.

The liberal and constitutional movements in the Islamic countries, which were launched with such high hopes in the nineteenth century, have, with few exceptions, ended in failure, disappointment and frustration. The local leaders have all too often relapsed into a cynicism and opportunism that has outraged the moral sense of those whom they professed to lead, or else have sought comfort in a rabid and xenophobic fanaticism, damning indiscriminately all and everything that has come out of the West. They expressed the blind protest of the masses against the alien and powerful forces that had dislocated their traditional way of life, destroyed their traditional social equilibrium, and posed new problems for which they offered no effective answer. It is no doubt unjust of Muslims to blame the West for the exuberant and destructive haste of their own reformers and for the incompetence and selfishness of their own parliamentarians. But we must admit that the record of the West in its dealings with the Islamic world and for that matter in its own internal affairs does not furnish material for any very striking rebuttal.

The popular conception of the phenomenon of “imperialism”

Communist propaganda against the West can therefore always count on a ready response, especially when striking the anti-imperialist drum. It may seem strange to us that the Soviet empire, still audibly erupting after having bolted half of Europe, should be able to pose successfully as the champion of the rights of oppressed peoples against the imperialists—that the State which rules with no light hand over so many Muslim subject peoples should nevertheless be able to carry off this pose among the other peoples of Islam. Yet so it is. For most Islamic peoples the notion of “imperialist”—and I am speaking here of course of the popular image—is rather restricted and surprisingly precise. The imperialist is always Western—in fact, “Western imperialist” is a natural and normal collocation of terms, like German measles or Spanish ‘flu. The Arab who protests against imperialism does not think for one moment that his putative ancestors who conquered an empire from the Pyrenees to the Oxus were also imperialists, nor the Persian that the vaunted glories of Cyrus and Darius were also of an imperial quality. Even the modern Japanese, except of course among their immediate victims, are somehow regarded as different and as belonging fundamentally among the sheep rather than the goats—black sheep perhaps, but still sheep. The imperialist of the popular prototype, the stock figure of contemporary political demonology in the Orient, is Western, and is moreover always maritime and commercial. The imperialist is a man who comes across the sea in a ship, lands on the coast, buys and sells, works his way inland, and finally, by various devices, mostly dishonest, establishes his rule.

This is, of course, a distillation and in some measure a distortion of the experience of most of Asia and Africa, of Portuguese and Dutch, French and British expansion since the sixteenth century. It is in fact the direct experience of most of these countries, in the last few centuries, of the phenomenon of imperialism. The other kind, overland military expansion, is not really grasped, except again by those who have experienced it directly. Turkey, for example, has for centuries fought a defensive action against the suc-
cessive stages of the Russian overland advance, first to the Black Sea, then down through the Balkans and the Caucasus. Turkey, moreover, is related by language and origin to the Tartar peoples who are now under Soviet yoke. Hence the greater degree of awareness among the Turks of the nature of Soviet imperialism, and the vastly different attitude adopted by Turkey to the present world problems. In the rest of the Islamic world Soviet imperialism may perhaps, in some circles, be apprehended intellectually, but it fails to evoke any real emotional response. It is remarkable how Islamic opinion generally refuses to accord to ancient Muslim centres of culture like Bukhara and Samarkand one hundredth of the interest and attention given to, say, Casablanca, Ismailia and Abadan. Even those who are anti-Communist will often say — most of us must have heard it — “At least, the Russians are not imperialists” — and really believe that the Soviet regime, despite its other faults, is somehow free from that particular stigma which renders the Western Powers so odious. Here it must be stated that the Russians are greatly helped by Western racial and colour prejudice, and by their own apparent freedom from it. This is an immense asset to them, both in Asia and Africa, and one that is wantonly presented to them.

The present discontent of the Islamic world

The second accidental with which I shall deal is the present discontent of the Islamic world, and more specifically the social and economic discontent. The abject poverty of the masses and the callous irresponsibility of the possessing classes are often mentioned as sources of possible danger. Quite clearly, warnings of the threat to liberty and property are unlikely to move those who possess neither; on the contrary, Communist ideas and promises will have a ready attraction for important groups in a society which, as has often been pointed out, in many ways resembles that of Russia on the eve of the Revolution.

This point is self-evident and has often been made, and there is no need for me to dwell on it. I would, however, like to mention three facts which we might bear in mind when we speak of the immemorial poverty and irresponsibility of the Orient. The first is that this poverty, at any rate in its present form, is in fact not immemorial. Obviously, the gap between rich and poor has always existed, but as far as we can ascertain, it has not in earlier times been as wide and as unbridgeable as it is now. In its present form, this gap is largely the result of the Western impact, the effect of which has been to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer, than they were before. The economic effects of Westernization and of contact with the West are a complex problem: I propose here to mention only two aspects. One is the greater opportunity to amass wealth afforded by Western industrial, commercial, and financial techniques, and the consequent growth of fortunes on a scale unknown in earlier and simpler economies; the other is the rapid increase of population, made possible by Western hygiene and security, but unaccompanied by any corresponding increase in food supplies.

Moreover, the disparity between rich and poor is not only greater than before, but, what is perhaps more important, is more visible, thanks to the introduction of Western amenities and the flow of Western consumer goods, which afford vastly greater opportunities for the public display and enjoyment of wealth. These changes are not due to the villainy of the West or even in any great measure to the direct intervention of Westerners; they are rather the consequences of the process of Western contact, Western influence, and Westernization generally. The West is now doing something to remedy them, and can do very much more.

The corporative structure of traditional Islamic society

I have said that the poverty of the Orient was not, in its present form, immemorial. Nor for that matter is the irresponsibility of the Oriental ruling classes. Before the impact of Westernization from, say, the late eighteenth century onwards, the corporative structure of traditional Islamic society, though worm-eaten, was still standing, and the complex system of social and moral duties associated with it was still functioning. Then the old order was shattered, not by the wicked imperialists, but by native reformers, men of the stamp of Mahmud II in Turkey and Muhammad ‘Ali in Egypt, who destroyed better than they built. Nothing has come to replace the old bonds. That is the cause of the social and political formlessness which has struck so many observers of modern Islamic societies, the absence of any but purely personal and family loyalties — since the family is the only surviving social unit with any real life or meaning. So that, we might remember, what we condemn as the vice of nepotism is, for those who practice it, the virtue of family loyalty, the only intelligible form of loyalty that remains. The disappearance of the old social ethos and the breakdown of the old social cohesion have left a dangerous gap which Western social ideals and institutions have failed to fill.

My third point is that the centre of danger is not the starving peasantry so often referred to, but rather the aspiring mechanics, who are the main recruits to the Communist cause. The peasantry are still, to a large extent, integrated in their traditional social units, and sustained by the loyalty and cohesion of the family and village group. It is the semi-skilled or unskilled labourers who are uprooted from their tribal and village communities, deprived of the support of their usual system of social relationships and mutual aid, and placed in alien and unfamiliar surroundings. In the Communist cell the transplanted proletarian or mechanic may hope to find some substitute for his lost social armature, as well as encouragement in the ambitions and resentments that he acquires together with his new skills.

Islam and democracy

I turn now from the accidental to the essential factors, to those deriving from the very nature of Islamic society, tradition, and thought. The first of these is the authoritarianism, perhaps we may even say the totalitarianism, of the Islamic political tradition. It is by now lamentably clear that any totalitarian government, however anti-Communist its professed creed may be, does in fact provide the starting-point for a swift and easy transition to Communist dictatorship. The democratic Finns, isolated and abandoned to the mercies of Russia, have nevertheless succeeded in maintaining their democratic liberties through long and difficult years. The more or less Fascist regimes of Eastern and Central Europe, by a few simple adjustments, were soon transformed into Communist States, for which the machinery and personnel of repression, and the habit of acquiescence in it, were ready to hand. The political experience and traditions of Islam, though very different from those of Eastern Europe, do nevertheless contain elements which might, in certain circumstances, prepare the way for Communism.
It will be remembered that the writer is a doctor of the Holy Law and speaking in terms of the Holy Law. When he prescribes recognition and obedience, he is laying down the duty of the believer under the Holy Law — that is to say, he is formulating a rule the violation of which is, in our terminology, a sin as well as a crime, involving hell-fire as well as such anticipatory chastisement as the sovereign might see fit to impose in this world. "Even a slave or a woman," says Ibn Jama’a; only one thing worse can be imagined — an infidel, and that stage, too, was reached when, after the Norman conquest of Sicily from the Muslims, a Muslim jurist of Mazaara laid down that even a Christian ruler must be accepted and obeyed, provided he accords religious toleration to the Muslims. A community brought up on such doctrines will not be shocked by Communist disregard of political liberty or human rights; it may even be attracted by a régime which offers ruthless strength and efficiency in the service of a cause — anyway in appearance — in place of the ineptitude, corruption, and cynicism which in their mind, one may even say in their experience, are inseparable from parliamentary government.

Centralization and bureaucracy in the Islamic world

Even the Communist doctrine that the State must direct economic life is not alien to the Muslim as might be thought — rather is he accustomed to look to the State for direction and control of certain central aspects of economic life. The classical Islamic social order was evolved in Iraq and Egypt, and conformed to the ancient pattern of river-valley society. In those lands of little rainfall there was an intensive agriculture, based on artificial irrigation from the river. This required armies of engineers and officials, employed and controlled by a central authority, whose task it was to maintain the elaborate structure of dykes, dams, canals, and other irrigation works, by which alone the economic life of the country could be maintained. For this system a strong central authority was a paramount necessity, and one does not have to look far to find examples of the ruin and impoverishment which followed the breakdown of the central authority in times of political weakness and the consequent neglect of the irrigation works. In countries blessed with rain the farmer can look to God for his water and maintain a certain independence in other respects. In the river-valley societies he must look to the central authority to maintain the system and to supply the life-giving stream and he knows himself to be at its mercy. It is in such communities that we find the type of social order that Wittfogel has called “the hydraulic society,” where the régime and the ruling class are based on the supply of water for irrigation. Its characteristics are well known: a docile and helpless peasantry, at the mercy of a centralized and bureaucratic authority and a ruling class of officials and landowners in unchallenged, and indeed unchallengeable, control of the sources of economic life and therefore of political power. The same basic type of society exists in Egypt and Iraq, in the river-valleys of India, in China, and, one may perhaps add, in the river-valleys of Russia. Whether the historic Russian society is “hydraulic” in this sense I would not pretend to say; there are, however, certain striking similarities. The traditional Islamic autocracy rests on three pillars: the bureaucracy, the army, and the religious hierarchy — and I may recall in passing the interesting suggestion recently made by Mr. Albert Hourani, that we may be witnessing a return to this pattern in the recent changes in Egypt. In this pattern, only the third, the religious hierarchy,

Many attempts have been made to show that Islam and democracy are identical — attempts usually based on a misunderstanding of Islam or democracy or both. This sort of argument expresses a need of the uprooted Muslim intellectual who is no longer satisfied with or capable of understanding traditional Islamic values, and who tries to justify, or rather re-state, his inherited faith in terms of the fashionable ideology of the day. It is an example of the romantic and apologetic presentation of Islam that is a recognized phase in the reaction of Muslim thought to the impact of the West. There are, of course, elements, even important elements, in Islam, especially in the early period, which we might not unjustly call democratic, but on the whole the tendency which is usually adduced in support of this thesis is equalitarian rather than democratic; a very different thing, and one that goes with authoritarianism at least as well as with democratic institutions. In point of fact, except for the early caliphate, when the anarchic individualism of tribal Arabia was still effective, the political history of Islam is one of almost unrelieved autocracy. I say autocracy, not despotism, since the sovereign was bound by and subject to the Holy Law, and was accepted by the people as rightful ruler, maintaining and maintained by the authority of the Holy Law. But still it was authoritarian, often arbitrary, sometimes tyrannical. There are no parliaments or representative assemblies of any kind, no councils or communes, no chambers of nobility or estates, no municipalities in the history of Islam; nothing but the sovereign power, to which the subject owed complete and unswerving obedience as a religious duty imposed by the Holy Law. In the great days of classical Islam this duty was only owed to the lawfully appointed caliph, as God’s vicegerent on earth and head of the theocratic community, and then only for as long as he upheld the law; but with the decline of the caliphate and the growth of military dictatorship, Muslim jurists and theologians accommodated their teachings to the changed situation and extended the religious duty of obedience to any effective authority, however impious, however barbarous. For the last thousand years, the political thinking of Islam has been dominated by such maxims as “tyranny is better than anarchy” and “whose power is established, obedience to him is incumbent”. The classical formulation of Islamic political quietism may be found in an often cited passage from the Syrian jurist Ibn Jama’a, who became Chief Qadi of Cairo and died in 1333:

“..."Forced homage. This happens when a chief seizes power by force, in a time of civil disorders, and it becomes necessary to recognize him in order to avoid further troubles. That he may have none of the qualifications of sovereignty, that he be illiterate, unjust or vicious, that he be even a slave or a woman, is of no consequence. He is a sovereign in fact, until such time as another, stronger than he, drives him from the throne and seizes power. He will then be sovereign by the same title, and should be recognized in order not to increase strife. Whoever has effective power has the right to obedience, for a government, even the worst one, is better than anarchy, and of two evils one should choose the lesser."

An unpalatable truth"

It will be clear that these are not the words of a Time-server or flatterer trying to make his career at an autocratic court. They are the words of a pious and devout believer, putting bluntly and sadly an unpalatable truth as he sees it.

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need be changed in order to prepare the way for a Communist State.

The 'Ulama of Islam

That third, however, is by no means unimportant. Quite obviously, the 'Ulama of Islam are very different from the Communist Party. Nevertheless, on closer examination, we find certain uncomfortable resemblances. Both groups profess a totalitarian doctrine, with complete and final answers to all questions on heaven and earth; the answers are different in every respect, alike only in their finality and completeness, and in the contrast they offer with the eternal questioning of Western man. Both groups offer to their members and followers the agreeable sensation of belonging to a community of believers, who are always right, as against an outer world of unbelievers, who are always wrong. Both offer an exhilarating feeling of mission, of purpose, of being engaged in a collective adventure to accelerate the historically inevitable victory of the true faith over the infidel evil-doers. The traditional Islamic division of the world into the House of Islam and the House of War, two necessarily opposed groups, of which the first has the collective obligation of perpetual struggle against the second, also has obvious parallels in the Communist view of world affairs. There again, the content of belief is utterly different, but the aggressive fanaticism of the believer is the same. The humorist who summed up the Communist creed as "There is no God and Karl Marx is my Prophet" was laying his finger on a real affinity. The call to a Communist Jihad, a Holy War for the faith — a new faith, but against the self-same Western Christian enemy — might well strike a responsive note.

Religio-Communistic movements

I have referred to collective obligations. Here, too, there is a possible point of contact between Communism and Islam, the collectivist tendencies of which have struck many observers. A good deal has been written about the innumerable religio-Communistic sects and movements that have arisen all over Islam, almost since its beginning. Let me quote from an almost contemporary Arabic chronicle, describing the activities of an agent of one such sect in Iraq, in the neighbourhood of Kufa, about the middle of the nineteenth century. This agent, we are told, having converted the inhabitants of some villages to his doctrine, imposed on them an ever-increasing series of taxes and levies and finally:

"The duty of Ulfa... this consisted of assembling all their goods in one place and enjoying them in common without anyone retaining any personal property which might give him an advantage over the others. He assured them that they did not need to keep any property because all the land belonged to them and to no one else. That, he told them, is the test by which you are proved so that we may know how you will behave. He urged them to buy and prepare arms. The missionaries appointed in each village a trustworthy man to assemble all that the people of the village owned by way of cattle, sheep, jewellery, provisions, etc. He clothed the naked and met all their needs, leaving no poor man among them, nor any needy and infirm. Every man worked with diligence and emulation at his task in order to deserve high rank by the benefit he brought. The woman brought what she earned by weaving, the child brought his wages for scaring away birds. Nobody among them owned anything beyond his sword and his arms."

This is no doubt an exaggerated description of the proceedings of these groups, but it is not untypical. And this is but one of many such movements recorded in Islam, and in Persia also long before Islam. All of them failed and were duly condemned by the orthodox as heresy, but they reveal the recurring tendency in Islam to throw up such ideas and groups, and they also help to explain the otherwise mystifying connections which are reported from time to time between certain extremist Islamic religious organizations and Communism. It was precisely in organizations of this sort, the popular, semi-secret, mystical brotherhoods, of dubious orthodoxy and mistrusted by the regular 'Ulama, that these religio-Communistic tendencies usually appeared. Nor is this collectivism limited to what one might call the "popular substratum" of Islam. It is also discernible in many aspects of orthodox Islamic thought, I have the attitude to society and government, which I have already mentioned, even in literature. The classical Arabic book is often presented not as an individual and personal creation of the author, but as a link in the chain of tradition, the author effacing his own personality behind the prestige of authority and the ranks of previous transmitters. Many of the great works of Arabic literature are as impersonal and as collective as a medieval cathedral. This collectivism is perhaps clearest in the Muslim idea of the Perfect Man and the Perfect State as given, immutable patterns externally applied, to which all must in theory attempt to conform by imitation, instead of, as in the Western ideal, by developing their own potentialities from within.

Common ground between religion and Communism

But all this, it may be objected, could equally well be said of any other religion as of Islam, and amounts to no more than saying that Communism is itself a religion. I concede that this is true, though by no means all, apply to some other religions. I would add that had these religions retained the same formative and determinative power over their adherents as Islam still has, the observation might have some practical relevance. But I cannot accept the statement that Communism is a religion, and nothing. I would suggest, illustrates more clearly the decayed state of religion in our Western world than that such a comparison can be made at all. Admittedly, the resemblances are at first sight striking. In Communism, as in most religions, we find ritual and hierarchy, revelation and prophecy, scripture and exegesis, orthodoxy and heresy, excommunication and persecution. Even some of the deeper spiritual strength of religious faith seems to fortify the true convinced Communist. Despite his professed materialism, he has objectives beyond his own self-interest, and beyond his own lifetime. He is filled with an evangelical fervour and a messianic faith. It is this quality which has given Communism its special strength — the dangerous fascination which it exercises in so many Oriental countries. Fascism and Nazism, with their naked appeal to greed, hate, pride, and envy, could in the long run address themselves only to the evil instincts of man, and were correspondingly limited. Communism, while exploiting these to the full, has also perverted to its service some of the noblest aspirations of the human race — as peace, social justice, the brotherhood of man — and has used them with deadly effect. We shall fail to understand and meet the threat of Communism if we do not recognize its attraction for the best, though not the brightest, as well as for the worst spirits.

Communism thus has many features in common with religion, but those that are lacking are perhaps the most
important. I would like to quote a passage from the Danish
writer Vilhelm Gronbech, who says:

"The trouble is that we confuse religiosity with
religion. Just because people are so devout in their
personal way, they are unable to conceive a religion
which is the soul of society, the obverse of the practical,
a living and real religion, the practical relationship of
the people to God, soul and eternity, that manifests
itself in worship and works as a life-giving power in
politics and economics, in crafts and commerce, in ethics
as in law. In this sense the modern State has no
religion."

The core of Islamic resistance to Communist ideas

In this sense, one may add, Communism is not and
cannot be a religion, while Islam, for the great mass of
believers, still is; and that is the core of the Islamic resist-
ance to Communist ideas. Though their belief in liberty be too
weak to sustain them, their belief in God may yet be strong
enough. The Islamic peoples are still profoundly religious in
the simplest and deepest meaning of the word. Islam as a
religion is not more anti-Communist than Christianity; in
fact, as I have suggested, rather less so. But it is more potent
as a force affecting the lives and thoughts of its adherents.
Pious Muslims — and most Muslims are pious — will not
long tolerate an atheist creed, nor one that violates their
traditional religious moral principles which, because they do
not tally with our own, are too often overlooked by Western
observers. The present revolt of the Muslims against the
immorality and opportunism of their own and of some
Western leaders may temporarily favour the Communists,
with their appearance of selfless devotion to an ideal, but will
work against Communism when Muslims come to see the
realities behind the propaganda. Let us hope that they will
not take too long over it.

In any case, there is not a great deal that we can do
about it. Our own public and political morality is un-
doubtedly better than that of the Communists, but the
difference is apparently not large enough or striking enough
to make any notable impression on the rest of the world. The
people who represent Western democracy in its dealings with
Islam are certainly estimable men, doing important and
meritorious work, but as promoters of moral and religious
revival they are unlikely to carry conviction. We of the West
can do much to promote the material well-being and raise
the material standards of the lands of Islam. We can also
perhaps do something to encourage — and that means to
justify — a more positive attitude towards ourselves, our
ideas, and our aspirations; but in the present crisis it is from
within that Islam must find the moral strength and spiritual
resources to resist the great secular heresy of our time. We
can do no more than refrain from offering impediments.

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION

The resolutions adopted

The third annual conference of the International Islamic
Economic Organization, which opened on 25th April 1954,
concluded its sessions on 29th April. It was attended by
delegates and observers from Afghanistan, the Arab League,
Egypt, Kashmir, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, the Lebanon, Sa'udi
Arabia, Syria, and Turkey.

The conference adopted nine resolutions. One of the
resolutions, proposed by Lebanon and supported by Syria,
authorizes the General Secretariat of Organization to use its
good offices for successful negotiations of bilateral trade
agreement between member countries. Another resolution
thanked the Pakistan Government for their help to the
Organization, while a third resolution thanked the Aga Khan
for his donation of one million rupees towards a proposed
Institute of Economics. The conference also asked the
Pakistan Governor-General, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad, to
continue his patronage to the Organization as it Founder-
President.

The conference also elected the Pakistan Foreign
Minister, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, as President of
the Organization for one year, and confirmed the election of

Mr. Husain Malik of Pakistan as Secretary-General for three
years.

Addressing the final session of the conference the Foreign
Minister of Pakistan asked members of the Organization to
follow up the suggestions and proposals moved by different
member countries during current sessions to make the
Organization a success.

The leader of the Sa'udi Arabian Delegation said that
the uplift of Muslims today depended wholly on their unity.
He emphasized that Islam believes in action.

Muslim "Colombo Plan"

The Governor-General of Pakistan, who was the first
President and one of the founders of the Organization, said
in his address inaugurating the conference that the Organiza-
tion had hopes of preparing a plan similar to the Colombo
Plan in which all Muslim countries would participate — "at
least those which geographically comprise the region known
as the Middle East."

He said that there was one single purpose which the
founders of the Organization had in view, and it was to bring
the peoples of the Islamic countries together economically, to generate economic thought and to stimulate economic co-operation amongst them. As a very young nation which owed its existence solely to the desire of its people to follow the Islamic way of life, Pakistan was pledged to the ideal of international co-operation for the attainment of human welfare. It had only been the belief that the Organization would strive to achieve this co-operation which had been the reason of Pakistan’s active participation in the affairs of the Organization and not any expectation of any exclusive material gain.

He went on to say that in a world torn by dissensions and rent by conflicts, Islam provided a way of life which combined a just distribution of wealth with perfect freedom for the individual to lead a full life. The distinct economic system forming a part of Islamic life had to be adjusted to the conditions of every age which needed constant research and study. Due to the political decay of the Muslim people this research had been absent for generations. But the fulfilment of the hope of political emancipation had inevitably given rise to hopes of economic well-being and unless this was attained mere political freedom would serve but little real purpose. It was for such studies and research that the Organization decided to set up an Institute of Economic Studies.

Continuing, the Governor-General said: “While it is indisputable that every country must plan its own economic development according to its needs and its resources, it is also true that there is great advantage in regional planning and in economic collaboration between nations who have a community of interests.” He then referred to the Colombo Plan under which the participating South and South-East Asian countries provided technical assistance to one another and certain highly developed countries gave economic assistance also to under-developed countries and said, “We had hopes of preparing a similar plan in which all Muslim countries would participate — at least those which geographically comprise the region known as the Middle East. It should be possible to work together on a number of projects of common interest like research in agriculture, land and water uses, providing technical information and, in certain cases, technical assistance. It should be also possible to call upon the experts and technical advisers of the countries of the region for guidance and consultation in matters in which they have attained eminence.”

“Islam is our guide”

The Governor-General said that a readjustment of values was necessary to make a new approach to the problems underlying the attainment of the Organization’s objectives. Patience, understanding, and hard work, were needed for the purpose as well as precaution against “the designs and machinations of our enemies, whose interest would be to subvert and to sabotage our activities”.

Finally he said, “So far we have not yet reached the stage where regional planning plays a real part in national economic plans, and we are also not much nearer the realization of the hope of an integrated system of communications. In commerce and industries also, there is yet no joint enterprise or common plans. Our first need is to study closely the Islamic system of economic life and how to co-ordinate this with modern conditions. This needs research by two sets of people — economists and those well-versed in Islamic thought. We Muslims have waited centuries and must make up for the lost time in the near future. The second important thing is to have training classes in planning which should be open to every member-country. With its library and facilities, the Organization should start on a modest scale so that the work takes practical shape and produces men of thought with vision and enterprise.”

The President of the Conference, Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, struck a similar note when he pleaded for a high degree of priority for research into the Islamic economic system. Referring to the present conflict of ideologies, Chaudhri Zafarullah Khan said, “Other systems are rapidly proving inadequate or harmful. A wholly beneficent system must soon take their place. Islam is able to provide that system. It is our duty to draw up a blueprint of that system so that a beneficent economic structure may be reared in accord therewith.”

The President also said that the Ford Foundation had loaned to the Secretariat the services of Dr. Howard Tolley, an eminent agricultural economist, who would work as consultant to the Organization and assist in the planning and setting up of the Institute of Economics which should start functioning in Karachi by the end of the current year, or early next year.

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A meeting of the Special Committee of the International Islamic Economic Conference held in Karachi on 20th April 1954. The Committee discussed trade and travel facilities between the Muslim countries, and was under the chairmanship of Mr. ‘Abd al-Qudr al-Gilani, Minister and Chargé d’Affaires of Iraq in Pakistan.
Lectures and Talks on Islam

MAJOR J. W. B. FARUQ FARMER, M.B.E., gave lectures on Islam at the Waterlooville Luncheon Club on 4th March 1954 and at the Gosham Rotary Club on 9th April 1954. The lectures were followed by questions put by the audience, and the discussions were informative and lively.


DR. BURTON BENEDICT, PH.D., an ardent student of Islam, spoke at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on 17th April 1954. His subject was “A Sociologist Looks on Islam”. The talk was very instructive and informative, and was followed by an interesting discussion. MR. BASHIR AHMAD was in the chair.

DR. S. M. ‘ABDULLAH, M.S.C., PH.D., Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, addressed a gathering of the Theosophists at the Spiritualists’ Lodge in Gillingham on 22nd April 1954. The subject of his lecture was “The Islamic Way of Life”. MRS. C. OWERS was in the chair.

MR. QAZIM ISMA’IL EVANS, a British Muslim of long standing, spoke at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on 24th April 1954. The subject of his talk was “Islam and Spiritualism”. Mr. Evans said that the knowledge derived from spiritualism was vague and indefinite, whereas the one deduced from the Qur’an was certain and unequivocal. That, he said, was the reason why he decided to embrace Islam many years ago after having studied spiritualism for more than two years. The talk was followed by questions put by the audience, which gave rise to an interesting discussion. MR. S. M. IQBAL, ex-Secretary of the Muslim Society in Great Britain, was in the chair.

DR. S. M. ‘ABDULLAH, M.S.C., PH.D., Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, Surrey, addressed a distinguished and select audience consisting of men of letters from the various educational centres in the United Kingdom at a conference organized by the Council for Education in World Citizenship, London (an organization sponsored by the United Nations Association), which was held at the Rose Hill Centre, Reading, from 30th April to 2nd May 1954. He spoke on “Islam and the Arab Revival” to the delegates who had gathered to study the influence of religion in international affairs.

Dr. ‘Abdullah said that the basic dilemma of modern society was the inability to deal with the tremendous changes and innovations brought about by the advance in technology. He said that the problem was to some extent relieved by the fact that man today was drawing on the moral capital bequeathed by an earlier age, and he pointed out that this “capital” would soon be exhausted, and the world would become morally bankrupt with no hope except by reverting to religion and to higher moral values. The Imam also outlined the great contribution made by Islam towards the realization of this aim, and showed how far Islam had in the past been the guiding spirit of Muslim society and how it could, now and in the future, provide the motive force necessary for the progress of man and his salvation from moral stagnation. He also spoke of the manner in which Islam counters the danger of secularism, materialism and Communism.

The address lasted about forty-five minutes and was followed by a very interesting and thought-provoking discussion for another forty-five minutes. MISS MARGARET MILES, headmistress of the Putney County School for Girls, was in the chair.

Farewell to member of the Woking Muslim Mission

Friends of the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, and of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, gathered at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on Saturday 10th April 1954 to bid farewell to MR. S. M. TUFAIL, M.A., before his return to Pakistan.

For the past two and a half years, Mr. Tufail has been in England on the staff of the Woking Muslim Mission in the capacity of Assistant Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque and Assistant Editor of The Islamic Review. He gave very valuable service to the cause of Islam in England and endeared himself to many Muslims and non-Muslims in this country.

Islam on television

Islam was the subject of the first of a series of six half-hour programmes entitled “Man Seeking God” broadcast by the Television Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation in London.

The programme, which was compiled and edited by MR. CHRISTOPHER MAYHEW, M.P., was broadcast on 26th April 1954. MR. MUHAMMAD ’ALI, a Barrister-at-Law of Lahore, Pakistan, gave an interesting exposition of Islam, and the film, which was made in Pakistan, contained beautiful shots of characteristic Islamic scenes. There was also an interview in London with MR. HASAN KARMI, a Palestinian Muslim living in England. He recited verses from the Qur’an and answered questions put by Mr. Mayhew. Mr. Karmi’s answers to these questions have given rise to comments and criticism by Muslims living in England (see What Our Readers Say, page 39).

Marriage solemnized

The marriage of MR. AFTAB HAIDAR and MISS MYRIAM KARNER was solemnized by DR. S. A. ‘ABDULLAH, M.S.C., PH.D., Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, Surrey.

The author is a representative in the Far East of a British firm, and in the course of his duties he has had to travel widely in this part of the world. In his book he records his impressions of the places he visited, as well as the views of the ordinary folk of the Far East, including the views of some British residents there. He presents a very interesting galaxy of personalities which he met in Malaya, Indonesia, Siam, Hong Kong and Tokyo. His stories are very fascinating and his views, especially on the need for a better standard of living for the indigenous inhabitants of the East, are honest and forthright.

I have found the book absorbing and informative reading. But at times I felt that the style (which is in the form of a diary) was a little strained, especially when the author recorded under one date what he thought he heard many months before. But this is a minor criticism. The book is good.


Perhaps no phase in its chequered history has been more crucial for Palestine than the few months which preceded May 1948, and those which immediately followed. During this period world Jewry threw its full weight into the battle for the “Promised Land”.

The story of how this was achieved, so far as the Jerusalem area was concerned, is told in a fragmentary fashion by Mr. Walter Lever, a Zionist from Manchester, who was commissioned in 1947 to lecture on English literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

To the author, Arab soldiers from Syria and Iraq who came to Palestine to protect their fellow brethren from such massacres by the Jewish terrorists as the notorious Deir Yassin were “foreigners and mercenaries”.

Perhaps the most revealing fact in the book is the statement that every Jewish youth, student, or even University professor, was trained as a member of the Haganah, the illegal army of the Jewish agency and now the core of the Israeli army. The Jewish University always had a student-body of some 1,500, while the rest of the Jewish population of Jerusalem numbered about 80,000, with a large proportion of youths. The author’s statement that the fighting force of the Jews at the time was only about 1,400 is thus an obvious distortion of the facts, made apparently as an attempt to idealize the Jewish fighting spirit.

Astonishing, though not through the eyes of an ardent Zionist, is the array of implicit justifications for the Deir Yassin massacre (pp. 172, 173, 244), in which 254 Arab villagers, with a large proportion of women and children, were slaughtered by Jewish terrorists in cold blood. The author attributes the brutality of the perpetrators to their backwardness and ignorance, and to the fact that the village was a menace and that many of the Arab victims were active combatants in the struggle for Palestine. All these arguments were later refuted by the evidence of impartial observers. In defence of the massacre the author states that none of the outrages of the terrorists were approved by the leaders of the Jewish community. Yet Mr. Ben Gurion, the retired Prime Minister of Israel, was openly told not long ago by the former leader of the terrorist organization which perpetrated the massacre that it was he (Ben Gurion) who gave instructions for the blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1945, which cost the lives of ninety-two senior British officials. (See record of debates in the Kenesset [Israel Parliament] for 18th October 1950.)

The episodes relevant to the narrative, and inadvertently or otherwise omitted, are too numerous to recapitulate here. Suffice it to note that the shelling of the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre finds no space in the author’s diary.

In spite of its many shortcomings the book is good reading. More than one narrative arrests the reader with thrilling suspense.


Jerusalem is perhaps one of the most history-laden cities of the world. The struggle for its possession by the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims is a story of romance and interest.

The author, who is a well-known Palestinian Arab writer and an authority on Arab tribal life, has given us a very readable book which, in little more than 300 pages, traces the story of Jerusalem as far back at the year 3000 B.C., and takes it up to the last days of the British mandate. The sacred places of the city are dealt with in detail, and the book’s last chapter is more like a visitor’s guide than an historical treatise.

This is the first comprehensive book on the history of Jerusalem in the Arabic language. The author has drawn for material on about seventy-eight books and manuscripts in various languages on this subject. From all these he has moulded a story which will be found most interesting by the average reader as well as by the historian.
What Our Readers say . . .

(The Editor welcomes letters from readers on matters arising out of articles or letters published in "THE ISLAMIC REVIEW", and generally on all informative and thought-provoking subjects of interest to the world of Islam. But he reserves the right to shorten letters for reasons of space.)

ISLAM ON TELEVISION

66 Station Road,
Aldenstone,
Surrey.

Dear Sir,

I should like to protest against two statements made by Mr. Hasan Karmi in the television programme on Islam.

The organizer of the programme was indeed unfortunate in his selection of Mr. Karmi to expound the teachings of Islam. Had Mr. Karmi fully appreciated the teachings of Islam he would not have stated that the Muslim was a fatalist, and that the status of women in Islamic society was inferior to that of men.

Fatalism boils itself down to the statement that “What is to be will be”. This outlook has no place in Islam, and is a complete contradiction of the prayer seeking divine guidance. In Islam there is a “brotherhood” and a “sisterhood”. Men and women are given equal rights.

Yours sincerely,

E. LUSCOMBE.

“Little Orchard,”
Carlton Road,
Horsell,
Woking.

Dear Sir,

It is not often that Islam receives any publicity in this country, and it was pleasing to note that a programme was devoted to it on television recently.

Mr. Muhammad ‘Ali, of Lahore, was very explicit in the answers he gave to the questions put to him; but Mr. Hasan Karmi’s answers were misleading and un-Islamic. He gave the impression that the Muslims were fatalists, and that there was nothing a human being could do about his future.

Anyone who has studied the Qur’ān knows that man is expected to exercise his will. He does so under limitations and laws, but it is not true to say that the choice is never his. The doctrines of fatalism and predestination, the system whereby a good life is prescribed for one and an evil life for another, finds no support in Islam.

Mr. Karmi was also completely confusing in his replies to the questions put to him on polygamy—first saying that it was allowed, then remarking that it was impossible, yet admitting that it was practised.

There are many Islamic centres in Great Britain, and had Mr. Mayhew sought the advice of one of them he would have found speakers in plenty in this country who could have put the case for Islam to the British public in a clear and understandable manner. For example, the Cultural Centre in London, the Woking Muslim Mission, the Muslim Society in Great Britain — each of these would have been pleased to help Mr. Mayhew in his endeavour to give Islam a hearing.

Yours sincerely,

(Major) J. W. B. FARMER.

Ophthalmic Registrar,
Derbyshire Royal Infirmary,
London Road,
Derby.

Dear Sir,

The recently televised programme on Islam has given rise to certain doubts in my mind. It was said on this programme that God in Islam was an “abstract” idea. Does this mean that we Muslims worship an abstract deity?

It was also said that fatalism was a cardinal doctrine of Islam. How can this conception be reconciled with the following verse in the Qur’ān: “There is nothing for man except that for which he strives”? Again, it was stated that the status of women in Islam was inferior to that of men. If this be true, is Islam a living faith today?

Finally, was the sanction for polygamy given for olden days only, or is it valid for all times?

Yours faithfully,

(Dr.) AKIL BIN A KADIR, M.B., B.S.

(An article on “Taqdir or Pre-Measurement in Islam” by the late Dr. Basharat Ahmad appeared in the March, April and May 1954 issues of The Islamic Review. The status of women in Islam has often been discussed in The Islamic Review.—Ed., I.R.)

* * *

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

Avenue Felix Eboe,
Gointe-Noire,
French Equatorial Africa.

Dear Dr. ‘Abdullah,

It was with special interest that I read about you in The Voice, and I am writing to seek your assistance and guidance.

I am a student of truth, and this is my third year of strife in search of God. I have one single aim, and that is: God, and the rendering of service to my fellow human beings. Primarily, I am a Christian esoteric scholar; but I have also studied Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam. I think I am more of a Muslim than anything else.

I should like to know something about the Muslim esoterics. I have read some sufi writings, but I very much need a guide to lead me through the science of mysticism. Please send me any useful material you have on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

RAYMOND PARAISO.

(This is one of many letters received by the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Woking, Surrey, from persons seeking information about Islam. Free literature on various aspects of Islam is sent to inquirers, and we publish many pamphlets on various Islamic subjects at nominal prices. All inquiries about Islam are heartily welcome.—Ed., I.R.)
KNEELING TO A QUEEN

43 Grendon Gardens,
Wembley Park,
Middlesex,

Dear Sir,

When a Muslim religious dignitary in Aden recently received the accolade from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, special arrangements were made for him to "kneel" on a chair and not on a low footstool as is the practice on such occasions.

Two conflicting reports have been given in the British Press and in newsreels of the reason why this religious dignitary requested this special arrangement. One said that the religion of Islam forbids religious dignitaries to kneel to a woman. The other said that the religion of Islam provides that man should not kneel to any other human being — in other words, that man should kneel only to God.

Would you kindly enlighten me on the correct Islamic view on this subject?

Yours truly,

ANTHONY W. PEACOCK.

(Kneeling is a mark of extreme reverence and respect, and a symbol of abject submission. The act of kneeling is, in the minds of both Muslims and non-Muslims, associated mainly with prayer — the Muslim kneels in the mosque, and the Christian kneels in church; and they both kneel to God. The teachings of Islam recognize only God as meriting complete and utter submission on the part of man. This fact was probably in the mind of this Muslim dignitary when he requested that a milder form of "kneeling" should be accepted as a mark of his homage to the Queen.—Ed., I.R.)

* * *

A WORLD-WIDE MUSLIM CORRESPONDENCE CLUB?

Chatham Cottage,
Westbury Road,
St. Michael,
Barbados,
British West Indies.

Dear Brother,

Why do you not start a Muslim correspondence club to be known as "The World Muslim Correspondence Club"? The club can have its own badge, tie, scarf, blazer, cap, etc. I am sure these would be very much sought after by members, who would utilize them as a means of introducing themselves to other members and cementing bonds of friendship with other Muslim brothers and sisters. The Islamic Review, with its world-wide circulation, can do a great deal to help the Muslims in various parts of the world to know each other better by the medium of correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

I. H. I. ABID.

(We have been printing lists of "pen pals" for some time now. Should the number of those seeking pen friends increase, we shall devote more space for this purpose. Meanwhile, we shall be glad to receive comments from our readers about Mr. Abid's interesting suggestion.—Ed., I.R.)
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