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CONTENTS

Editorial—Why Muslim Unity? ... ... ... ... 4
Dr. I. H. Quraishi

Islam and other Isms ... ... ... ... ... ... 5
M. A. Mannan

A Journey to Paradise Lost ... ... ... ... ... ... 12
Naji Jawad al-Sadati

The Prophet Idris of the Qur'an is the same as Imhotep (3000 B.C.), the builder of the enormous Step Pyramid at Sakkara, Egypt ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 16
Dr. Mahmud Mufid

America's Very Special Relationship with Israel ... ... ... ... 20

The Spiritual Aspect of the Life of the Prophet Muhammad 22

Ibn Jinni's Commentary on Mutanabbi's Poetry ... ... ... ... 28
Dr. S. A. Khulasi

The Religious Thought of the Indian Muslim Educationist, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 34
Dr. Muhammad Noor Nabi

Book Reviews ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 38

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Why Muslim Unity?

By Dr. Ishtiaq Husain Quraishi

An eminent Muslim of Pakistan thinks aloud

Islam seeks to integrate the Muslims into a world community, not only because it believes in the brotherhood of all Muslims but, also, because it feels that it cannot succeed in its universal mission if it permits the Muslim community to be broken into small fragments, at best working without any co-ordination, at worst warring amongst themselves. The Muslim community was able to play almost a decisive role in the affairs of the world so long as it remained united. Ever since fissures developed in it, and to the extent that they developed, it lost its power to influence world affairs. In the darkest days of its history it was buffeted by every wisp of a breeze in world developments and this position has hardly improved today. Even when it was left to itself by the dominant nations it was, as it is today, only a silent and inactive observer of the world scene.

Islam has never taken the view that religion is merely a personal matter, a relationship between the individual and his God. It has never been worldly and has sought to influence not only individuals but also mankind in general. This function cannot be performed by different segments of the Muslim community in isolation. If it were only a question of mere existence, the Muslims perhaps could have afforded to take their back seat in the great drama of human progress and the expansion of mankind’s authority and power, a power that now seeks to conquer worlds outside the narrow compass of this planet. A mere conglomeration of pious and religious men does not form a dynamic religious community.

Piety was quite common during the period of our utmost decay in the 19th century. And yet our lands were ruled by foreigners or were dependent upon their goodwill even for a morbid peaceful existence. Even today when we have emerged as independent nations in the 20th century, we are sovereign only in name, because we are not able to defend our interests effectively. An effective voice in world affairs is out of the question for us, because we have not yet learnt to speak with one voice. Our numbers are not small, and therefore our ineffectiveness arises only from our lack of solidarity and common thinking. The nations of Islam still bear the brand of weakness and backwardness and have not yet been able to find their rightful place in the world. We are still victims of aggression and are not able to recover the lands that have been taken away from us. Israel blatantly defies us. India has no regard for the sentiments of the people of Kashmir, nor, for that matter, does it care to protect its large Muslim minority from persecution and even genocide. Aggression is possible only because the non-Muslim powers know that they can get away with impunity and their interests will remain safe in Muslim countries as retaliation is not possible because we are so divided. We are economically poor and intellectually backward. Must these conditions continue? They will persist so long as the intellectuals in our different countries will continue to think differently, so long as they worship the idols of narrow nationalism and sacrifice the unity and interests of the Islamic community at false altars. This narrow nationalism has led to no visible progress, even though we have compromised with our ideals and taken to philosophies and ways of life which are not ours and are diametrically opposed to the philosophy enunciated by Islam.

Must we necessarily remain in isolation? We are not isolated physically. Two large areas of the world are occupied by us, one in the West and the other in the East. Beginning with the Eastern frontiers of West Pakistan, a solid Muslim area extends right up to the Atlantic Ocean. And then beginning with the Western frontiers of East Pakistan, another solid area of Muslim population extends up to the limits of Indonesia. And then on the fringes of these areas, there are solid Muslim minorities which have been left uncared for by the Muslim world. Surely this large Muslim population, occupying continuous masses of land, has no justification for dividing itself up into mutually isolated groups which so easily become the clients of other powers, serving their interests and weakening, in the process, the community of Islam.

Even if we had no ideological common ground, no sense of mission, no contribution to make to the thought and way of life of the world, no part to play in the solution of the problems that face humanity today, the very fact that we occupy two contiguous land masses should have brought us together into some kind of regional grouping for the purpose of development and solution of common problems. Is it not strange that despite our contiguity, we are separated in thought as well as in action, and even that much co-operation does not exist between ourselves as does between us and certain foreign powers. Our lands are rich in natural resources, but our people are poor, because these resources are not exploited.

For the exploitation of our great resources we are dependent upon others, and now we are accepting alignments and ideologies which not only divide us, but bind us to the interests of different super powers. Surely this cannot be the destiny of the Muslims who have played such a noble role in the history of the world and of human progress. We must come closer and be united, otherwise we shall never regain our independence and self-respect. Let us pause and look at the havoc that has been wrought by the theories of narrow nationalism in our lands. We who should have been united to face any assault upon our independence and integrity are now so divided that, quite often, we find ourselves co-operating with those very forces that seek to destroy us.

One really wonders whether we are so bankrupt in constructive thinking that we are prone to court destruction by our fallacious thinking and wrong policies. Let us realise that we cannot get our due from the world unless we are strong and we cannot be strong unless we are united. We can remove our backwardness if we try to rebuild our society

1 Courtesy, The International Muslim Scene, Karachi, Pakistan—a publication of The World Muslim Congress, Karachi.

Continued on page 11
Islam and other Isms

Ideologies of Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, Fascism and Their Effect on Man’s Behaviour

by M. A. Mannan

To make a comparison between Islam and other isms like Capitalism, Socialism, Communism and Fascism is a fascinating subject for a student of Islam; for the social, political and religious challenges with which Islam is face to face today point the need of an analysis enabling us to find out what ism Islam-ism has to offer in the solution of the pressing problems as against the other issues.

Rightly or wrongly each of the social philosophies has got its basic objectives. Thus Capitalism believes in the unrestricted private ownership of the means of production, the motive force of which is private profit. The capitalist’s motto is “Everything for himself and devil take the hindmost”. Again, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need” is the basic goal of Communism. In realising this objective, Communism regimentalises the means of production, crushes personal liberty, destroys the family and religion. But Socialism also aims at the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production. The concept of private profit as it exists in Capitalism will be replaced by the motive of social service under Socialism, whose motto is “From each according to his worth, to each according to his work”. Communism is more extreme than Socialism. But Fascism, which is almost a forgotten chapter of history, can be described as a totalitarian system; for the Fascist ideal is nationalistic expansion through aggressive encroachment upon other nations. “Everything for the State, nothing against the State and nothing outside the State” is the philosophy of Fascism. In spite of certain differences, Fascism and Communism are the two symptoms of the same disease.

But Islam aims at achieving a social system which is capitalistic in broad outline restricted very largely by socialistic institutions and ideas. That is, the Islamic concept of society based on five principles. They are: (a) the Qur’anic concept of history, (b) a restricted private ownership of the means of production, (c) the universal brotherhood of man, (d) the eternal principle of co-existence, and (e) the sovereignty of Almighty God. In our comparison with different economic systems we would confine our discussion to comparing their performance in respect of each of the principles just mentioned.

(a) THE QUR’ANIC CONCEPT OF HISTORY

Before developing the Qur’anic concept of history I would prefer to take up the Marxian materialistic interpretation of history according to which the economic motive is dominant in controlling the social and political life. True, in every human society there is always present a covert and overt conflict of opposing tendencies. But Marx tries to impress upon us that only two human classes exist—the exploiters and the exploited, the haves and the have-nots, and it is the conflict between these two classes which creates and explains all history. Marx believed that in the process of social evolution there has been slavery and serfdom, feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism from the standpoint of production and distribution. According to Marx, each stage is an advance on its predecessor. But the revolutionary struggle of Marx was actually directed against Capitalism, under which the labourer is, Marx believes, paid only enough to maintain him a bare level of subsistence. Consequently, there is a surplus value created which the capitalist is able to take for himself. Profits of the capitalists are nothing but exploitation. Marx’s “Law of Concentration”, coupled with his doctrine of “surplus value”, must lead to class war between the two groups which would ultimately bring about the downfall of Capitalism and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This idea of the inevitability of the historical process leading to the fulfilment of a predestined end finds no
counterpart in the Qur’an, at least in two ways. First, the Qur’an recognises the existence of different classes of people in society; it does recognise differences in talents, differences in income among the different members of the society for its progress and prosperity (The Qur’an, 4:33). This leads directly to the denial of the doctrine of proletarianism developed by Marx, namely, the proletariat majority will shape the future course of history. The Qur’anic concept of history is more practical and more realistic in the sense that the Qur’an, by recognising the multiplicity of human motives and sentiments, took into consideration the role of the great men like the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus Christ, etc., in shaping the future course of history and the destiny of nations. But Marx is so much obsessed with viewing economic relations as the sole determinant of human history in every direction that he denies categorically the part played by religious conflicts, countless dynastic wars and great men like Kamal Ataturk, Abraham Lincoln and Napoleon Bonaparte as the shapers of human destiny, “the Qur’anic concept in this respect approximates Toynbee’s concept of creative minority; for it is only a minority of purposeful and thinking persons that form the leadership of any movement even of the proletariat movement under Communism. The vast majority of people merely follow the lead given by the minority.”

Second, the inevitability of class conflict leading to the ultimate victory of the proletariat over the capitalist as propounded by Marx is not supported by the Qur’anic concept of history. True, the Qur’an has promised victory to the Prophet of Islam over his opponents as in the verse, “He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of Truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions” (48:28).

But here the victory promised is clearly the victory of Islam in Arabia over the polytheists, the Jews and the Christians, and the promise was fulfilled in the lifetime of the Prophet.

From the above-quoted verse we are not prepared to accept that the success of Islam is guaranteed by the process of history. If the Muslim community do not follow the path laid down by the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah, they might fail to secure the power and domination as promised by the Holy Qur’an.

The Qur’an guarantees the victory of Islam on other grounds. It says, “The Truth has come and falsehood vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish” (17:31).

Islam, being the truth, is bound to prevail over untruth. Its victory, therefore, is a moral and not an historical necessity, except in so far as a moral necessity is bound to influence the historical process which is largely governed by the moral nature of man.

This concept of universal morality is based on the Qur’anic doctrine of Tawhid, i.e., all life is one; therefore, no separate sphere can claim independence of others, since it is the moral and spiritual version of man that co-ordinates and harmonises the economic, social, political and biological activities of society. Thus the Qur’an does not propound any set of laws which may be said to govern the historical process. It only shows that certain traits of human nature express themselves in the history of all decaying societies, while other traits of human nature exhibit themselves in the history of growing societies. At the same time the Qur’an tells us through the mouths of the Prophet what kind of moral teachings, beliefs and socio-economic values, tangibly incorporated in laws, can arrest the process of social decay and lead a community to material as well as spiritual power.

Thus, it is possible to explain the advent of Islam, the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the Pakistan movement through the Qur’anic concept of history which is based on a deep understanding of the human nature. But I wonder how all these events of history can be explained through the materialistic interpretation of Marxian Communism. This brings us to the discussion of the significance of “matter” in shaping the human history. Marx started with the denial of God; if He does not exist, only “matter” is left. Like all materialists he presumed the purposelessness of “matter” in the dynamic setting of human society. But borrowing the idea of Hegel (d. 1831 C.E.), he told us that “matter”, though unconscious and unpurposeful, somehow possesses the attribute of progressively creating the values of life. Because the mere class conflict as propounded by Marx is of no significance, if it does not create the values of life. The Qur’an teaches us that the entire creation is meaningful (38:27; 11:15-16) and therefore, matter is not also purposeless. In fact, all physical life comes out of it and is reabsorbed by it. Matter, life and mind denote varieties and graduations of being and all that exist are real.

It is not out of place to mention here that neither Capitalism nor Fascism propound any set of laws which may be said to govern the historical process. The unrestricted individual initiative and unhealthy competition between the rich and the poor are likely to determine the future socio-economic set-up under Capitalism. Again, Fascism, which is the product of the peculiar post-war conditions, is largely anti-intellectual and opportunistic in method. If there is any law, it is the militant nationalism which may be said to govern the future course of bloody history under Fascism.

**RELIGION PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT PART IN SOCIAL EVOLUTION**

Another significant aspect of the Qur’anic concept of history is the part played by religion in the process of social evolution. Marxian Communism does not recognize religion. To Marx religion is an opiate for the people and was invented by the exploiting classes as a method of ensuring the subservience of the exploited. True, Marx found a good deal of exploitation and economic injustice around him in the name of religion. But there is always a basic difference between religion and cult just as there is a difference between the eternal problem of housing and method of handling this problem. The former is eternal and the latter relative to the needs of the community, just as the basic principles of religion are eternal and cult is subject to change. But Marx confused religion with cult, condemned religion and gave us as a result his theory of dialectical materialism, a materialistic interpretation of history. It is ridiculous to assert that historical materialism produced men like the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus Christ, Goutama Buddha and so on. Under Fascism religion has no part to play except in so far as religion is used to assist in consolidating the power of the State. Like Socialism, Capitalism is not anti-religious; religion could flourish in such societies in its own way. But here also religion is divorced from the social, political and economic activities of the society. In such a society religion is just a misfit. The whole society is drifting towards materialism to the utter neglect of the role of morality and spirituality which consists in harmonising the conflicting requirements of material life. But the Qur’anic
concept of religion is based on the Oneness of God, which is symbolic and significant in the sense that all life is one and wholesome and the religion of Islam provides the entire gamut of activity—social, political, economic and biological, and brings an equilibrium in society. With these words, we may now pass on to the second part of our comparative analysis.

(b) THE CONCEPT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

There is a vast difference in the views of social systems about the concept of private property. Islam maintains a balance between the exaggerated opposites. Capitalism believes in free enterprise, which necessitates private ownership of the material means of production. The freedom to save, to invest, to inherit, and to accumulate is a right which is even more peculiar to Capitalism than is the free choice of consumption and of occupancy. In such a social system we find great inequalities of income. Some people are found living in a palatial building and some in huts and tents. But Communism wants a complete control of the economic resources which in a capitalistic system is determined by price and income, and related in turn to the consumer’s sovereignty and decisions made by innumerable businessmen. It has practically involved the liquidation of private enterprise and private property. The regimentation and compulsory direction of labour under Communism is too high a price for a “mess of pottage”. In fact, Communism in this respect holds a more extreme view than Socialism, which also stands for the abolition of private ownership of the means of production. Here the nature and extent of industry and production are to be subservient to social needs and not the profit motive. Though it avoids the waste of the competitive system, yet here also we find the same problem of incentives and individual liberty. Again, in theory, Fascism calls for the preservation of private property, but in practice liberal laissez-faire Capitalism almost completely disappears under Fascism. Since everything for the State, the private enterpriser is held responsible to the State for the direction given to production. It assumes the right to fix wages, rent, interest and in certain cases commodity prices. In these respects, Fascism bears some resemblance to State Socialism, but without either its democracy or its interest in the welfare of the workers. The question of exercising private initiative loses its significance when it is realised that the primary aim of economic activity under Fascism is not the attainment of the highest possible standard of living, as presumably it is under both capitalism and collectivism, but a continuous increase in the military power of the State.

But in Islam the absolute ownership of everything belongs to God.

“The sovereignty of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to God” (5:17-18 et al).

It follows that the proprietorship of all free gifts of nature—land, water and their wealth does not belong to any individual. Mankind holds them jointly in trust. The trust is conditional in the sense that men benefit themselves equally and not to the exclusion of anyone, nor for enriching nor for exploiting others or holding others in subjection. Thus Islam allows the private ownership of property, but subjects the owner to restrictions preventing him from using property except for the common good. It encourages the acquisition of private property, but requires that this should be the means conducive to the good of the community as a whole. In brief, while Islam allows the individual to promote his own good, it exhorts him not to forget that he is part of the group, and reminds him of the need to protect and promote the interest of his followers. The moral injunctions about ownership are designed to create a sense of responsibility and a conscience in the owner.

Broadly speaking, these ethical injunctions—both positive and negative—enjoin on the owners of property the following obligations:

(a) They may exploit their property to the fullest extent without adversely affecting the interests of the community.

(b) They should pay the Zakāh—the fixed charity tax.

(c) They should spend “in the way of God”.

(d) They should abstain from taking interest.

(e) They should avoid fraud in business dealings, hoarding or monopoly.

From the above analysis, we can safely say that Capitalism believes in an unplanned economy resulting in the occurrence of periodic crises; Communism is a totalitarian planning with total damage to the liberty of the individual; Socialism is a comprehensive planning with considerable harm to personal liberty; Fascism is a militant planning which aims at increasing the military power of the State to the utter disregard of the welfare of the people. But Islam provides a realisable synthesis between a planning by inducement and a planning by direction. We may now pass on to the third part of our comparative analysis based on the principle of universal brotherhood.

(c) THE CONCEPT OF BROTHERHOOD

The Islamic concept of brotherhood distinguishes Islam from other social systems in moral, social and economic spheres of life. In the moral sphere, it is the Salāh (prayer) which plays a decisive role. The prayer in Islam finds expression in many ways. The most important is the one known as the Salāh, which comprises five daily services. The service is led by one of the congregation, preferably by one who possesses the best understanding of the Qur'ān. There is no priesthood or anything corresponding to ordination or taking holy orders in Islam. Every Muslim is, or should be, competent to officiate at the congregational service.

In other words the Salāh places everybody, rich and poor, high and low, king and beggar, on an equal footing. In fact, the Salāh teaches us man’s equality with man, his dignity and his value. This vision is a part of the Islamic faith, because in the Salāh, the worshipper repeatedly returns to the contemplation of the Majesty of God, imploring Him to guide and direct his life and effort along beneficent channels. This repeated effort made in the right spirit, humility and sincerity, must leave its impress on the mind and soul of the worshipper and cleanse him thoroughly of all dross. The Qur’ān says that the Salāh purifies a worshipper and washes him clean of all evil and misbehaviour (29:46). The Prophet Muhammad has said, “If a person has a stream of pure water running at his doorstep and washes himself thoroughly in it five times a day, no impurity would even approach him. Remember, the Salāh is such a stream.”

Thus Salāh is fruitless if it does not bring the mood and temper of voluntary submission to the demands and dictates of genuine social welfare. This contribution of Islam towards developing the concept of brotherhood from the moral standpoint is practically absent in Communism, Socialism, Capitalism and Fascism for some reason or the other. It is absent in Communism, because Communism, which is anti-
religion, stresses mere material progress in life and uproots all feelings of brotherhood from the minds of the people. It is absent in Capitalism because Capitalism like Socialism limits the scope of religion and morality within the four corners of a church. The dynamic interplay of spiritual and secular institutions is not found either in a Capitalist or Socialist society. It is absent in Fascism, because Fascism believes in a State which is an end in itself and not a means to an end. Therefore, it negates all feelings of fraternity from the minds of the individual.

Secondly, in the social sphere the Islamic concept of brotherhood springs from the spiritual renovation and not from the social surgery which is the sole weapon for ensuring social security under Communism. The Qur'an (49:16) says that God has divided mankind into tribes and nations for a greater facility of intercourse and that the true source of honour in the sight of God is a righteous life for the individual irrespective of his membership to any race or tribe. In his Farewell Address, the Prophet Muhammad said, “You are all brothers and are all equal. None of you can claim any privilege or any superiority over any other. An Arab is not to be preferred to a non-Arab, nor is a non-Arab to be preferred to an Arab.”

It is stressed that true brotherhood can be established only by virtue of mankind's relationship with one another through good. While the Qur'an stresses upon showing due kindness and proper affection towards the children and other members of the family, it (cf. 4:37) exhorts in emphatic terms kindness towards neighbours. The Prophet Muhammad emphasised on many occasions the duty owed to a neighbour, saying “So repeatedly and so much has God impressed upon me the duty owed to a neighbour that I began to think that a neighbour might perhaps be named an heir”. In the same way, the needy and the wayfarer must be looked after (The Qur’an, 4:37). Orphans have been made the subject of particular care. The property of the orphan should not be dealt

with to his prejudice by exchange or by being held in common with the property of the guardian (The Qur'an, 4:3).

Thus it follows that all men, rich and poor alike, must help one another materially and personally; the rules vary in detail but they maintain the principle of universal mutual aid in the Muslim fraternity. This fraternity is absolute and comprises men of all colours and of all races: black, white and yellow, all being the sons of Adam by the flesh and all carry in them a spark of the Divine Light. Everyone should do his best to see to it that this spark be developed to that full companionship of God Whom the Prophet Muhammad clearly saw awaiting him on his deathbed. It is impossible in an Islamic society to reduce man in the name of Islam to the kind of degradation to which we find whole races or castes condemned in many non-Islamic societies. “There are no parallels in Islam to the pogroms which characterised the history of Europe in the Middle Ages. Nor will there be found in the chronicles of even the worst Muslim ruler any instance of the kind of bigotry and race hatred which has darkened the history of modern European imperialism. Islam can claim both in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as in the practices of Muslim governments to have been able to solve the problem of race prejudice more effectively than any system or philosophy, ancient, medieval or modern known to man. That this is no mean achievement will be appreciated by those who are aware how even in the most advanced countries periodic outbursts of irrational racial hatred continue to menace human life.”

Thus Islam aims at merging all sections of society into a single community so that all persons may feel themselves to be members of the same family. Thus Dr. Dhalia in his book Our Perfecting World says: “Muhammadanism alone, among the religions of the world, has remained free from colour bias... It welcomes all converts with open arms. Whether they are Negroes or Persians. Without reserve it accords them their rights and privileges and receives them into its social circle as much as into its religion. It excludes all barriers of birth and colour and admits its convert within the community on the basis of complete social equality.”

Again, in his book The Outline of History, H. G. Wells observes: “The stress of creed and class and the practical domestic brotherhood of Muslims, has made the faith one of the greatest forces of the civilised world today.”

In the social sphere also, a true brotherhood cannot be developed under Communism, Capitalism, Socialism and Fascism, because Communism stresses mere technological advance in social affairs through class conflicts, the basis of which is hatred and not love. Karl Mannheim in his Diagnosis of our Time says: “If there is a lesson to be learned from the experiments of the totalitarian states it is this: that ruthless regimentation leads to the enslavement of the citizen and the machinistic concept of equality defeats itself.” We find the same regimentation in varying degrees both under Socialism and Fascism. In the case of Socialism it is in the name of welfare of the masses and in the case of the latter it is in the name of the State. Therefore, these social systems cannot develop the true brotherhood of man. Again, in a capitalistic society we find not only the landlord and the landless masses living side by side but also an obnoxious distinction between man and man on the basis of race and colour and creed. The racial conflict of the U.S.A., the apartheid policy of South Africa and Rhodesia's minority rule, are some of the living testimonies to the fact. I wonder how the concept of universal brotherhood can ever be developed in such a society.
In the economic sphere, the uniqueness of the Islamic concept of brotherhood lies in the fact that Islam abrogates all anti-social economic activities which are not conducive to communal welfare. Thus all monopoly and speculative businesses are prohibited, because all these are opposed to beneficence and take advantage of the need or distress of others.

Hoarding is condemned, because it puts wealth out of circulation and deprives the owner as well as the rest of the community of its beneficent use. Again, by condemning interest, Islam has not only helped expanding production and employment but also placed the cultivating of brotherhood on a firm footing, because human brotherhood and sympathy evaporate when interest is charged for loans of money. Positively, the payment of the Zakāh has been made an integral part of the Islamic faith. The spiritual discipline inculcated by the Salāh would lose its practical significance if Muslims did not pay the Zakāh to root out economic and social injustice. Moreover, in carrying out legitimate economic activities, it is stressed that all contracts, involving large or small amounts, must be reduced to writing setting out all the terms agreed upon fairly, and as a further precaution it is laid down that if the person on whose behalf the liability is undertaken is a minor or of unsound judgment, then his guardian or the persons representing his interest should dictate the terms of the contract (The Qur’ān, 2:283). The point is that in all economic activities permitted by Islam there should not be an iota of exploitation or unfair dealing which may ultimately stand in the way of the true brotherhood of mankind. Islam recognises that absolute equality in economic terms is likely to remain a wholly unattainable object; what it has sought to prescribe is a system which, if followed strictly, reduces to a minimum the danger of one individual or of a group exploiting another and perpetuating the exploitation as we find happens in the case of Capitalism. This is probably far more important than the establishment of a system aiming apparently to enforce absolute economic equality but actually ending in the thwarting of the basic human impulses, as is the case in Communism and Socialism. Economic egalitarianism in many countries today has led to the development of cults in which one single individual is elevated to the rank of a divinity. This results in the degradation of the human dignity and the debasement of man’s self-respect. Thus in the economic sphere also we cannot have the true brotherhood of man under Communism, Capitalism, Socialism and Fascism. We cannot have it under Communism, because the economic progress under Communism is not only a record of class conflict and ruthless suppression of one group by another but also a total erosion of the individual freedom and liberty. The individual’s feelings, his mental and moral faculties, are submerged in his function as an economic tool. We cannot have it under Capitalism because Capitalism is the climax of economic pursuits which are not subordinate to the ethical discipline of religion. Therefore, all anti-social economic activities like monopoly, speculation, hoarding, etc., which are not prohibited under Capitalism in the name of individual freedom militate against cultivating the spirit of the brotherhood of man. Again, we cannot have it under Fascism, because Fascism charges the State with the task of social and economic planning. It does favour the notion of forced conformity. In the name of the State when the individual is denied the reasonable exercise of his God-given faculties, when he cannot influence the policies or change the persons sitting astride the executive machine, when he has perforce to fall into line with what the ruling oligarchy decides and prescribes, when he ceases to be a rational being, the question of the brotherhood of man does not therefore arise under Fascism. In the economic sphere, if there is any similarity between Islam and other isms, it is with Socialism minus the latter’s curb on individual initiative and drive.

Now, we would take up the comparative analysis on the basis of the principle of co-existence.

(d) CO-EXISTENCE

Unlike any other isms the basic principle of co-existence owes its origin in the Holy Qur’ān and the Sunnah. While the Holy Qur’ān (2:209) commanded the Muslims to work wholly for peace the Prophet himself embodied this principle of the Qur’ān in his actions and deeds.

Thus the Muslim greeting in all parts of the world is “Peace be on you, and the mercy of God and His blessings”. Every pursuit and activity which has a tendency to disturb the peace is severely condemned.

“Do not promote disorder, and in the earth after peace has been established” (The Qur’ān, 7:56-57).

“Do not go about committing inequity in the earth and causing disorder” (The Qur’ān, 7:75; 11:86; 29:37).

“Seek not to create disorder in the earth. Verily, God loves not those who seek to create disorder” (The Qur’ān, 28:78).

Thus all possible factors which tend to disturb peace and order are strongly condemned by Islam. Domination of one group by another in the domestic sphere or of one people by another in the international sphere or economic exploitation of any form which may develop into a threat to peace is strictly prohibited. The Qur’ān, 20:32, says:

“Do not raise thine eyes covetously after that which We have bestowed on some groups, to enjoy for a period, of the ornaments of this life that We may try them thereby—the provision bestowed upon thee by Thy Lord is better and more enduring.”

Again, many an international conflict gives rise because of the divergence between the proclaimed intentions and policies and actual practice and conduct, as we find in the case of many countries of their forceful occupation of the territories of other countries.

A true Islamic State cannot behave in such a manner. The Qur’ān emphasises complete conformity of conduct to declarations and professions of intent.

“O ye who believe! Why do you say what you do not: most displeasing is it in the sight of God that you say what you do not” (61:3-4).

It also warns against indulgence in undue suspicion of other people’s motives and against seeking to discover pretexts for differences and disagreements, as this might result in harm. Even hostility towards a people should not incite a Muslim or the Muslim community or the Muslim State to act unjustly or inequitably towards them.

“O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of God, and bear witness in equity, and let not a people’s enmity towards you incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is closest to righteousness. Fear God. Surely, God is Aware of what you do” (5:9).

Islam no doubt takes note of the diversity that exists among nations and peoples, but “inasmuch as God’s
sovereignty extends over the whole universe, the ultimate ideal of a State in Islam is a universal federation, or confederation, of autonomous States, associated together for upholding the freedom of conscience and for the maintenance of peace and co-operation in promoting the human welfare throughout the world."

In fact, Islam's attitude towards idolatry, in spite of its uncompromising stand on the unity of God, is indicative of the firm principle of co-existence. The principle is that even false doctrines and unsocial and destructive ideas, so long as they are believed in and adhered to, must be taken into account as having an appeal to those who entertain them; all conduct which is likely to cause provocation should be avoided (The Qur'an, 6:109). This tolerance is a unique contribution of Islam in the domain of international relations. A Muslim does not differentiate the secular from the religious and he is required to allow others to follow the dictates of their conscience. Such is the seminal demand of Islam. Islam does not merely tolerate but fully recognises the co-existence of other faiths in the political State evolved by it. The manifestation of the principle of co-existence we find in Islam has no counterpart in any other existing isms. It is absent in Communism, because Communism believes in a world revolution through material progress and it is virtually nationalistic in practice. This undue emphasis on material welfare will, I am sure, increase the human greed and destructive ambition. This greed at national level means a clash of interest with other nations resulting in chaos and conflict between nations.

It is conspicuously absent in Capitalism, because Capitalism in its drive for unrestricted ownership of the means of production and private profit ultimately leads to imperialism, the outcome of the need of markets for finished goods and raw material for industry. This means a naked exploitation by a richer nation of a poorer nation. Under Capitalism this exploitation is there either in the name of "enlightened self-interest". Whatever arrangement we offer for Capitalism in this regard, the fact remains that imperialism is the negation of the principle of co-existence. Even under Socialism we cannot have the principle of co-existence fully manifested because the motive force of Socialism is social service, but the utter neglect of the motive for private profit and incentive. On the face of it, this may appear to be an ideal, but it is not workable and practical. I wonder how the principle of co-existence can find its fullest expression and manifestation under such social systems.

(c) THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

Islam differs fundamentally from all other systems with regard to the concept of sovereignty. In Islam sovereignty in all matters belongs to God, and to none else. It does not belong to the monarch nor to the State, nor even to the people. The people are the trustees of that power, that is, sovereignty. They are not sovereign in their own right as the capitalistic and socialistic systems hold. Like Capitalism, Communism does not believe in the sovereignty of God. The Western democracies of the capitalistic societies believe in the so-called sovereignty of the people. Again, sovereignty under Communism is the sovereignty of the proletariat to the neglect of the wishes of the non-proletariat. Lastly, Fascism believes in the sovereignty of the State, which is, to them, an end in itself, not a means to an end. The Islamic concept of sovereignty is superior to all these existing systems at least in two ways: first, its superiority lies in its belief in God and its fear of violation of the moral code of life given by God in the Holy Qur'an—a code which can also bring harmony among the conflicting requirements of the material life. This fear of God is expected to keep the Islamic governments always within the border line of democracy and justice in the real sense of the term. Because of the ultimate sovereignty of God, the Islamic democracy is more than a people's democracy or proletariat's democracy. In proportion to the decrease in the physical (personal) charm, the mental hold on the people also starts to slip. As God is not to be seen, His hold remains always firm for all time to come.

Secondly, the Islamic concept of sovereignty is more clear and more simple than the concept of any other system. The Western concept of sovereignty is unclear and vague, because there are scores of schools giving their own theories with regard to the nature, extent and location of sovereignty. Here the strife between monistic and pluralistic concepts of sovereignty is still going on. Again, this concept of sovereignty is also misleading, partly because people cannot act as a sovereign power and partly because people's sovereignty cannot guarantee people's welfare as under Capitalism the will of the people is rarely the will of all the people. Again, sovereignty under Communism is confusing, because in theory it believes in the sovereignty of the people, but in practice it believes in the sovereignty of the proletariat suppressing the individual freedom of thought and conscience. The Fascist's concept of the sovereignty of the State was so abstract that the individual for whom the State exists lost his identity.

But the Islamic concept of sovereignty, on the other hand, is very simple, clear, reasonable and convincing. It is in consonance with the nature of things, with the place of mankind in the universe, with the position of the individual in society and aims of moral, social, economic and political life evolved by it.

In fact, the original policy of Islam was a republican democracy where the head of the State—Khalifah or Amir—was chosen by the consensus of the citizens. He was the first citizen of the State but with no special privileges, being subject to all the laws of the realm. He was a constitutional head of the State, not a dictator. He should be obeyed as long as he followed the principles as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The moment he starts to disregard any principle of the Holy Qur'an and the established Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, the people have every right to disobey him. Herein lies the role of opposition in an Islamic State. In his first address, the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, said, "Obey me as long as I obey God and His Prophet. In case I disobey God and His Prophet, I have no right to obedience from you." This opposition, of course, has to be political, not ideological. In an Islamic State there cannot be "Party loyalty" as such. If the truth lies on the opposite side, one must acknowledge it. Therefore, parties in an Islamic State must be radically different from the ones we see in Capitalism, Communism and Fascism. The Western democracy of the capitalistic countries believes more in so-called "Party loyalty" rather than in truth and justice. Thus if truth lies on the opposite side, the other party will not normally acknowledge it as such. This is true even in the cast of the most highly-developed democracy of the United Kingdom. Like Fascism, Communism believes in what the Communist Party says. "My party, right or wrong," is the slogan of Communism as well as that of Fascism.

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Again, that all men are equal in the eyes of God is a gift of Islam to humanity. There is nothing original in the modern theory of the “rule of law”. By guaranteeing the security of life and property, Islam taught all the modern constitutions a basic moral code. By rejecting the narrow concepts of nationality, Islam attacks the very roots of the present-day conflicts, dissensions and strives and shows a way out to the Communists in their present conflict within their body-politic. The Western democracies recognise the individual and give him the right to frame laws for his own good, but that right is only “indirect”. By the time the wills and wishes of the millions are translated into legislation, they become the degenerated wisdom of “200 asses”. The Communist democracy gives some birthrights to the individual but controls his brain. The individual has the right to vote but the Government can only be changed by a revolution and not by any other means.

While Communism dubs the Western democracy plutocracy, where directly or indirectly capital governs and labour is exploited, Western Capitalism stigmatises Communism as the so-called Socialism as totalitarian where the power of Capitalism and the domination of one party has deprived the individual of fundamental rights, Islam is neither Nazism nor Fascism, neither plutocracy nor totalitarianism. It is humanitarianism and internationalism. It guarantees full liberties of speech and action to all its members belonging to different religions, races, colours, languages, classes and castes. Here any exasperated majority does not inflict persecutions on its minorities in the name of national security. In an Islamic State neither capital governs nor labour is exploited, and individuals are not deprived of their basic human rights. It is a democracy only in the sense that all people, irrespective of race and creed, are regarded as equal before the law. The ultimate aim is to reach the goal of social justice and public welfare. Again, the minorities are a sacred trust in the Islamic State, they are at a more advantageous position than the non-Muslim, because they enjoy the same privileges as Muslims without discharging the obligations enjoined upon the Muslims. Moreover, in an Islamic State the minority is not at the mercy of the majority because the majority is not empowered by the Holy Qur’an to frame any and every law not conducive to the welfare of the entire population irrespective of their faith, colour and creed.

Under Western democracy we find that the fate of the minority is entirely dependent on the whims of the so-called majority, who can make any law excepting “making a man woman and woman a man”.

Why Muslim Unity?

Continued from page 4

on the basis of the ideology of Islam and in co-operation with all the Muslim peoples, otherwise we shall remain mere fragments of a huge population inhabiting these vast regions and whether we adhere to Islam or discard it, we shall remain divided, weak and dependent. We have to be united and nothing can unite us except Islam. We are fortunate in being Muslims. So long as we do not realise the fact of our being Muslims and do not adhere to the ideal of Islamic unity we will continue to be mere pawns in the great international games of power politics.

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A Journey to Paradise Lost:
The Alhambra, Granada, Spain — The Undying Dream

By Naji Jawad al-Sa’ati
(Translated from the Arabic by Professor Dr. S. A. Khulusi)

Nowhere natural art has reached its symphonic harmony as in al-Hamrá. Water, green grass, flowers, scents, sunshine and the azure-coloured sky are all in superb unison. There is no doubt that the luxurious civilized aspects of life made the Banū al-Ahmarr more and more inclined to softness and leisure. The battle of Granada was none other than a struggle between a people that was anxious to enjoy what wealth and comfort it had obtained, and another that had marched along the barren lands of Castile, attracted by the shimmering lights and fragrant atmosphere of Andalusian cities.

It was inevitable that in the end of this unequal fight between civilization and barbarism the latter should win, according to the socio-historical theory of Ibn Khaldūn who visited Granada and worked there as an ambassador, befriended its great vizier, writer and prince of sonnets: Lisán al-Dīn Ibn al-Khatīb.

The charm of al-Hamrá still attracts hordes of tourists to Granada. So much so that it has sprung to the first rank of tourist towns as Cairo, Babylon, Rome, Paris and the Tāj Mahal. It goes to show that the Arabs can achieve in fleeting moments of peace and respite.

The bathroom was the most beautiful I had ever seen in my visits to historical palaces and castles. I was taken aback by the coloured decorations on the four marble pillars, upon which an adorned ceiling is raised, surrounded by stone-benches that were used by blind musicians who would sit and play on their musical instruments, whereas the Queen and the princesses would sit on the two opposite benches and listen... only separated by a marble pool. The air is ventilated with musk and burning aloe-wood, through a tube.

It is evident that the Sultan chose blind musicians in order that his women-folk were not gazed at. All the rooms of al-Hamrá are blessed with the scents and shadows of pretty damsels. Those rooms seemed to be like beautiful boxes inlaid with ivory and attractive decorations to keep very rare and precious stones... the beautiful women!

* * *

Thence we passed into the Hall of Lions, the most famous spot in the Moorish Palace. It is now as famous as the Sphinx, the Pyramids, The Lion of Babylon, The Spiral Minaret of Sāmarra, the Tāj Mahal, the Stone memorial of Baalbek and the Tour d’Eiffel.

Its fame mainly rests on the delicate pillars which carry even more delicate arches. The clever architect has also designed two flower gardens on both sides resting on thin pillars that look like small trees adorned with coloured designs.

Amidst the hall is the lions pool made of azure marble.
In the palace of enchantment, which is the Alhambra, one of the loveliest apartments is the Hall of the Two Sisters. Our picture shows the balcony of this famous Hall of the Two Sisters.

"Nothing can exceed the glory of the honey comb vaultings, with thousands of fantastic cell formations, each one differing from the other, yet all combining in uniformity. The effect is as if the architect has been assisted in his work by swarms of Brobingnagian bees."

It is sexagonal in shape, with a fountain carried by twelve lions, all of marble, but they lack the good finish in sculpturing, probably because the Muslims were not religiously well-disposed to this art.

The water comes down from the pool and runs into marble aqueducts, which in turn merge into four subterranean pools and vanish in the four corners. However hard we may try to describe this hall we will not surpass the Egyptian poet Shawqí (d. 1932 C.E.) when he says:

"You see the Hall of the Lions deserted
Its floor is void of antelopes and gazelles
Neither Queen Thurayyá nor her maids of honour
Are seen as moons of joy and pleasure.
It is a piece of marble upon which
Are perched lions with dull claws, soft touch.
They spray water from the pool
Like small shining pearls
Dripping on soft breasts.
They were the last to see our rule in the Peninsula,
In the wake of a fierce struggle with Fortune.
O Land in which I took refuge!
How like paradise thou art with extensive shade, ripe fruit,
And leisurely running crystal clear water.
One cannot see on thy hillocks
But black-eyed hot-lipped hours.
My chickens were endowed with feathers in thy shade.
They grew up in thy lap and gained strength.

Those antique relics
Should give sufficient lessons
Throughout time, both old and new."

On opposite sides of the Hall of Lions are two other halls that are the height of exquisite architectural art. They are the Hall of the Two Sisters and the Hall of Benserragus, where the family of Banú al-Sarráj met their doom at the hand of Abú 'Abdulláh (Bobadillo), the last of the Banú al-Ahmár!

Their story is strange. Fahima, a Princess of the Banú al-Ahmár fell in love with a young, heroic Benserragus. They used to have clandestine rendezvous in a corner of the Summer-wing of al-Hamrá, where they would enjoy celestial moments of love, under a lofty cedar tree, which is still flourishing in a corner of the garden. It is nowadays known as The Queen's Tree.

When the Sultan came to know of it, he was vexed. He arranged for a dinner party to be held in this Hall. All the members of the family of Banú al-Sarráj were invited. Now, while they were reclining on sofas and soft cushions stuffed with ostrich feathers and covered with silk and damask, eating, drinking and merry-making all round the marble pool, in the middle of the hall, the Sultan made a sign to his soldiers who were hiding behind the silk curtains. Like a thunderbolt, they fell on the guests and cut them to pieces. The bottom of the pool became stained with blood, which remains unburnished to the present day.

I cannot believe the story. The colour is only what we get in some varieties of marble. It is natural red. The tale is reminiscent of al-'Abbásah (the sister of Hárún al-Rashíd)
and Ja'far al-Barmaki that ended in the tragedy of the Barmecides. Hârîn did not kill them on account of the escapade of 'Abbâsah and Ja'far, but because of the increasing wealth and power of the Barmecides who were threatening the ruling dynasty with imminent danger.

Concerning the tragedy of Banû al-Sarrâj, the famous Syrian writer Shâkîb Arslân, had the following to say: "They were the ministers of Banû al-Ahmâr, the partisans of Muhammad Ibn Yusuf. They took sides with him against his nephew (Muhammad al-Saghîr). So on coming to the throne, he exterminated them." . . . This explanation is much nearer the truth.

The Ambassadors' Hall is the largest and most magnificent of all. It is squarish with a wooden ceiling, adorned with gilded patterns. Its walls have a variety of exquisite decorations. The variation is so subtle that it is difficult to discern it on first look. But it is quite evident on close scrutiny.

It is a pity that Napoleon's soldiers took away many pieces of the mosaics as souvenirs, leaving certain parts of the walls deplorably naked.

Those are the startling masterpieces, immortal relics, fancied by poets, designed by engineers, moulded by artists, cast by architects, immortalised by scholars and lost by kings!

The story of the surrender of Granada is full of lessons. It is said that when the leaders met for the last time in the Hall of al-Hamrâ to ratify the document of capitulation they went, except Mûsá Ibn Abû al-Ghassîn who kept quiet and frowning, then burst out saying: "Leave tears to children and women. We are men born with hearts not to give way to tears but to blood. I see that the noble souls of the nation have failed to save Granada, but there is another alternative to that, which is glorious death. So let us die defending our liberties and avenging unfortunate Granada. Our mother earth will embrace us as worthy sons, free from the fetters and tyranny of the conqueror. If we fail to obtain a grave to repose in, we shall always have the sky to cover us!"

Mûsá was quiet again. The whole assembly was overwhelmed by a silence not unlike that of death. Abû 'Abdullah looked round. Behold! despair was written all over those faces that were worn out by exhaustion. No more resolution was left in the bleeding hearts and broken souls. Abû 'Abdullah shouted: "God is great. No one can ward off the decision. By God, it has been ordained that I should be miserable and the Kingdom should fall in my reign." Those present shouted likewise: "Allâhu Akbar (God is great). The terms of the Christian King are the best we can obtain."

On seeing that his protestations were in vain, and that the leaders were signing the document, Mûsá rose in rage and screamed: "Do not deceive yourselves. Do not think for a moment that the enemy will keep his word. Do not rely on the chivalry of their spineless king. Death is the least we can fear. We are confronted with the looting of our cities and the raping of our wives and daughters. We are to face extreme despotism, savage bigotry, whips and fetters. We are to expect prisons and the stake. This is what we are going to suffer in the way of calamities and misfortune. This is what at least these mean souls that fear honourable death now, shall see later on. As for myself, by God! I will not live to see that day!"

Thereupon, he left the meeting, strode right through the Hall of the Lions, with a grave countenance. He passed through the outer passages of al-Hamrâ, without looking at anybody or uttering a word. He went home, armed himself, mounted his horse and galloped through the streets of Granada. No one ever saw or heard of him since.

Thus Arab Andalusia was lost at the hands of the small king, the spoiled child of the Castilians . . . Abû 'Abdullah al-Saghîr who humbly surrendered the City of Granada to Ferdinand and left Andalusia forever to live as the guest of one of the North-African kings.

"Weep thou, like women, over a lost kingdom.
Which thou hadst not protected like a man."

I should like here to record a piece of the apology that Abû 'Abdullah sent to the Sultan of Fez. It is touching and full of eloquence. In it he refers to the last episode of Andalusia, expressing his sorrow and admitting his fault. In it Abû 'Abdullah appears as the guilty-innocent. He does not clear himself of mistakes altogether, but thinks that he had no hand in what had happened. He depicts himself as the victim of fate. Here is what he had to say:

"This is the position of someone who is taking refuge with you, and holding tenaciously to your honour. He is hopeful of your heartfelt emotions and favourable bounties, a man who kisses the earth under your feet. His tongue stammers when he tries to begin the talk with you. What can a man whose face is bashful, whose heart is awe-stricken and whose pre-ordained fate is far beyond excuse of apology do? I would tell you what I should tell my Lord, and my audacity towards Him is greater and my respect for Him higher. By God. I am not innocent to excuse myself, nor strong enough to come out triumphant, but I am resigned seeking help, reproached asking for forgiveness. I hold not myself innocent; for man's soul is prone to evil. The like of me would have done the same and borne the burden of calamity twice as much, and destroyed himself and reduced his action to naught, taking refuge with God, lest he lose his religion and uphold the ungrateful and the aggressors. I had gone astray and I was misguided. If I knew that there was a single hair in my temple inclined to blasphemy, by God, I would have plucked it out, nay, I would have even severed what is under my turban and thrown it away; but the common folk are always the enemies of the kind and stand by the parties that are opposed to him. Most of what you hear is a lie, but the nature of the bulk of the people, save those who are protected by God, is attracted to it. We have been stoned with falsehood and have been accused of what inferences have not been accused of, let alone the transgressors. There occurred what had been related by all and sundry (literally: Zayd and 'Amr), may God preserve you from the like thereof! The false tellers have exaggerated. The stubblers have done their best to make us stumble likewise. They shot at us from the same bow and put us in the same rank as the blasphemous. Blasphemy as well as infidelity. O God! Bestow on us forgiveness after forgiveness. Did we do anything more than demanding our right from him who wanted to efface it and obliterate us all? For that sake we chased enemies that enraged us, so we were faced with a tear which we could not patch (and we were unaware of the unseen). Ordained fate cannot be warded off or stopped. It cannot be challenged or begged for compensation. Events must take their course. Even the moon must wane after it had been a full moon. The servant of God is obedient not an overlord. Nothing can be obtained but the possible. Almighty God hath an unseen knowledge concerning His creatures, that cannot be probed by human mind."

*  *  *

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"I strolled along reiterating the following lines:

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Those are their relics
That are almost effaced
Like lines in an illegible book!"

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JANUARY 1971
The Prophet Idris of the Qur'an is the same as Imhotep (3000 B.C.), the builder of the enormous Step Pyramid at Sakkara, Egypt

Idris, the Prophet to the Egyptians

by Dr. Mahmud Muftic

"And mention Idris in the Book. Surely he was a truthful man, a prophet. And We raised him to an elevated state" (The Qur'an, 19:56-57)

More than a thousand years before Abraham, and a millennium before the arrival of the first Greek-speaking people in Greece, there was a flourishing civilization in Egypt. I refer here to the time of the first Pharaoh of the IIIrd Dynasty: Djoser or Neter-khet (2780-2720 B.C.). This Dynasty ruled over a united Egypt, and it was also the period of great consolidation of the Egyptian people in cultural, economic and political fields. This was the first big kingdom of the world and also the cradle of the human civilization. As to the religious aspect of the Egyptian culture, it was still a kaleidoscopic pantheon of local deities of different tribes whose internal amalgamation had not yet been achieved, although it had been accomplished in the administrative and economic fields. The rest of the ancient world was still living in its prehistoric period—barbaric, superstitious without any aspect of a cultural tendency and any prospect of evolution. But in Egypt if we compare the world of the days of the last Pharaoh of the IIInd Dynasty, Khasekhemui, and that of Djoser’s, we notice a tremendous advance with nothing comparable anywhere before in human history. How was this miracle achieved? The answer, probably, is that, as in other crises in human history, the hour had thrown up the man. From the mists of legend and fragmentary history which surround this remote epoch, one figure looms up large. We know that the name of that figure is Imhotep. We also know that he was the architect of King Djoser. Twenty-five centuries after Imhotep’s death the historian Manetho poring over the priestly chronicles extracted and transmitted to us one tantalizing scrap of information. He says: ‘In his (Djoser’s) reign lived Imouthes (Imhotep), who because of his medical skill had the reputation of Aesculapius, and was the inventor of the art of building in hewn stone. He also paid attention to writing.’ That is all; four or five lines of history, a few later legends (in which Imhotep has become a god and magician), and a few inscriptions and graffiti—these are the only literary evidence we have of the existence of this great man!

For great he must have been and a genius who can stand besides the intellectual giants of later history. But even he could not have created the Step Pyramid at Sakkara if he had not an intuitive, religiously motivated drive to do it. But why, it may be asked, did the Egyptians suddenly begin to use stone in their buildings after using for so long mud bricks and timber? Reisner has suggested an answer. He says that the Egyptian craftsmen had mastered the cutting of blocks of limestone to such an extent that they were able to quarry limestone blocks of almost any size and, on royal demand, were able to excavate large pits and trenches (or stairways) in the rock. Sakkara, where the Step Pyramid still stands, is one of the most stirring archaeological sites in the world. For here one may study the very beginnings of stone architecture. At the beginning of this period neither the Egyptians nor any other people on earth could build in stone and all of a sudden there appears a

1 Manetho, an Egyptian historian who wrote about 305-285 B.C., divided the names of the Pharaohs which had come down to him into thirty Dynasties. His list is not accurate. He left out a number of names, but the list is still useful as a rough guide.
enormous pyramid of masonry—nearly four hundred feet square and over two hundred and fifty feet high—an “Eternal House” was built for King Djoser. Under the “House” the builders excavated a shaft eighty feet deep, with a granite-lined burial chamber at the bottom (the granite was brought by river from Aswan, nearly seven hundred miles away). For many years Egyptologists assumed that this pyramid unique in Egypt, which is built in steps (hence its name “the Step Pyramid”), must be of a later date than the more famous straight-sided Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza. They were, as a matter of fact, misled by the additions that had been made to it by the XVIIth Dynasty of the seventh century B.C. But we now know that the Djoser monument was built more than seventy years before that of Cheops. It is, in fact, the first pyramid, and the oldest large stone building in the world, and the only one of the seven wonders of the world still preserved in its original form. So the reign of King Djoser marks an epoch in human history—the beginnings of stone architecture; and also in Egyptian religious beliefs. The Egyptian archeologist Zakariyya Goneim discovered recently the lower courses of a hitherto unknown pyramid of the IIIrd Dynasty, a little to the southwest of the Djoser’s monument. In 1955 C.E. he found in it the royal name Sekhem-khet (the Powerful of Body). One of Djoser’s names (the Pharaoh bore several names) was Neter-khet; the similarity might suggest that Sekhem-khet may have belonged to the same family as Djoser.

THE GREATNESS OF IMHOTEP. HIS TEACHING

From the architecture of this newly discovered pyramid, which also had a large enclosing wall of a pattern similar to that of Djoser’s, it seems reasonably certain that Sekhem-khet was indeed the next king after Djoser. Goneim found on the white limestone wall, uncovered for the first time in 5,000 years, a faded inscription in red ochre paint. The inscription reads: “Imhotep,” together with other barely legible signs which might be read as “every day”. We shall assume that it reads: Imhotep (inspected this monument) every day. Another sentence: “Look out, he’s here again...” It seems that the great architect worked on the pyramid of his master’s successor—perhaps the king’s son (?)! Imhotep was a supreme product of the intellectual class of priest-technicians thrown up by the urban Revolution. One imagines him to have been one of those universal geniuses, like Leonardo da Vinci, a master of many skills. Manetho says that “because of his medical skill he had the reputation of Aesculapius” (the Greek god of medicine) and that “he also paid attention to writing”. For all we know, the last cryptic phrase may mean that he re-drafted and improved the whole system of Egyptian writing, which at this period, says Sir Alan Gardiner, “can be seen developing almost before our eyes”. His reputation was such that two thousand years after his death, Egyptian scribes used to pour out libations to him before beginning their work. His tomb has never been found. But it must be somewhere near Sakara. He is the first physician known by his own name. He was a physician and adviser to Djoser, architect of the Step Pyramid at Sakara; astrologer and prime minister; was deified as the Egyptian god of medicine and worshipped as son of Ptah, the god of Memphis during the XXVIIth Dynasty period 500 B.C. In the Greek literature he is known as Hermes Trismegistus (“three times powerful”), and has his philosophy and teachings described as “hermetism” or “hermetology”. This word is used in all Western languages and is related to something very tightly closed: “hermetically closed”, the word is connected with his teachings and his way of expression. Probably it is related to the gnostic forms of secret philosophical and mystic teachings of his followers during the centuries after his death.

We have no historical documents which can give us any information about the existence of an organized, or better, an institutionalized “hermetical religion”. We can suppose that in the lifetime of Imhotep such things existed, but through the fog of polytheistic mythology which is so much dense, it is difficult to find a proper answer.

More excavations and diggings will be necessary at Sakkar and around it to get a better answer.

CORPUS HERMETICUM

At present we have a collection of traditional hermetic teachings in a book entitled Corpus Hermeticum. This book is the rearranged collection written in the 5th century A.C. by certain Ioannis Stobaei, and was originally entitled Antologia Stobaei. Systematization of the fragments which are included in this Antologia was done according to Scott, for the person to whom the chapters (in Greek: logoi) are addressed. Ten logoi are from Hermes to Tat; five logoi are from Hermes to Ammon and four logoi are from Isis to Horus, not forgetting the first logoi which is from Poimandres to Hermes. Tradition mentions the existence of 29 logoi. Even so there are still ten of them that are missing from the Corpus Hermeticum. The Collection of Stobaei is based on fragments from a Cosmogony of Thoth, which was extant in the time of Philon of Byblos who wrote during the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian (d. 138 C.E.). Then follow the fragments written in Oxyrhynchus Papyri about the introduction of a lost book, which was translated from the Egyptian of a book of Pharaoh Memkau-Ke (Myerens of the IVth Dynasty) about a treatise on cosmogony, and from the quotations from a Latin book under the title of Asclepius, as well as from the anonymous fragments collected by Stobaei, and a general index. All these date from 100-300 B.C., and are collected in the aforementioned Antologia.

The early Church fathers like Cyprianus and Lactantius as well as Bar Hebraeus have supported their theses by quotations from the Corpus Hermeticum. The contents of this treatise contain very little of Egyptian elements. The ideas are mostly Greek philosophy, and it is more or less eclectic, with a mixture of Platonism, Aristotelism and Stoicism. There are a few traces of Judaism, and eventually a little bit of the Iranian thought (dualism). There is nothing in it of Christian or Neoplatonic ideas. In general, the diction in various logoi is different and sometimes polemic, but in all logoi we find a kind of piety. Some

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9 This famous find of papyri found in Egypt was published at the beginning of this century. They contain some sayings of Jesus Christ.
of them are of an Apostolic zeal. It may be that certain groups of spiritually inclined people were shaped and had dedicated themselves to practising as hermestists, the same as around a pagan hermit Antonin or as in the conclaves of Orphic orders.15

Before reading any of the hermetic logoi, we must realize that Imhotep (or Hermes Trismegistus) lived in an epoch more than a thousand years before any historical evidence of the presence of any people speaking Greek. It is for this reason embarrassing to read in one of the logoi that Hermes is pleading to the (unnamed) king not to allow his books to be translated into Greek, because only the Egyptian language could give proper meaning to his ideas and that the Greek language was not adequate to give proper meaning to his statements. Furthermore, we can observe that the general semantics of the works is out of frame with the time in which Imhotep lived, but we may certainly excuse it, because in the Old and New Testaments which are much closer to our time, terrible distortions of facts, philological, philosophical, historical, and what is most important, theological are registered and were corrected by the only historically authentic religious codex: the Holy Qur'an. Keeping in view this fact I will give here few quotations from the Corpus Hermeticum just to illustrate the way of thinking which flows in it. One fundamental theme of hermetism is the knowledge of God. It was emphasized in the first logo: Poimandres to Hermes. Poimandres is here a spiritual Being with all the characteristics of Gabriel who usually is the messenger of God to the prophets. In the language of Spiritism, it is the spirit guide or "control" of Hermes. The general content of the Corpus after age-old interpolations and change due to translations, transcriptions and voluntarily distortions naturally is as follows:

1 The apparition of Poimandres; demand for Revelation.

2 Revelation:
   (a) cosmogony,
   (b) anthropology,
   (c) eschatology.

3 Apostolic mission of the Prophet.

4 Final prayer.

The central idea of hermetism is the divine Omnipresence. In the "Sacred lecture" is stated: "Glory of everything is God and divine. The nature is divine. The principle of all being is God, intellect, nature, matter; (God) is wisdom and revelation of everything. The principle (of existence) is divine, and He is nature, energy, necessity, end and renewal. God, the father of everything is identical with good, and He has the same nature, or the same energy. This energy in His Will, and this Will consists of the wish of existence of everything which exists."

This quotation will astonish every reader who is confused by the very complicated Egyptian mythology where beside Ra, Amon and Osiris he will find thousands of different divinities, some of them connected with each other and some without any connection. The only known historical interruption in this mess was in 1500 B.C., during the XVIIIth Dynasty, and especially during the reign of Amenophis IV (Akhnaton), who tried to eradicate the polytheistic tradition in Egypt. Well, I can say that the Egyptian polytheism is an artificial creation, and surely the original Egyptian religion was monotheism; for in it the idea of the One God was essential. The Egyptian god called Kamephys or Kmephis or Kmeph is actually one "Urgod" as Uranus in Greek mythology. Those are His Hellenised names, but in the Egyptian He is known as Kamuteph, which means the "Father of his own mother"; it means the first generator or the First Cause, who is Himself not born or created. He was sometimes identified with Amon (Amon-Ra-Kamuteph) and sometimes with Min, an ithyphallic generator.16 So we can now see that the cult of Amon and Ra are in origin monotheism, where only semantic and philological differences reflecting previous multitudes of tribes and dialects contributed to the polytheistic tendencies of the busy and tired masses. The cult of Osiris is something very new in the Egyptian history and was for a very long time (probably till the Hyksos invasion in 1700 B.C.) the only religion of the Pharaoh's family. Osiris (which means somebody sitting on the throne) became a cult for the masses after the expulsion of the Hyksos and other Asiatic invaders from the Nile Valley. The remnants of the Amon cult—Amon was the most common name for a single God—has remained in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim liturgy till today in the words of Amen or Ameen, and is used as the last word in any personal prayer for Ameen.

Hermetological literature is abundant in its various duplications; for instance, the duplication of Thoth as Hermes and Tat, and their duplication as Aselepius.17 He is sometimes mistaken as the son of Hermes. The Greeks translate the name Imhotep as Imouthes, the son of Pth, and he was described in the Greek Pantheon as Asklepius, the god of medicine. According to tradition, which was mentioned by Plutarch,18 Isis is not only a pupil of Hermes but his daughter.

Here are a few quotations from the early Christian literature about hermetism. Cyprianius: "Hermes Trismegistus speaks also about one God, whom we cannot perceive and estimate." Lactantius: "(Hermes said) that God has neither a father nor a mother, and His being came from Himself, and He exists by Himself." In another place Lactantius says: "Hermes says that God's name cannot be pronounced by a human being." Bar Hebraeus quotes from Hermes: "... out of Him there is no god, neither angels, nor demons, nor essence whatever it might be: but in Him and under his authority..." Even after 5,000 years of distortions, how beautiful those exalted words of monotheism sound. They are much more assuring and affirming than the passages of the Old and New Testaments and they give us an idea of how powerful and impressive they were in their original form, and in their original language.

In the Old Testament Imhotep is called Enoch (or Henoch). He comes out from Cain the progenitor (Genesis IV, 1-2). His father was Jared and his son was Methuselah (Gen. V). According to the O.T. he lived 365 years, and is described as "Walking with God", his end being told in the words: "and he was not, for God took him". No further reference to Enoch is found in the Hebrew Scriptures, unless we go to the ingenuous emendment in Ezekiel (XIV, 14:20; XXVIII, 3).

From the Rabbinical literature, according to Targum-Pseudo-Jonathan (Gen. V, 24) Enoch was a pious worshipper of the true God, and was removed from among the dwellers on earth to heaven receiving the names and offices of Metatron.

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14 E. Sjöberg, Der Menschensohn in Aethiopischen Handbuch, Lund, 1946.
15 See No. 10.
16 See No. 10.

18 THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
and “Safa Rabba” (Great Scribe). In the development of the Enoch legends he is credited with the invention of the art of writing; he teaches astronomy and mathematics (Sefer Yuhasin, V; compare with Eusebius: Preparatio Evangelica, IX, 17; Bar Hebraeus Chronicle, p. 5). At the end of the last century two apocryphal books of Enoch were found. One was discovered in an Ethiopian monastery in Greek, and the other in Serbia in the old Slav language. They only confirm the already known Rabbinical expounding. In Ugaritic Hebrew the word “Enoch” means: “Initiated”. The proverbial Hebrew attitude which is sometimes common to all Semitic peoples is “nationalization” of foreign names and even the events of foreign history. For this reason we find in the Old Testament all foreign names so distorted that in several examples you cannot recognize at all the original person about whom the word is being used. Something similar was done later by the Greek historians who distorted the names of foreign origin to such an extent that it is a horror to read their histories.

The Greeks—Herodotus, for example—distorted the names of persons and places in the old Egyptian history to such an extent that we really are in doubt about many kings. Herodotus called, for example, King Khufu, Cheops, King Menkaure, Mycerinos, and the city of No-Amen, Memphis. Thanks to similar distortions we have lost a clear panorama of most of the spiritual evolution of the humankind.

**THE PROPHET IDRIS**

Islam knows of Imhotep, because he is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an (19:57, and in 21:85) under the name of the Prophet Idris, which is an old Arabic word for “Instructor” (the more modern version of the word is mudarris). He is mentioned as a truthful man, and a prophet, raised by God to a lofty place and was a model of patience. It is interesting to mention that in the verse 21:85: “And Ishmael and Idris and Dhu al-Kifl; all were patient ones; and We admitted them to Our mercy; surely they were good ones,” Idris is mentioned together with Ishmael whose mother was Egyptian, and with Dhu al-Kifl (Ezekiel), probably because it is in the book of Ezekiel that he was again mentioned in the Old Testament. Early Muslim scholars have identified him with Enoch and Hermes, and it is the Qur’an Commentator Baydawi who mentioned this for the first time. He relates that Idris gave explanations of divine mysteries. According to him, Idris was the first man who knew how to write, and it is he who discovered astronomy and mathematics. He says that Idris was also known under the name “Ukhnhu” (probably Enoch or the O.T. or Old Egyptian “Nou-s”), and that he had communications from the Angel Gabriel (probably “Poimandres” of the Greek version), and that he had studied books of Adam, beside those imparted to him by Gabriel. He had been sent as a preacher of repentance to the corrupt descendants of Cain. He received from heaven thirty leaflets containing the praises of God and prayers. How close to reality was Baydawi, we can recognize if we remember that in the Corpus Hermeticum there is a mention of the thirty logos, twenty of which are known or are preserved even today. We know about his spirit-messenger Poimandres, which Baydawi described as Gabriel, and we know from those fragments that they really contain praise to God and prayers. It seems that ancient Muslim research workers were very precise. Ibn al-Qifti identified Imhotep with Ilyas and al-Khidr. He says that the Greeks know him under the name of Hurmus (Hermes) or, as Bar Hebraeus says, Hermes Trismegistus.

**CONCLUSION**

From the above it becomes clear that even the most famous and oldest human civilization—the Egyptian—has its roots in prophethood. Even the most important stone architectural tradition of humankind is prophetic, and derived from the divine spiritual inspiration, with a strong affirmation of the next life, and also a strong interdependence of our earthly existence. This civilization is essentially monotheistic and was with the passage of time distorted and assumed with centuries a polytheistic shape. Idris is one of the rare prophets of non-Semitic origin mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. It is also clear that the Zionist propaganda is distorting the fact that the Hebrews living in Egypt from the time of Joseph down to the days of Moses, were an enslaved people obliged to construct pyramids for the Pharaohs. The Pyramids were constructed 1,500 years before the birth of Abraham, and at the time of the Hyksos and the invasion of Egypt of other Asiatic peoples, the burial customs had long ago changed and the kings were buried in subterranean caves. There were no more pyramidal edifices. The Hebrews are very limited in their architectural skill.

It should be observed that even at its highest political achievement of the Hebrew nation during the days of kings and prophets (David and Solomon) the construction of the first Hebrew temple at Jerusalem was of wood, and that the Phoenician King Hiram sent his architect Adoniram, and other workers to construct this temple. Civilization might have a national nest, but it is always the property of all humankind, and no nation has any prerogative or advantage over the others except in piety, moral discipline and dedication in the service of the Creator and others of its own kind.

After reading the above we can also admire the majesty of God’s will that inspired men like Idris, and through centuries and millennia to shape the human mind and the creative art in a certain manner which we can describe even today as great and unsurpassed.

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America's very special

US assistance between 1948 and 1966

The text of a revealing article which was published in its earlier editions

"The White House invitation and reception recently accorded Israel's Defence Minister, Moshe Dayan, is illustrative of the very special relationship the United States has developed with his country over the past 22 years. It is dubious whether a NATO or SEATO defence chief would have been granted such high protocol treatment. Most would have had to be satisfied with meeting the Defence Secretary, Mr. Melvin Laird, or in exceptional cases, the Secretary of State, Mr. Rogers, or the Vice-President.

"When President Truman said in October 1948: 'We are pledged to a state of Israel, large enough, free enough and strong enough to make its people self-supporting and secure' the stage was set for the gradual establishment of an association between the United States and another country unique in American history. Today, that association is far closer in all areas—defence, economic collaboration, intelligence exchange, common citizenship, and mutual diplomatic support than enjoyed, for example, between the United States and Great Britain.

"Unique also is Israel's almost total immunity from criticism in the United States—a situation hardly paralleled by any of our European or Asian allies, many of whose faults and frailties are daily aired in our communications media and by our legislative representatives. Perhaps as James Reston of the New York Times suggested a short while ago, "...you can put it down as a general rule that any criticism of Israel's policies, will be attacked as anti-semitism". And so it goes in reverse, with Israel's image as a small, democratic, courageous little country struggling to survive in a sea of uncivilized, bloodthirsty, pro-Communist Arabs, representing—rightly or wrongly—the view of most Americans. A new, very impressive colour documentary film on Israel and the Bible sponsored by Billy Graham and to be shown in 1,200 Christian churches throughout the United States each month, will support this image.

"In dollars and cents America's assistance to Israel through the years, both governmental and financial, has been prodigious. During the 20-year period between 1948-1968, the United States Government economic aid totalled $11,000m., while dollar transfers from private sources amounted to $25,000m., a total of $36,000m., or $1,400 per capita on a current population of 2,500,000. This greatly exceeds on a per capita basis United States assistance to any ally and compares to $35 per capita to the peoples of 13 neighbouring States. Since 1968, American assistance to Israel has greatly increased. Dollar transfers in 1970 reached $800m., and in 1971 will approximate $1.5 billion.

"Until 1967, we assured Israel a continuing supply of modern military equipment directed through West Germany and France and we were thus able to avoid Arab hostility. However, with the conclusion of German 'reparrations' and De Gaulle's change in Middle East Policy, America has since 1967 become the exclusive purveyor of arms to Israel. Of greater significance is the fact that qualitatively, America has provided aircraft, missiles and electronic systems of greater sophistication and greater strike capability than those furnished our NATO and SEATO allies. For example, Greece, Turkey and Iran, which form the northern tier defence line against the Soviet Union, have not yet received our Phantom aircraft. A few weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed an amendment to the Defence Procurement Bill giving the President open-ended authority to transfer military equipment to Israel without total cost limitation. As the Speaker of the House, Mr. McCormack remarked: '...I have never seen in my 42 years as a member of this body, language of this kind...'. Great Britain at the height of its struggle with Hitler never received such a 'blank cheque'. Nor, in more recent times, has South Vietnam. The Senate on 15 December, by a 60 to 20 vote, killed the Williams' Amendment to the Defence Appropriations Bill which would have restricted the President from sending United States troops into Israel without Congressional permission. Many who are supporting similar limitations with regard to Cambodia in the Cooper-Church Amendment opposed the Israel restriction.

"There has been significance also in Washington's reaction to the Soviet action in putting an anti-aircraft missile defence system in Egypt which began before and was apparently completed after the cease-fire arrangements undertaken at the Secretary of State Mr. Rogers' initiative last summer. The concern has greatly exceeded that generated by reports of air-to-ground Soviet missiles and nuclear submarines in Cuba today in defiance of the 1961 Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding.

"In the area of nuclear weapons, the United States has also pursued an exceptional position vis-à-vis Israel. During the years when we were pressing over 100 nations in the world community with whatever diplomatic, economic and military leverage we might have to adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Israel alone was exempted from strong representations. In fact we may have encouraged Israel to refrain from assuming the obligations set forth in this international undertaking. Through a study prepared at White House request by the Rand Corporation of California, we provided Israel with the most advanced technical and political data on the effective use of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. The Jewish Press in December summarised the nuclear situation: "The experts who before the Six Day War felt that India would become the next member of the nuclear club now believe that the next member will be Israel." This, in fact, has already occurred. The nuclear reactors at..."
The Times of London for 5 February 1971, but withdrew from its later ones!

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8 was equal to $1,400 for each Israeli relationship with Israel

Dimona and Nahal Sorek have been reported for several years to be producing plutonium sufficient for ten 25-kiloton bombs a year. The widely-read Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace recently published by the former head of Israel Army Intelligence, General Y. Harakabi, is the current authority on the use of nuclear weapons in the Middle East conflict. In contrast to our intense opposition to France's nuclear development, the United States has supported Israel in virtually an identical policy.

"In the exchange of intelligence, American co-operation with Israel is unprecedented and goes far beyond the special nuclear arrangements with Great Britain based on the McMahon Act. During the months before the June 1967 hostilities, the military intelligence requirements required by Washington from American embassies, the Central Intelligence Agency and military intelligence staffs in the Middle East were very largely based on Israeli needs, not on American interests. The effectiveness of the Israeli air strikes on 5 June 1967 was assured at least in part by information on Egyptian airfields and aircraft dispositions provided through American sources. With political and economic information, it has long been State Department practice to provide the Israeli Embassy in Washington with copies of all of our reports from Middle East embassies considered to be of interest. A summary by Ray Vickers about this co-operation appeared in the Wall Street Journal on 12 February 1970. When the American Naval Intelligence ship Liberty was attacked by Israeli air and sea units in June 1967—with the loss of 34 dead and 71 injured—the incident resulted in minimum official reaction. It boggles the imagination to speculate as to the reaction were the attackers to have been British or French, much less Egyptian, as initially assumed.

"Israel also enjoys an exceptional position on the question of dual citizenship. Under long-standing citizenship laws an American voting in the elections or serving in the armed forces or government of a foreign country loses his citizenship. By a recent Supreme Court interpretation, Americans may serve in Israel in this manner without loss of citizenship. Under the Israel Law of Return, an American Jew entering Israel is automatically given Israeli nationality.

"Since the war in June 1967, and particularly during the past year American commitments to Israel have been greatly expanded. Before 1967 the United States was committed to Israel's territorial integrity within the 1948 armistice lines and to her economic viability. Tangentially, Washington favoured a military balance in the Middle East. In the United Nations Resolution of November 1967, America, in effect, opposed Israel's retention of the territories conquered by force the previous June. This fundamental position has now changed very radically.

"Last summer, in a series of statements from the San Clemente 'White House', the Nixon Administration would appear to have extended the territorial integrity commitment to include until a final peace settlement the occupied territories; to have moved from assuring a military balance, to guaranteeing Israel a 'military superiority capable of launching a rapid knock-out blow' against her neighbours and to have supported Israel's continued 'racial exclusiveness' thereby negating our 18 years of support for the United Nations Palestine refugee formula of 'repatriation or compensation'. When asked during his 10 December press conference whether America still adhered to its position on Israeli withdrawal from the 'occupied territories', President Nixon, for the first time, evaded the issue by saying that it was a matter for negotiation.

"Finally, the assignment and advancement of personnel in the Department of State to the top positions relating to Middle East policy have traditionally been subject to prior approval by the American Zionist leadership. As an example in reverse, the firing of the United Nations Ambassador, Mr. Charles W. Yost, was demanded by 'the pro-Israel lobby', as recently reported by the columnists Evans and Novak.

"This special relationship would appear to have the full and massive support of most Americans and certainly of the Congress and the press. It is hardly surprising therefore that every Administration since that of President Truman has worked towards establishing closer and more cordial ties with Israel as one of the cardinal principles of American foreign policy. General Moshe Dayan, when he met President Nixon, was in a far more enviable position than other top foreign leaders visiting Washington: whether they be Mr. Heath, M. Pompidou or Herr Willy Brandt, or representatives of Asian, African or Latin American countries friendly to the United States.

"Only history can provide the total explanation for this very special American-Israeli relationship. It has now reached a point where Israel's security and welfare is considered vital to American welfare, but our reaction to any threats against Israel is more intense than with any of our NATO or SEATO allies. One State Department humorist has said: 'Were Israel's survival to be seriously threatened, we would be in the Third World War in two minutes—with Berlin, it might take several days!'"

David Nes

Mr. Nes spent 26 years in the United States Foreign Service. He was Charge d'Affaires in Cairo immediately before and during the 1967 war.

JANUARY 1971 21
The Spiritual Aspect of the Life of the Prophet Muhammad

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE IN ARABIA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD AT ITS LOWEST EBB AT THE ADVENT OF MUHAMMAD

It is not far from truth to say that when Muhammad came there was no real spirituality left in the world. Even the first stage of spiritual evolution—ethical and moral evolution—was at its lowest. The teachings of the great spiritualists leaders of India had become absolutely distorted. Even Buddhist spiritualism had been degraded into a sort of atheistic humanism. Judaic spirituality had also been misunderstood, and the spirituality of Jesus had degenerated into grossest Trinitarianism, including a deified man. The Arab life itself was very much near the animal life. It is undeniable that here and there in the world there must have been individuals living in caves or monasteries who had cut themselves off altogether from their fellow-beings and from all their affairs, and were engrossed in self-edification; but spirituality as a universal means of elevating humanity—a human consciousness of its original soul, whence it came and where it went—was unknown when Muhammad came. Some true souls in Arabia itself had got sick of the gross idolatry, and their souls tried to soar aloft to the One and Only Real Existence. But the way to reach that goal was lost. Muhammad was born among idolatrous Arabs, where even God, the Spirit of all spirits, was represented by 360 idols. But Muhammad himself had a pure soul. Even when his people were steeped in vices and immoralities of the worst type he was straight. He was al-Amin, the Trusty. His soul could not be satisfied with its environment.

What am I? What is this mysterious and unfathomable thing called the universe? What is life? What is death? Who is the author, sustainer, and cherisher of all that exists? What is man? What relation has he with his Creator? The sun, the moon, the elements, what are they? Are they really gods? Such were the questions put by Muhammad’s inner self to himself. Who was to answer them? Carlyle says that the grim rocks of Hirā, of Mount Sinā’ī, the stern, sandy solitude answered not. The great heaven, rolling silently overhead, with its bright glancing stars, answered not. There was no answer, says Carlyle. Yes, there was no answer, I also repeat. Even the oracles of India, of China, of Palestine, of Nazareth answered not. The spirits of Krishna, of Buddha, of Moses, of Jesus had sent a telepathic answer to the spirit of Muhammad, but to all outward appearance there was no medium, no answer. Even the spirits of the great departed had become voiceless, speechless. They seemed to have become indifferent to the world. The only answer to these and thousands of other questions like these came from Muhammad himself, Carlyle beautifully puts it: “The man’s own soul, and what of God’s inspiration dwelt there, had to answer.” Yes, it was only the spiritual self of Muhammad that solved all the problems which his thinking and inquisitive soul put to him. Muhammad had prepared his soul by years of exercise, introspection, and communion to give the answer. For years after his marriage he used to go to a cave on Mount Hirā, sometimes with his faithful wife, sometimes all by himself. There he engaged himself in meditation and in communion. Solitude, at that time of his life, had become a passion to him. He was engaged in the study of
self—in the conquest over his physical body, his human sentiments. He used to spend night after night in that solitary cave far away from all the world. He was a recluse. He began to see visions. He began even to hear voices from mouths his eyes could not see. The great unseen was revealed to him. He could read the Book of Nature. That unlettered man became the most learned of the Book of Nature; as if the very stones spoke to him, as if the very trees invited him to take up the great task of restoring spirituality. The whole nature, as it were, called him forth to crush materialism, to break the idols and images, to abolish man-worship and to teach man to know himself, and thus to know God. Muhammad in that case was one with his Maker—the all-Pervading, Omnipresent, Omnipotent God.

Ghazzali on the aim of moral discipline

Ghazzali says, "The aim of moral discipline is to purify the heart from the lust of passion and resentment, till, like a clear mirror, it reflects the Light of God." The Light of God was fully and completely reflected in the soul of Muhammad. He had reached the stage of self-elevation when duality becomes non-existent and only One remains. The Qur'an 24:35 says, "God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth."

That Light, and that Light alone, reflected in the soul of Muhammad: In all the gifts of Nature, in every relation of life, in the rising moon, in the setting sun, he saw the hand of God—the One and only God—the One and only spirit that rules over and pervades the whole universe. And in the words of the Qur'an his prayers and supplications, his life and death, were all for none but the One Cherisher of the Worlds.

Muhammad, by meditation and prayer, by cutting himself away from the affairs of the world, had realized the craving of his soul. Says the Qur'an, 50:22:

"We have stripped the evil from off thee and thy sight today is keen."

The veil had fallen from the eyes of Muhammad. He had become conscious that the human soul is from God, for God, and returning to God— Innâ l illâh wa innâ ilâh râji'ân (The Qur'an).

No formal prayers had been instituted then; no month of fasting was fixed then. The Law of Islam itself had not been promulgated. The Shari'ah was unknown. But Muhammad had reached that stage of spiritual evolution in which his soul had acquired a full knowledge of God.

Ghazzali says that any one who will look into the matter will see that happiness is necessarily linked with the knowledge of God. Each faculty of ours delights in that for which it was created. Lust delights in accomplishing desire, anger in taking vengeance, the eye in seeing beautiful objects, and the ear in hearing beautiful sounds. The highest function of the soul of man is the perception of truth; in this accordingly it finds its special delight.

MUHAMMAD'S TASK OF WORLD REGENERATION

Muhammad had acquired happiness. His soul had realized the Truth for itself. But that alone did not satisfy him. He was not selfish; he was not egoistic. Self-elevation alone could not satisfy him. He was destined for a higher position. His heart bled for his people—nay, for the whole human race, for all his fellow-beings all over the world. When the evolution of his spirituality had reached a high stage by self-abnegation and self-surrender he was chosen by God—the All-Wise, the All-Merciful—to be His messenger to His people of the Message of Islam—resignation to the will of God. He was the first Muslim in the strictest sense of the word, and by the complete surrender of himself to his Maker he became His beloved, His chosen man to take His final message to humanity, to be a torch-bearer of Eternal Light. Moses and Jesus and others had been chosen before when they had evolved their spirituality. But their spiritual power was perhaps not so highly developed as to be chosen for the task of world-regeneration. Moses and Jesus both came only to the Israelites. Non-Israelites were nothing but "dogs" in the eyes of Jesus. Muhammad was chosen to be world-teacher. He was designated to be the Mercy of the Worlds—Wa mà arsalnâ illâ rahmatan lill'damin. (The Qur'an 21:107.) And so one night—the night which has been called Laylah al-Qadr—the Night of Power and Excellence, when the whole creation is in a worshipful mood—in the middle of that night the call came. Muhammad heard a voice mightier and clearer than he had ever heard before, "surging like the waves of the ocean," asking him to "Read!"—read the Book of Nature. Twice the voice called, and twice Muhammad said that he was untaught. "Read!" called out the voice for the third time, and Muhammad then realized that he could no more evade. "What shall I read?"

and Muhammad answered the call. He repeated what he was told to read. When he woke from his trance the medium had disappeared, but he felt as if the words that were spoken to his soul had been written in his heart. However, at first this highest reward, this culminating result of his spiritual evolution and elevation weighed so much upon him that he came trembling to his bosom friend—his own wife, Khadijah, and related to her what had happened. Khadijah, who knew Muhammad as closely as nobody else could know, who knew his spiritual exercises, who had seen him in communion with God in the same cave where the call had at last come, said, "Rejoice, and be of good cheer. He in Whose hands is Khadijah life, is in my witness that thou wilt be the Prophet of the people." And so it was. Thenceforward Muhammad was the mouthpiece of God, not only to one people for one time, but to all people for all time.

With his call to the Prophethood, Muhammad could no more take to the life of a recluse. He was commissioned by God to set the best example to humanity—an example which every human being could follow—an example which would be in harmony with the purpose of the creation of the universe, where everything obeys the Law—where every "effect" has a "cause"—where even the very soul has to live in a body, where even the "prince of peace" had to proclaim, "I came not to send peace, but a sword. I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother" (Matt. x, 35, 36).

Muhammad as a Prophet had to establish morality, elevate social conditions, and improve human life in all respects, in every phase. He was a Universal Prophet; even the political and constitutional dreams of Socrates and Plato had to be realized through him. He had to defend the cause of Truth even at the risk of his life. He had to legislate. He had to be a soldier, a monarch, the general of an army, the president of a commonwealth. But never for one minute did he allow his soul to be left alone. No day and no night passed without his holding his communion with his God.

His followers presented themselves five times a day before their Maker, but his own soul did not feel satisfied even with that. His feet would get swollen by his standing in his nocturnal prayers when the rest of the world—his own faithful followers
—enjoyed calm sleep. Prayer he found to be the best spiritual medium, and he used it to its fullest extent for the achievement of even his prophetic mission. And how could an ordinary man represent the Almighty and Omniscient, the Merciful and the Majestic, the Loving and yet the Requiring God, to Whom belongs the kingdom of heaven and earth, to Whom submits the whole universe; if he had not divine spiritual power within? Muhammad’s spiritual power was unapproached by any other man, by any other prophet—neither by Moses, nor by Jesus, nor even by those ancient master spiritualists like Buddha and Krishna. Muhammad did not only enact legislation revealed to him, but by his spiritual power subjected the whole people to own will, and thus secured their implicit obedience to these laws. Up to this day at least one-fourth of the population of the whole globe abstains from alcohol simply because Muhammad during his lifetime willed it.

Since the time that Muhammad undertook his prophetic mission he had to suppress those spiritual powers in which he indulged for his own personal edification, so that he might not be misunderstood as were the prophets of yore. He was very solicitous not to lay any such example which would go against his mission work—which would encourage any superstition, any indolence, any neglect or indifference to duty—which would sin in any respect against the sublime Unity of God—which would raise anybody equal to Him—in power, in knowledge, or in any respect. But those who assert that Muhammad could not prophesy and had no spiritual power to cure the sick, etc., are ignorant, shamefully ignorant, of his life-history, or of that ever-living book, the Qur’án, which was revealed to him, and which in itself is the most remarkable proof of Muhammad’s spirituality and inspiration.

If all the literature that was written before Muhammad on spiritualism was collected on one side, and that written after Muhammad by his followers on the other, the latter will be not only much larger in quantity but also better in quality. Muhammad combined in his ideal of spirituality DUTY with LOVE.

LESSONS OF DUTY

The Qur’án 6: 164; 35-18 says,

“No soul shall labour but for itself, and no burdened one shall bear another’s burden.”

“Be good to parents, and to the kindred, and to orphans, and to the poor, and to the neighbour, whether kinsman or new-comer, and to a fellow-traveller, and to the wayfarer, and to those whom your right hands possess” (The Qur’án, 4:36).

“Give just measure, and be not defrauders; and weigh with an equal balance; and diminish not unto men aught of their matters, neither commit violence in the earth, acting corruptly,” etc. (The Qur’án, 7:85).

The moral code of Islam is complete, in which the duty of man is clearly laid down before him.

LOVE OF GOD

But the part that love plays in the religion of Islam is also highly appreciable. The Prophet Muhammad said, “I would not value having the whole wealth of the world in the place of this revelation. Say: (O Muhammad!) O My servants who have oppressed your own souls, despair not of the mercy of God.” A man said, “What is the condition of him who hath associated others with God?” The Prophet remained silent; after that he said, “Know that him also God forgiveth; but on repentance.”

“My mercy compasseth all,” says the Qur’án, 7:156.

“And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, then will I be nigh unto them. I will answer the cry of him that crieth when he crieth unto Me: but let them hearken unto Me, and believe in Me, that they may proceed aright” (The Qur’án, 2:186).

“Is not He who answereth the oppressed when they cry to Him and taketh off their ills, and maketh you to succeed your sires on the earth? What! a god with God? How few bear these things in mind!” (The Qur’án, 7:62).

“Pray to Me, and I will hearken” (The Qur’án, 40:60).

“And when they who believe in Our signs come to thee (Muhammad), say: ‘Peace be upon you! Your Lord hath laid down for Himself a law of mercy: so that if any one of you commit a fault through ignorance, and afterwards turn and amend. He surely will be Generous, Merciful’” (The Qur’án, 6:54).

The effect of the spiritual life and teachings of Muhammad on his companions made models of human perfection. The Qur’án has preserved contemporary records of their virtues thus:

“And the servants of God of Mercy are they who walk upon the earth softly: and when the ignorant address them, they reply, ‘Peace!’ They that pass the night in the worship of their Lord prostrate and standing, and that say, ‘O our Lord! turn away from us the torment of Hell: for its torment is endless: it is indeed an ill-abode and resting-place!’ Those who when they spend are neither lavish nor niggard, but keep the mean. Those who call no other gods with God, nor slay whom God hath forbidden to be slain, except for a just cause, and who commit not fornication (for he who doth this shall receive punishment)” (25:63-69).

“Who fulfil their pledge to God, and break not their compact. And who join together what God hath bidden to be joined, and who fear their Lord, and dread an ill-reckoning: And who, from desire to see the face of their Lord, are constant amid trials, and observe prayer and give alms, in secret and openly, out of what We have bestowed upon them, and turn aside evil by good: for them is the recompense of that abode, gardens of Eden—into which they shall enter together with the just of their fathers and their wives and their descendants: and the angels shall go in unto them at every portal saying: Peace be with you because ye have endured all things! Charming is the recompense of their abode” (The Qur’án, 3:20-25).

To the modern spiritualists the following verse of the Qur’án may be of interest:

“And say not of those who are slain on God’s path that they are dead: Nay, they are living, only ye do not know” (The Qur’án, 2:154).

SOME SPIRITUALISTIC INCIDENTS

In battle, which has been called the battle of the Ditch, when digging a trench, the spade fell on a stone and a spark came out. Muhammad said to his companions that in that spark he saw the empires of the Caesars and the Chosroes that were soon to come under the banner of Islam.

This prophetic vision of Muhammad was fully realized after his death, when his followers conquered the domains of the Caesars and the Chosroes both.

There was a rough child of Arabia named Surâqah. Muhammad once said, “I am seeing the gold hangies of Chosroes on your wrists.”

When Persia was conquered during the time of the second successor of Muhammad, Ûmar, he deliberately asked
Suraqah to put on the Persian monarch’s bangles, and thus was fulfilled again the prophecy of Muhammad.

One day Muhammad’s camel was lost. People searched for it but could not find it. An unbeliever came and said: “You, Muhammad, pretend to be a prophet. When you cannot know where your camel is, how can you tell people about the after life or the next world?”

Muhammad smiled and said: “I have been commissioned to guide people on the path of rectitude and piety and reason. I have come to obey the law, not to break it; therefore I have to keep my spiritual powers suppressed. But now that you challenge me, I tell you to go to such and such a place, in such and such a tree the nose string of my camel has got entangled.”

The man went and fetched it from that very place, and became a believer.

A FEW PROPHETIC VERSES OF THE QUR’AN

The Qur’an itself is full of predictions which were fully realized in due time.

(1) “The Greeks have been overcome in the nearest part of the land; but after their defeat, they shall overcome the others in their turn within a few years. Unto God belongeth the disposal of this matter, both for what is past, and for what is to come; and on that day shall the believers rejoice in the success granted by God; for He granteth success unto whom He pleaseth and He is the Mighty, and the Merciful. This is the promise of God. God will not act contrary to His promise; but the greater part of men know not” (The Qur’an, 30:2-6). [N.B.—The word “few” in the expression “within a few years,” is a translation of Arabic Bid’ which means ‘from three to nine.’]

The Persians, as is well known, were worshippers of fire and the Greeks were Christians. When, therefore, the news of the victory of the Persians over the Greeks was first heard in Mecca, the idolaters of Mecca became elated; and they began to speak to the followers of Muhammad that as the Persians defeated the Christians with their own scriptures, so they would overcome them though they had the Qur’an—their guide of faith. It was on this occasion that the above verse was revealed, whereupon Abu Bakr spoke to the idolaters that they were doomed to be disappointed. “In the name of God I tell you, the Greeks will again conquer the Persians.” Then Ubayy, the son of Khalaf, the leader of the opponents, said that he was a liar and challenged him to fix a limit and lay a wager. The limit was to be three years, and a wager of ten camels was laid and security was given. Abū Bakr then came to the Prophet Muhammad, and told him all that had happened. Then Muhammad explained to him that the word Bid’ meant from three to nine, and therefore advised him to ask for an extension of limit even at a higher wage than ten camels. The limit was then prolonged to nine years and the wager was raised to a hundred camels. Before the time elapsed Ubayy, the son of Khalaf, died of a wound he had received at Uhud. The Greeks triumphed over the Persians in the seventh year of their first defeat. Abū Bakr got the camels from the heirs of Ubayy and brought them to the Prophet Muhammad, who asked him to give them away as alms.

(2) “Verily He who hath given thee the Qur’an for a rule of faith and practice, will certainly bring thee back home unto Mecca” (The Qur’an, 27:35).

And it did really so happen:

(3) “We have surely sent down the Qur’an; and We will certainly preserve the same from corruption” (The Qur’an, 15:9), is a prophecy which has been literally fulfilled.

SOME SPIRITUAL SAYINGS OF MUHAMMAD

Some of the sayings of the Prophet have the highest spiritual value; as, for example:

“God saith, ‘I am near the hope of whoso putteh it in Me; and I am with him, and near him, when he remembereth Me.’”

“God saith, ‘Whoso doth one good act, for him are ten rewards; and I also give more to whomsoever I will; and whoso doth an ill, its retaliation is equal to it, or I forgive him; and whoso seeketh to approach Me one cubit, I seek to approach one cubit; and whoso seeketh to approach Me one cubit, I seek to approach him two fathoms: and whoso walketh towards Me, I run towards him; and who cometh before Me with the earth full of sins, and believeth solely in Me, him I come before with a front of forgiveness like that.’

“God saith, ‘The person I hold as a beloved, I am his hearing by which he heareth, and I am his sight by which he seeth, and I am his hands by which he holdeth, and I am his feet by which he walketh.’”

“God saith, ‘O man! only follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me, and then say, ‘Be’ and behold, It is.’”

SOME VERSES OF THE QUR’AN WHICH HAVE A MYSTIC INTERPRETATION

The following verses of the Qur’an also require a deeper study:

(1) And seek strength from prayer and patience. These are difficult but to those who are humble and believe that they will meet their Lord and are returning to Him. (2:45).

(2) And to him (man) We (God) are nearer than jugular vein. (50:16).

(3) And He (God) is with you wherever you be. (2:25).

(4) O thou soul that art at rest! return to thy Lord, thou being pleased with Him and He with thee (29:27).

(5) And We (God) are nearer to him than you; but you do not see Us (56:75).

(6) And to God belongs the East and the West; therefore, to whichever direction you turn yourself there is the face of God (2:115).

(7) He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden (57:3).

(8) Every one knoweth His prayer and His praise (24:41).

(9) Verily they who swear fealty to you (Muhammad) swear fealty to God. The Hand of God is over their hands. (48:10).

(10) When I (God) have formed the body (of man) and breathed into it My soul, prostrate yourselves (angels) before it (15:29).

GHAZZALI’S DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL POWER

Ghazzali says:

“Nor is it only by reason of knowledge acquired and intuition that the soul of man holds first rank among created things, but also by reason of power. Just as angels preside over the elements, so does the soul rule the members of body. Those souls which attain a special degree of power not only rule their own body but those of others also. If they wish a sick man to recover, he recovers, or a person in health to fall ill, he becomes ill, or if they will the presence of a person, he comes to them. According as the effects produced by these powerful souls are good or bad they are termed miracles or sorceries. These souls
differ from common folk in three ways. (1) What others only see in dreams they see in their waking moments. (2) While others' wills only affect their own bodies, these, by will-power, can move bodies extraneous to themselves. (3) The knowledge which others acquire by laborious learning comes to them by intuition."

SPIRITUAL HEALING

Muhammad's companions have related:

"When any one of us was sick, the Messenger of God used to rub his hands upon the sick person's body saying, 'O Lord of mankind! take away this pain, and give health; for Thou art the giver of health: there is no health but Thine, that health which leaveth no sickness.'" "When any person complained of being out of order, or having a wound, or sore, the Messenger used to moisten his finger, and put it upon the earth, after which he would apply it to the painful part and rub it, saying, 'In the name of God; we have done this in order to restore the sick to health, by the permission of our Lord.'"

THE WAHY (REVELATION)

After the first revelation of Wahy to the Prophet Muhammad, the angel Gabriel became the medium for successive revelations which continued till a little before the death of the Prophet. Sometimes the Wahy used to come while Muhammad was in a sort of trance. He heard first a jingling sound, and then the revelation clearly and distinctly which was impressed upon his mind. When it was completed he used to call his amanuensis Zayd to write down the whole of the revelation word for word as it was revealed to him. The Holy Qur'an is thus, the whole of it, a revelation from God. It is really and truly the Word of God as heard by Muhammad through his prophetic spirituality. It is the greatest and most permanent miracle the world ever seen. It is the greatest spiritual triumph of all times. An unheltered man like Muhammad was the human medium of the Great Spirit to promulgate His Law in this world. It has been miraculously preserved for over thirteen hundred years absolutely intact—word for word —letter for letter, and is today the spiritual, moral, military, civil, criminal and yet religious code of life of one-fourth of the whole human race. It still continues the challenge.

In the Qur'an we read these challenging words: Fa'tū bi sirātīn mim mithlihī (Bring one chapter like that if you can). Illiterate Muhammad became the medium of a Book, on reading which the best Arabic litterateurs shouted out—'This is nothing but an open magic.'

How great must have been the spiritualism of Muhammad to have been selected to be the medium for such a mighty and comprehensive revelation—for such a glorious religion which, and which alone, can satisfy the advancing reason and the developed conscience of humanity!

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION ACCORDING MOSES, JESUS, AND MUHAMMAD

From the very beginning of his race man has evinced disposition to criminal liability, and no branch of mankind has been without its Cain. Our mutual dependence interweaves human society, but our struggle for existence, exercised at the expense of others, shatters its very fabric. Had Nature been so generous to us as it has been in lavishing its bounties on dumb creatures in some respects, much of the criminality would have disappeared.

To save them from heat and cold lower animals are given comfortable skins; while, to protect us against the inclemency of weather, we have to look to others' labour. So it fares with our other hungers and thirsts. We cannot kill the behest of our cravings. We must satisfy them, but we cannot do so without others' help. Mutual co-operation is the backbone of human society, and the principle of "give and take", guided with prudence and good conscience, can only guarantee us perfect order and happiness. But selfishness takes the better of us. We try to exact from others as much as possible, and give in return as little as acceptable. This often creates unpleasantness, and even excites resentment, which when exercised beyond moderate limits, leads to aggressiveness and criminality and endangers peace and tranquillity. But we wish to avoid it while we do not give up our selfish desire; we want to rob others without being detected, and we stoop to clandestine ways. Our culpable propensities find new activities for their plans, and give shape to theft, pilfering, cheating, and swindling.

"Respect your neighbour" and "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you" could suppress all our criminal predilection, but, thick-skinned as many of us are, we need drastic measures to invite our observance of these golden rules. This necessitates criminal legislation, and brings forth penal laws into existence. In fact, no human institution can claim perfection for it without providing some penal measures for securing safety to property and life, as without it there will be no order, but a sort of chaos will become engendered which will sap the very life of society and bring forth misery. Some sort of criminal law is therefore a necessity; and religion, if it came from God to secure to us peace and happiness, would be an utter failure if it made no such provision. Rules of morality and virtue, taught and enjoined upon for observance, but with no stringent measures to check their infringement, are only dead letters; and fear of punishment after death, even up to eternity, has not often proved to be an effective check against criminality. The God of Moses, after giving His Commandments for the guidance of the house of Israel, had to provide "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

THE LAW OF MOSES AND ITS ANNULMENT BY JESUS

The importance of this Law of Retribution to human society cannot be too much exaggerated. It supplied a good basis to coming legislation of various nations and civilizations. But it was not without its defect. It was too drastic to allow leniency in cases of possible reformation of the first offenders. The law of mercy was also needed, which they say was given by Jesus. But the law of the Mount of Olives seems to nullify the law of the Mount of Sinai. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," is not an amendment, but annulment. It repeats the whole law of retribution. Nothing could be more desirable than this, had the advent of Jesus put an end to criminality. But if it survived the crucifixion, we should better go to the law of Moses than that of Jesus.

The whole difficulty lies in realizing the ministry of Jesus and his real mission as a promulgator of such laws. If Jesus be given his true position, and it will be that which he himself professes and claims, he stands redeemed of his paradoxical situation and the unpractical nature of his teachings explained. He did not come, as it is believed, to take the burden of others on his shoulders, therefore giving license to violence by preaching "Resist not evil." He was not a prophet to other nations, as he himself stated, but he was raised to reform the House of Jacob. He came to improve the morals of the Israelites and expose the hollowness of others who posed as the only

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
expounders of Mosaic law. It has been abused, and Jesus came to explain it.

ANNULMENT OF THE LAW OF MOSES EXPLAINED

To understand the whole situation which called forth these two contradictory laws from two persons claiming to have been inspired by the same Divine source, one must refer to those circumstances which were responsible for bringing the law of Moses into existence. The "children of bondage" required emancipation physically as well as morally. Through the bondage of many generations under the rule of various Pharaohs, the Israelites had lost all manly morals, and had become dejected and cowardly. Crossing the Red Sea could liberate them from the yoke of Egyptian kings, but it could not liberate them from the slavery of servile habits. To make a martial race of these sons of bondage, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was the only code of life suited to redeem their enervated spirits. The said law therefore worked well, and succeeded in turning children of bondage into a race of rulers and conquerors. Then came abuse. They forgot the spirit and began to worship the letter. They left the kernel and went after the husk. They insisted scrupulously on the literal observance of the law of vengeance, and in course of time they became a personification of vengeance. Their hatred, when aroused, knew no bounds. Thus they fell morally, and with it came their worldly downfall. They were again humbled under a foreign yoke, and needed a redeemer. The promised Messiah came, and brought them a code of regeneration. Their previous history was a good lesson to them. If their previous emancipation consisted really in the observance of the law, the subsequent situation should also follow the law. If the law of vengeance came to regenerate them when they were slaves to unmanly habits and was a necessary preliminary to making them rulers and conquerors, the law of mercy was indispensable as well to redeem them from being victims of anger and hatred before they could be restored to their lost supremacy. The law preached by Jesus may appear to us impracticable and not consonant with the politeness and commonwealth of the world in general, but it was a gospel to and could save those who had been slaves to hatred and anger. The law of Jesus thus had its particular use, and so had the law of Moses. They were given under peculiar circumstances, and were meant to serve special purposes. Conditions similar to those in the lives of these divine personages, if again in existence, will justify a resort to them, but to claim for them universal applica-

tion in all times and places is a mistake of no small magnitude. The conditions of the day are so changed, that we can follow them if necessary only in spirit and not in letter.

It is, however, worthy of note that the law of Moses has remained always in requisition. No legislation could dispense with it. The law of retribution, in fact, brought magistracy into existence, but the law of mercy remained always ignored. No penal code of any country made any provision based on the spirit of Jesus. But it is indispensable also in the proper administration of civil justice. There are certain criminal propensities which evince their existence in us even before we reach an age of discretion. Stealing is one of them. Besides, punishment very seldom effects reform. Penal servitude sends back more gaol-birds than reclaimed delinquents. Would it not be more desirable to devise some good scheme for reclaiming first offenders of ordinary offences than to make them callous through punishment? Such legislation will create wholesome effect and produce good citizens. Moses law welded with the law of Jesus, with some modification, will produce a very happy result. No offence, no doubt in the interest of peace and good order, should remain unpunished; but in certain offences, if a first offender of tender age and of good antecedents is given the chance of reform instead of being punished, the society will be the gainer and the ends of justice will be better served. And it is a matter of great rejoicing to note that the world, after all, has seen the necessity of such legislation. Almost all civilized nations have made some sort of amendments. Reformatory schools have been opened to substitute gaols, and in certain countries culprits are released, on security for good behaviour, for a period enough to kill their evil propensities. The law of Moses was too severe, and the law of Jesus, though suitting the conditions of his own age, had become impracticability. We could only observe it in spirit, and that only under the condition of reclamation. If there was no prospect of reform, the law of Jesus was no good. It was the Prophet Muhammad to whom the secret of this happy legislation was revealed centuries before the world jurists could think of it, as we read in the Qur'an the following:

"Let the recompense of evil be only a like evil; but he who forgiveth and reformeth shall be rewarded by God himself; for He loveth not those who act unjustly" (42:38).

The verse upholds Mosaic law and supports the law of Jesus, but under condition, and lays down clearly a salubrious foundation of useful legislation of penal laws.
Ibn Jinni’s Commentary on Mutanabbi’s Poetry

A Lost Ms. recovered and published ten centuries after its author

By Dr. S. A. Khulusi

Part II

Moreover, criticism of poetry is not part of the trade of grammarians. You will hear of his poetical judgements what will make you convinced of his real place in criticism.\[1/23

We do not agree with al-Azdi in his cruel attack on Ibn Jinni. Why could not a grammarian be a literary critic, if he has a good literary taste? After all, Arabic literary criticism developed in the lap of philologists who were the earliest literary critics. Abû ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Alâ’, Abu Ubaydah Ma’mar Ibn al-Muthannâ and al-Asma’i are examples in view.

One of the odd things one can notice with regard to Ibn Jinni’s Commentary is the fact that the poet wants something and the compilers of his poetry want something else. This gives us the idea that Arab compilers did not just pile up poem upon poem mechanically without suggesting alteration of a word here and a phrase there. They were compilers, revisers and editors at the same time. The Commentary of Ibn Jinni is full of such examples. Now, for instance, al-Mutanabbi, wrote the following verse:

Wa qad ‘adat il-ajā‘ān qurhan mina l-bukā
We ‘adā bahārān fīl-khud̲ūd̲ ish-shaqaqīqā
(The eye-lids have become ulcerated with weeping
And the red poppies of the cheeks have turned pale daisies!)

Ibn Jinni asked him personally, “Is it qarḥā, without nunnation, or qurhan with nunnation, for being the plural of qarḥā?”

“Qurhan, with nunnation,” he replied. “Don’t you see that it is followed by wa ‘adā bahārān fīl-khud̲ūd̲ ishshaqaqīqā?”

Mutanabbi means by that, that he wanted to have qurhan in the first hemistic as opposed to bahārān in the second hemistic; but his commentators would not have it. Practically all of them have changed it into qurlā, a thing which the poet did not want by his explicit admission to Ibn Jinni.

In his defence of Mutanabbi, Ibn Jinni says that many poets and critics were jealous of him; then he adds, “but whoever was above the ill-speech and jealousy of people?”…There has always been fanaticism and partisanship from time immemorial up to the present day. Of the classical examples known, one might quote what was between ‘Abdullah Ibn Ishāq and al-Farazdaq; between al-Asma’i, Abu Ubaydah and Abu Zayd; between al-Khalil and Yūnus, on one side, and al-Khalil and Khalaf al-Ahm, on the other. Again, there was the same rivalry and jealousy between Sibawayh and al-Kisā‘i, in the presence of Harūn al-Rashid; between al-Mubarriq and Tha‘lab and between Ibn al-‘Arabi and Abu Tammān.\[1/23

This ill-feeling showed itself not merely in literary criticism, but also in personal libel and slander, not sparing fathers, mothers and all members of the tribe.

Abu Zayd al-Ansāri was once asked that a certain hemistic was read differently by Abu ‘Amr al-Shaybǎnī. “He knows it better,” was the prompt reply of Abu Zayd, “because the word is Nabataean, and Abu Amr’s mother is Nabataean,” insinuating that his rival is not a pure Arab.

Ibn Jinni alleges, in the introduction to his Commentary (p. 33), that he had put in the Diwān verses that were unknown to the people in the compilations they had. This goes to show that there were other compilations before Ibn Jinni’s, made during the lifetime of Mutanabbi.

He adds that his compilation will make people dispense with others, because he had arranged it alphabetically. Naturally the previous compilations were arranged chronologically, as Mutanabbi was still flourishing, and no one knew what he would compose next. This proves that the final recension of the Diwān took place after the deaths of both Mutanabbi and Abu ‘Ali al-Fârisī, because the latter’s name in certain parts of the Ms., e.g. folio 109/b, line 2, is followed by the formula: “May God have mercy on him!”

* For the first part of this article see The Islamic Review for December 1970.
31 Ibn Jinni’s Commentary, p. 23.
32 Ibid., pp. 27-31.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
The Diwân opens with Mutanabbî's famous glottal-stop-rhymed poem, which other compilers considered an H-rhymed poem and had it at the end of the Diwân.

A compromise between the two differing parties came from Barqûqî, who suggested that the eighth verse was in fact the opening line of the poem, consequently it is a Hamzated poem.

But we cannot agree with Barqûqî, because the eighth line was meant to be the beginning of a new stanza which must have the identical rhymes both in the first and second hemistiches. Ibn Jinnî cannot be wrong in arranging the lines of the poem, since he had collated it with Mutanabbî and obtained his approval to regard it as the official version. The fact remains, however, that Mutanabbî broke one of the rules of Arabic rhymes, for he rhymed al-ta‘îhi (the lost), with sawda‘îhi (its core), (h) in the first is an essential part of the word, whereas in the second, it is a pronoun, which is not permissible in the opening line of a poem, if the poet intends to have what is termed as Tāṣī, combined identical rhythm and rhyme.

Some defend Mutanabbî by insisting that he had no such intention. If that be the case, then the Matla‘ or opening line is Musammam or Silenced, and everything is in order, but in all probability it is not the case, and Mutanabbî intentionally broke the rule, because he sometimes delighted in doing that, as was the case when he broke an important rule of prosody concerning the ramaal metre, which runs thus:

Fā‘ilātun
- u - -
Fā‘ilātun
- u - -
Fā‘ilun
- u --
Fā‘ilātun
- u - -
Fā‘ilātun
- u - -
Fā‘ilātun
- u - -
Fā‘ilātun
- u - -
Fā‘ilātun
- u - -

It will be observed that the third foot is catalectic, i.e., the last long syllable must be dropped in the opening line, unless there is Tāṣī or deliberate matching between the third and sixth feet, both in rhythm and rhyme. The verse in question is:

Innamâ Bad‘ru‘bu’ ‘Ammâ‘irin sahâbun/hatilun fi/ hi thawâbun/ wa ‘i‘qâbu
- u - / - u - / - u - / // u u - / - / u u - / u u -
(Indeed, Badr the son of ‘Ammâ‘ir is a cloud,
Pouring with rain that carries with it both reward and punishment.)

When Ibn Jinnî comments on this poem, he says, “It is metrically unbalanced,” i.e. broken. But I think what Mutanabbî has done is quite pleasing to the ear, and it is not out of the ordinary, because the poetical music sounds harmonious and pleasant. One or two poets followed suit with success. Therefore, he is not condemnable on this ground. On collating our Qonya Ms. with Isfahânî’s quotations in his al-Wâdihi fi Mushîkilât Shîr al-Mutanabbî, 24 we found many variations. It is probable that Isfahânî had recourse to a special copy that is lost to us, or else he deliberately made emendations in this text or summarized it. On p. 89 (of the published text) we have, for instance, the following statement by Ibn Jinnî, “Thus I got it from al-

Mutanabbî at the time of my reading it out to him. It is sound and correct,” whereas Isfahânî’s text reads (p. 30), “This is what I obtained from Abû al-Tayyib.”

Ibn Jinnî boasts that he had discerned the strong and weak parts of Mutanabbî’s art, to which Sa‘d al-Azûî gives the following caustic remark, “According to him, when the construction is unintelligible it is a sign of strength in the poetical art!”

Again, on p. 51 Ibn Jinnî says, “and a reproacher”, whereas Isfahânî’s text reads, “or a reproacher” and quotes the following verse by Qays Ibn al-Mulâwih:

“The calumniators have surrounded
And disturbed my peace of mind
Oh, God, save me from those calumniators
Whose words are obeyed!”

This is totally missing in our copy of al-Fâsr, which maybe an interpolation by a learned copyist, because it does not occur in any of the Mss. we have at our disposal.

Just as there are textual differences between the larger and abridged Fâsr, there are also marked differences amongst the various copies of the abridged version. The British Museum copy, for instance, omits the following verse by Mutanabbî, together with its commentary,

“Do I love him and love the reproach leveled at him?
Nay, reproaches are his enemies.”

Whereas the abridged copy used by Isfahânî mentions it. On p. 104, there is an interesting critical remark with a touch of philosophy by Sa‘d al-Azûî. It is occasioned by a comparison drawn by Ibn Jinnî between two verses of almost the same meaning, one by Mutanabbî and the other is by Abû Nuwâs. Ibn Jinnî thinks that Abû Nuwâs’s verse is sweeter, but less eloquent than Mutanabbî’s. Azûî thinks that such a statement can only emanate from a person who is not well-versed in the criticism of poetry, for Mutanabbî says:

“The cloud is not emulating your generosity
It is only feverish with jealousy
And pouring down into perspiration!”

Whereas Abû Nuwâs sings:

“Indeed the cloud feels shy
When it sees your generosity
And tries to compare it with its own.”

The first verse is based on hyperbole, the second on ordinary sweet words. Hence, Abû Nuwâs’s verse is both sweeter and more eloquent; for how could the idea of feverish perspiration be more eloquent than that of shyness. Even if poetry is primarily based on exaggeration, Mutanabbî should have wielded it more properly and said something to the effect that when the cloud knew of your generosity, it killed itself out of jealousy and rage, and what it is pouring down is its blood gushing forth. Moreover, a jealous person would envy only someone who is close to his position. He would not envy those who are far beyond. Commoners, for instance, would not feel jealous of kings.

If exaggeration were the sole criterion of good poetry, we would not have seen the moderns, who depend mainly on exaggeration in their poetry, make obeisance to an ancient poem that is mainly dependent on simple similes without exaggeration. They frankly admit their incompetence in imitating it.

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23 Ibid., p. 296.
Then Azdi proceeds to classify poetry into three categories:

1. **al-Mutrib** (the joyous), like that of Jarir, Jamil and al-Buhturi.

2. **al-Mu'jib** (the amazing), like that of Kuthayyir and Farazdaq. It is usually compact and full of good meanings.

3. **al-Mudhik** (the comic), like that of Abu Dulamah, Ibn Sukkarah and Ibn al-Hajjaj.  

One of the interesting criticisms raised by Ibn Jinni concerning Mutanabbi's poetry is his excessive use of "thä and thi", meaning "this". "I told him," says Ibn Jinni, in one of the discussions that took place between us, "you use thä and thi a great deal in your poetry!" He paused for a while, then he said, "All this poetry was not composed at one point and the same time".

I said, "You're right, but the material is one and the same". To this he made no reply (p. 108).

Apparently Ibn Jinni followed Mutanabbi everywhere he went. He was definitely with him at Shiraz, at the court of 'Adud al-Dawlah. But it was not known that he was in Egypt with him at the same time, until the publication of the *Commentary*. "I was in Egypt," states Ibn Jinni (p. 120-1), "when Abu al-Tayyib was there. His news was regularly communicated to me by Ibn Hinzahab (Kafur's Minister). I knew through him that he was about to perish. So I urged him, out of love for poets and litterateurs, to leave Egypt. Meanwhile, I was afraid to meet with ill treatment, if my information to Mutanabbi leaked out. He was ready to flee the country, but he was so close to the claws of death. He brought it upon himself by refraining to compose a eulogy for Ibn Hinzahab, who was the minister of Kafur. Moreover, he was from a good family which provided many ministers and leaders. He had a high standing in science and literature as well. He was the main gate to Kafur, but Mutanabbi did not pass through it. He sought another gate and ran Sayf al-Dawlah down... This made Ibn Hinzahab disgusted. Still worse was his persistent reference to Kafur's blackness... So he had no alternative but to go home empty-handed."

This important passage reveals the fact that it was Ibn Jinni who saved Mutanabbi's life, by advising him to leave the country in good time, and that Ibn Hinzahab was conspiring against him to get him killed, and that had Mutanabbi made close friendship with Ibn Hinzahab, his fortune would have turned out differently.

Those facts are seeing the light for the first time through the *Commentary*.

Variations in the arrangement of verses are also noticeable in three important versions of the *Diwan*: Ibn Jinni's, Wahi'di's and 'Ukburi's. Now, for instance, the twenty third verse of the Seventh Ode in Ibn Jinni's version is the twenty-second in 'Ukburi's (Vol. 1, pp. 32-41). The ode runs into 36 lines in 'Ukburi's, but it is only 35 in Ibn Jinni's, because the Commentator omits the 35th line, owing to an unmentionable word that occurs in the second hemistic.  

Ibn Jinni also helps us to correct the name of Sayf al-Dawlah's Turkish slave boy, Yamak (which in Turkish means food), and suggests *Yaman*, hero (p. 142). A silly mistake in the date of his death by the copyist may suggest an approximate date of the Ms. itself. Yaman's death instead of being in 340 A.H. is wrongly placed in 640 A.H., probably

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36 The examples here are mine. Azdi fails to give any.
37 'Ukburi regards it as the eighth ode.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
because the copyst was writing round about 600 A.H. (p. 142, n. 1).

A correction in Qutámi’s Diwán is indicated on p. 157, which otherwise would have remained uncorrected.

On p. 158 students of comparative literature would delight at the following verse of Mutanabbi who died in 965 C.E.:

“May we be thy ransom, O’encampment, though thou increasest our grief.
For thou hast been the East to our beloved and the West!”

This was, of course, composed 600 years before Shakespeare (1564-1616 C.E.), who put the following line into Romeo’s mouth:

“Why, it is the east, and Juliet is the sun!”

Pages 161-2 tell us how Hárún al-Rashid expressed to the singer, Isháq al-Mawsíl, his great admiration of the Umayyad poet-caliph, Yazid Ibn al-Walid and ordered him to keep it a secret.

One hardly expects anecdotes in such a serious grammatical commentary, yet there are some gay ones, e.g. that of the pedantic grammarian, Abú ‘Alqamah al-Nahwi, who after recovery from an epileptic fit, the commoners who gathered round him thought him to be speaking Sanskrit, though he was only addressing them in archaic Arabic (p. 168).

On p. 169 (line 23), is an example of Wáhid’s just agreement with Ibn Jinní, in spite of the disapproval of al-Wahid. This is by no means the only place where Ibn Jinní is right and his critic al-Wahid is wrong. A more glaring one is on pp. 336-7, where Mutanabbi says:

“Would that the distance between my beloved ones and myself
Be the same as that between myself and my calamities!”

Ibn Jinní says that Mutanabbi wished his beloved ones to be as close to him as the calamities afflicting him. Al-Wahid rejects that and says that he wished the calamities to be as distant from him as his beloved ones are.

On the same page, viz. 337, there is an admirable textual emendation by the Commentator al-Ukbari, where he alters the pronoun from the first to the third person, so fa’uqíthi (thou hast hindered me), becomes fa’uqithi (thou has hindered it). The whole verse is:

“Thou hast thought the thread of thy necklace my emaciated body
So thou hast hindered it, by the large pearls, from Meeting the upper part of thy chest.”

One of the rules of Arabic literary criticism finds its echo in Ibn Jinní’s statement on p. 173; “The moderns should be quoted inasmuch as meanings are concerned, just as the ancients are quoted on questions of diction.” But where could the line of demarcation between the modern and the ancient be drawn? That is the main problem. Some fixed it at the downfall of the Umayyad Dynasty (132 A.H./750 C.E.); others went further down to 200 A.H./813 C.E.

I personally think that if we intend to keep Arabic continually developing, such a line should be discarded. All great poets and writers of all ages should be quoted for both meaning and diction. Another unblessed line that should be done away with is that which distinguishes poetical from prosaic diction. It is all right to use the choicest and most refined words in poetry. But we have overdone it in Arabic; so much so that the number of poetic words is much less than those used in prose. Consequently, our poetry has become stereotyped. The same stock words and phrases are used over and over again. The reform should come through the regular addition of prose words to the poetical language with the approval of the Arab Academies. Attempts to impose the language of the first or the second century of the Hejira on the people of the fourteenth century A.H. should also be discarded as a folly which is detrimental to the future of the language. English, French and German are developing quickly. We must give the same rate of acceleration to Arabic and it has every chance to become one of the most accurate universal languages of the world.

On p. 176 the text describing the patience of Málik Ibn Nuwayrah is given differently by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih in al-Iqd al-Faríd (Vol. I p. 120). We take it that Ibn Jinní’s is the more accurate of the two.

There are places in the Commentary, however, where al-Wahid’s criticism gets mixed with Ibn Jinní’s explanation, owing to the absence of the letter (H). We took the liberty to insert such a letter to make the text more intelligible (cf. p. 189).

A humorous anecdote similar to what we referred to above occurs on p. 202. It runs as follows:

Somebody told a slave-merchant: “I want you to buy me an ass with good front and back appearance, easy to mount, soft at proceeding, playful with his front legs, joyous with his hind ones. If I wish him to rush forth, he would not fail me. If I point to him to rise, he would do so, as if he is soft water being poured into a stream or a wave in a river.”

To this the merchant replied, “Wait till the sage of Persia turns into an ass with this description.”

A lengthy historical account on pp. 203-5, concerning the Carmathians is first hand information obtained from Abú Isháq Ibráhím Ibn Habíb al-Saqáti, the author of al-Radíf ji al-Táríkh (The Companion Rider to History), which was written as a Supplement to Tabari.

Commentary to verse 7 (p. 209) shows textual variation from Abú al-Qásim’s copy.

On p. 212 Ibn Jinní traces the origin of the exclamatory expression, “wá harábáh!” (O my grief!) He says it was coined on the death of Harb Ibn Umayyah. People wailed: wá hazanáh! wá Harábáh!

According to him the proper name ‘Iráq is masculine, on the authority of Mutanabbi who uses it in this gender (see pp. 212 and 213).

On p. 215 he admits that Mutanabbi was very presumptuous and forward in his speech. He did not refrain from mentioning the epithet al-Majmín (the mad man), in connection with Fátik al-Asadí. He was also very bold in addressing Sayf al-Dawlah. Some of the lines of his elegy of Princess Khawlah, Sayf al-Dawlah’s sister (pp. 214 and 216) are not in good taste. The same could be said about elegy lines on Sayf al-Dawlah’s mother.

Nevertheless, Ibn Jinní thinks that he used many brave words and expressions in such a tactful way that he did not incur the wrath of kings and princes.

This last statement rouses the indignant criticism of al-Wahid, who screams at the top of his voice, “And he did not incur the wrath of kings and princes. His safe emergence is no criterion of his doing the right thing. At times, one may make a mistake and come out safely, at others he may make the right thing and perish. This has nothing to

39 Diwán al-Qutámi, ed. Dr. Ibráhím al-Sámarrá’i and Ahmad Matúb, p. 30, where the word Fudhlin in the nominative, should be read Fudhlin in the accusative.

JANUARY 1971
do with the art of poetry. I have already said at the beginning of the book: He had the wrong judgement. I say this only on the ground of my observation and personal experience of him. He had high opinion of himself and hardly accepted the counsel of others. He would only do what pleased him, without calling himself to account."

We certainly cannot count someone who puts irrelevant and unbecoming points in his poetry as clever. His mentioning the beauty of the dead princess's smile, her sweet saliva and the parting point of her hair is equally presumptuous (pp. 215-6).

Yet he says:

"The eloquent poets would not dare to sing here a single verse,
But I do, because I am a brave lion!"

The most spiteful verse of his, in this particular poem is, according to al-Wahid, the following:

"I never mentioned a glorious favour of hers but I wept;
Certainly there is no affection without reason!"

"How urgently," adds al-Wahid, "he is required to mention the reason, but alas, he does not."

Furthermore, the poem is altogether free of bitter insinuations concerning her brother, Sayf al-Dawlah (vv. 20 and 30).

A philological point is raised on p. 223, concerning the difference in meaning between the words ghazz and ghaddab. According to Ibn Jinni, on the authority of some scholars, ghazz is a stronger form of anger than ghaddab; but, according to al-Wahid, anger shown by a superior to an inferior is ghaddab, but that shown by an inferior to a superior, whom he cannot punish, is ghazz. That is why the word ghaddab is always mentioned in connection with God, and never ghazz.

The Ms. on the whole seems to be a combat ground for more than just Ibn Jinni and al-Wahid; for from time to time we notice someone Butting in and acting as an arbitrator between Ibn Jinni and al-Wahid, e.g. on page 234, the unknown super-commentator takes sides with Ibn Jinni against al-Wahid to say, "al-Wahid is unfair! What is this criticism? The meaning is beautiful and to the point."

In another place (p. 238) he would say: "From this point down to its end the poem is highly select."

Page 245 indicates another verbal difference in the quotation of al-Wahidí from Ibn Jinni. Apparently he wants either to alter the wording (as he does with actual verses of Mutanabbi himself) or to quote him verbatim, with no reference to him (e.g. p. 248).

Ibn Jinni himself seems at times to ignore the precise reference to his authorities. He does that particularly with Abú Zayd's al-Nawâdir fi al-Lughah. Probably he had a special copy of it with extra material which had not reached us (cf. p. 274).

Comparisons between Mutanabbi's verses and those of Buhturi. Muslim Ibn al-Wahid, Abú Nuwas, Abû Tamâm and Ibn al-Rûmí are not lacking in the Ms. They are mostly by al-Wahid and the unknown super-commentator who scribbles his ideas on the margins. In such cases Mutanabbi is either charged with plagiarism or considered as inferior to the poet compared with (e.g. p. 287).

The greatest difficulty that an editor of Ibn Jinni's Commentary encounters is with regard to the hundreds of quotations that are either illegible or misquoted. Constant reference, therefore, to printed books and Ms. was necessary, foremost amongst the latter was Ibn Fâris in Mutakhabyar al-Alfâz (copy at the Iráqi Museum Library and recently printed by Hilâl Nâji) and al-Mu'tifâ Ibn Zakariyyâ in al-Jalis wa al-Anîs (copies at Selim Aghâ and Top Kapu Kutubhanesi, Istanbul).

An audacious theory is presented on p. 290 by al-Wahid. He maintains that "not every word that occurs in the Qur'ân may be used in poetry justifiably, because the language of the Qur'ân was meant for a generation that understood it. Most of it in our time (he means towards the middle of the fourth century A.H.) is unintelligible, unless it is explained, whereas the poetry of our time is specifically composed for the present generation. Therefore, it should be quite clear and intelligible. There are many things in a language that are considered wrong, if used by a poet."

We hardly can agree with al-Wahid; for most of the Qur'ân is intelligible even in our own time (1931 A.H.). Many school boys in Arab countries enjoy reading it. And their enjoyment is based on the meaning, as well as the music of the language.

In the same breath (p. 290 top) al-Wahid attacks poetical licences; for poetry that has recourse to licences is frequently never considered of the best quality.

On p. 292 Ibn Jinni is right and 'Ukburi is wrong, for line 36 is rhymed (Muqaffa), but not rhythmically-rhymed (Musarrar), since the last foot of the first hemistich is not metrically altered to match the last foot of the second hemistich as the rule of tarsî demands.

Certainly the unknown super-commentator has wisely criticised and emended verse 3, p. 397. It runs thus:

Ma yuujâl-tarâ'illa hamadathû Juhdahâ'î-ayid wa dhammatnu'r-rigâbu ("He hardly turns his looks round When the hands offer their utmost blessings and the necks their utmost curse."ız40)

The emendation reads: Hamadathû juhdahâ' ayidin wa dhammatnu riqâbu (certain hands offer their utmost thanks, and certain necks curse him!); for the definite article the in the first version has a general sense. It includes even the necks of those who have come to ask favour with their open hands as well as those who are his declared enemies.

The peculiar thing one notices with regard to this Diwân and the language that al-Wahid uses is the occasional omission of the particle on from the subjunctive mood. On p. 307, for instance, al-Wahid says, "Hadhâ 'rajulâ yash- tahi yatakallamâ bikulli mu 'Inâh" (This man wishes to say whatever he has). The orthodox way of expressing it would be: yash-tahi (an) yatakallama. Apparently this habit of omitting the particle on of the subjunctive mood was prevalent in the 4th Century A.H.

In the light of this Commentary we discovered some of the errors committed by Muhammad Ibn 'Ashûr, the Tunisian scholar, in his edition of Isfadâni's Mushkilät. Examples are to be found in vv. 506 and 547 of the Commentary. In the former he reads al-jayâbah (p. 95) for al-Jabûbah (the face of the earth). In the commentary of the second verse, he reads nadamî (my repentance, Mushkilät, p. 96, 1:2), for naimî (my sleep, Commentary, p. 333).

One cannot help having the impression that Ibn Jinni, at times, is quoting from memory, without reference to sources. Otherwise he would not have made such a slip as to put

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40 It means that the open hands of his well wishers are filled with gold (hence the hands are thankful) and the necks of his enemies are cut off (hence the necks curse him).
the first hemistich of the poet ‘Amr Ibn Shás with the second
hemistich of Maqásid al-‘A’idhí (p. 334).
Verse 571 (p. 345) gave rise to widespread indignation
against Mutanabbí, because it savours of slighting and be-
llitting the Prophet in comparision with Sayf al-Dawlah. It
runs:
“The brightest miracle of the Tihámi (meaning the
Prophet Muhammad)
Is that he was your father
And he was the most profiting commendation
That you could have!”

Commentators vied with one another in defending al-
Mutanabbí in this as in other similar cases. Ibn Jinní’s
attitude was peculiar. He admitted the blasphemous nature
of the verse and qualified it with the phrase “shání’ al-zahrí’
(of scandalous appearance) and added that Mutanabbí him-
self defended his case by far-fetched explanations that were
unconvincing to him, so he did not reproduce them in his
Commentary. Nevertheless, he states that personal opinions
and religious beliefs have nothing to do with the quality of
good poetry. He makes it explicit that he never intended,
throughout his book, to elucidate or criticize Mutanabbí’s
religious tenets (p. 346).

We think that this idea of divorcing the aesthetic values
of poetry from all religious and moral considerations was
quite an audacious one from a Muslim living in the 4th
century A.H./10th C.E. Meanwhile, with this surprisingly
modern view, Ibn Jinní has preceded the modern critics by
ten centuries. With it he set himself forth as a champion
of the doctrine of “Art for art’s sake”.
Verse 584 (p. 351) gives occasion for discussing a gram-
matical point dealt with by Ibn ‘Aqíl in his Commentary. It
is the question of separating the annex (mudíd) from the
annexed to mu’adhd ilayh, by a noun in the objective case, e.g.
sayá’ r-riyád(af’s-sahá’i(b(i) (just as the watering of
the gardens by the clouds). The normal construction would be:
sayá’(af’s-sahá’i(b(i) r-riyád(a), which was avoided by Mutan-
abbí for poetical licence. According to Ibn Jinní, the
separation by adverbs is easier for the abundance of
adverbs in the language. “However,” he adds, “poetical
arena is wide and narrow at the same time” (p. 351).
Al-Wáhid gives vent to his cynicism when he comes
across v. 591. “One would think,” he says, “that Mutanabbí
was born at Walán or the sand-dunes of Hawmán, because
he was fond of pretending to be a bedouin, which he was
not” (p. 357).

This is followed by one of the most admired verses of
Mutanabbí. The admiration does not come so much from
the meaning as from the diction. He says:
I call on them, the dark night being my protector
And leave them with the fairness of the morning
Enticing others against me.

“Mutanabbí said to me,” says Ibn Jinní, “at the time of
my reading out this verse to him. Ibn Hinzábah told me:
‘O Abú al-Tayyib, do you know that I brought all my books
and some reliable people to find out where you got this
meaning from, but they got nowhere.’ Mutanabbí added
that he had at his disposal fifty different copies of each book,
giving thereby importance to his authoritative works.”

Ibn Jinní tries to trace it back to Ibn al-Mu’tazz, but
leaves the issue undecided, since Mutanabbí rarely had a
look at modern poetry (p. 358).

An arbitrary rule is given on page 364, which implies
that whatever irregular constructions used by the ancients
can be used by the moderns, provided that they do not take
them as rules and do not attempt to create similar ones.

On the same page, incidentally, Ibn Jinní asserts what al-
Jawhárí mentions in his Sihhá (article: Nazáhah) that the H-
rymed poem of Ibn Harmah is an eulogy for his son, which
fact is contradicted by the editor of The Diwán of Ibn Harm-
áh, though Abú ‘Ali al-Fárisí himself holds the same view
of Ibn Jinní and al-Jawhárí.

A contradiction is distinctly clear with regard to line
612, where Ibn Jinní explains the word yahástt to as kill and
to bring down, in the same breath. Al-Wáhidí has referred
to this contradiction in his Commentary, p. 637.

Mutanabbí’s hyperboles make his lines, at times,
savour of blasphemy or disregard to the dignified position
of prophets, especially when he compares ordinary people to
them, such as in line 613 where every question in Káfúr’s ears
is likened to Joseph’s shirt on Jacob’s eye-lids. “This likening
of the condition of ordinary people,” states the unknown
super-commentator, “to those of the prophets—May God
have peace on them!—is most uneconomic and incorrect.”

The same super-commentator discloses with regard to
line 619 the fact that though Mutanabbí was fond of Sayf
al-Dawlah, he disliked his insinuation of being a benefactor
and his hints at threats. On the other hand, he hated Káfúr
without reservations. He was unable to suppress what he
had in mind. Hence, the strange colouring of his speech.

With this, our remarks concerning the printed part of
Ibn Jinní’s Commentary on Mutanabbí’s Diwán come to an
end.

41 Ibn Harmah, Diwán, ed. ‘Abd al-Jabáir Mu’ayyid, p. 87 1:17,
where the ode is considered an eulogy on ‘Abd al-Wáhid Ibn
Sulaymán.

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33
The religious thought of the Indian Muslim educationist, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898 C.E.)

(A study of the Muslim mind Facing the intellectual challenges of the latter half of the nineteenth century)

By Dr. Muhammad Noor Nabi

Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s early life

At the very outset it is desirable to point out that the religious thought of the Indian Muslim educationist, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898 C.E.), is vague, confused and, in places, even contradictory. The reason for this is to be traced to the fact that basically he was neither a profound scholar of theology nor a systematic thinker. His early education was on the old classical lines of learning to read the Arabic text of the Qur’an, and of learning Arabic and Persian. He then studied mathematics and astronomy. But, although he grew up in a religious atmosphere, his father, for instance, Mir Muttaqi was a disciple of Shāh Ghalām ‘Alī, the great Sūfī of Delhi, who belonged to the Order of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, whereas his mother was a devotee of Shāh ‘Abd al-Qādir and his family, religious discipline had no attraction for him from the very beginning of his career. In his youth he frequented convivial parties held in the houses of the rich, where singing and dancing were the order of the day. He fell a prey to most of the vices that is the common lot of all degenerate societies.¹

The death of his father in 1838 C.E. brought a change into his carefree life, but it was of no immediate significance from the religious point of view. It is not till 1846 C.E., that we notice in him an awakening of the love of and desire for religious knowledge when we was twenty-five years old. He set about studying Islamic jurisprudence, the Arabic literature, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’an under the guidance of some well-known religious divines of the day. He also took to religious writing. He produced a biography of the Prophet Muhammad based on trustworthy traditions. He, then, translated into Urdu the 10th and 12th chapters of Tuhfat’ e Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah, a pamphlet dealing with the Sunni-Shi’ah controversy. In 1848 C.E. he wrote an article in defence of the old Ptolemaic theory which maintained that the earth was stationary, a basic religious dogma of the scholastic Muslim divines of those days! He also wrote two tracts: (i) Kalimat al-Haqq (1894 C.E.), and (ii) the Defence of the Sunnah and Denunciation of Bid‘ah in 1850 C.E. at the insistence of Shāh Iṣmā‘il Shahīd Brailī. Among the non-religious works of Sayyid Ahmad Khan of this period are A‘thār al-Sanā‘īd (1847 C.E.), the preparation of an edition of A’in-i ‘Akbari. All these writings do not convey any religious thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, but they definitely show his aptitude for research; especially A‘thār al-Sanā‘īd and A’in-i ‘Akbari, which give an insight into his acumen and scholarly taste.

The Effect of the Consequences of the Failure of the "Mutiny" of 1857 on the Muslims of India

In 1857 C.E. there erupted a revolt against the British in India, better known as the Mutiny of 1857. The aftermath of this revolt affected Sayyid Ahmad Khan so profoundly that it completely changed his personality. In a lecture of his in 1889 C.E., he himself gives the impression of the Revolt in these words: "It is a heart-rending story to recall how the Muslim nobility and general masses suffered and died at the hands of the persecutors (both English and native). When Mr. Shakespeare desired to give me Jâgin (which belonged to a Muslim noble family) . . . I refused to take it and said that I no longer wished to remain in India. I thought then that our people would never be rehabilitated and never regain self-respect again. I could not bear to see the deplorable condition of my community. For some days I remained in this state of uncertainty and misery. Believe me, this sorrow made me old and turned my hair grey. When I reached Moradabad (in the course of my official duties) which had witnessed a great massacre of the Muslim nobility, my grief increased all the more. But then I thought that it would be very cowardly on my part to leave my community in this state of utter ruin and save myself by going to some place of security. No! I should suffer along with them and make it my duty to help them in this difficulty. I gave up the idea of hijrat (emigration) and chose to work for my people."

Thus the consequences of the failure of the Revolt brought a turning-point in the life of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. He devoted himself solely to the cause of the uplift of his community. Therefore, thenceforward the activating motive behind all what he did was the progress and betterment of his Muslim Community.

To add to all this, there was the problem of the centuries-old misunderstanding verging upon rivalry between Islam and Christianity. The Muslims had been conquering the countries of the Christians from the 7th century onwards and had established themselves therein as the rulers. It was a reaction to this rising tide of Islam that there came about the Crusades in 11th and 12th centuries. The reaction was further heightened when some of the European countries were occupied by the Ottoman emperors. But when the British rule was established in India, the Muslims for the first time were reduced to the status of a subject people.

1 Bashir Ahmad Dār, Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (The Institute of Islamic culture, 1957), p. 4.
2 An Urdu word meaning estate.
3 Ḥayār-i Jūvid, Part 1, p. 70.

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It was natural for the British to be suspicious of the Muslims’ loyalty towards the new order and the Revolt of 1857 C.E. once and for all confirmed their suspicion. Thus after the failure to the Revolt the rulers (the British) wanted the liquidation of the Muslim menace, and towards that end they employed every device.

**SAYYID AHMAD KHAN TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO MEETING THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY CHALLENGE TO ISLAM**

Now, after taking a look at the state of affairs around him, Sayyid Ahmad Khán became firmly convinced that the friendship with the British alone could ensure the safety and prosperity of the Muslim community, and also that the British rule had come to stay in India for a very long time. Secondly, he was overimpressed with the English civilization and culture. He made a tour of England in April 1869 C.E., and after coming back to India he remarked, “Not only are they educationally and technically advanced, but even in moral, social and religious matters they are unequalled.”

There was yet another important factor which had emerged with the establishment of the British rule in India the British Christian missionary work. In those days the Christian missionaries’ approach to Islam was of disdain and hostility. The core of the Christian missionary preaching was that Islam had outlawed its deity; that it could not stand scientific and intellectual scrutiny; that its appeal lay in the grosser instincts of the human nature; and that it had kept the Muslim communities all over the world in a state of chronic backwardness. Sayyid Ahmad Khán held the view that to meet the challenge of the missionary propaganda it was essential for the Indian Muslims to equip themselves with modern and scientific education.

To meet the above requirements Sayyid Ahmad Khán organized a society of Muslim scholars in 1864 C.E., which was almost the first learned body in Northern India, with its seat at Gházâpur (later at Aligarh). To propagate the mission of this learned society a bi-weekly, *The Aligarh Institute*, was started in 1866 C.E. To encourage cordial relations between the Muslims and the British he wrote a pamphlet in 1868 C.E., in which he tried to remove the prejudice amongst the Indian Muslims against the British, that a Muslim was religiously prohibited from eating with a Christian. To acquaint himself with the British civilization and culture and to know the secret of its superiority, he undertook a voyage to England on 1 April 1869 C.E. It gave a fresh orientation to his ideas and a new direction to his efforts for the social and intellectual regeneration of the Indian Muslims. On his return to India Sayyid Ahmad Khán started to publish a journal, the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, in December 1870 C.E., with the sub-title “Mohammedan Social Reformer”, which after a chequered career ceased publication in 1893 C.E. Now he became convinced more than ever before that the time had come when Islam as a religious system had to be presented on a rational basis. To achieve this object he started writing a commentary of the different chapters of the Qur’àn in the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. But this commentary of his covers only about two-thirds of the Qur’àn. All these contributions of Sayyid Ahmad Khán serve as an important source of his religious thought.

**THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF SAYYID AHMAD KHAN AND ITS WEAKNESSES**

With this background of Sayyid Ahmad Khán, let us analyse his religious thought. Sayyid Ahmad Khán was a devout Muslim both by his faith and practice. For him there was only one problem, as we saw, and that was how to uplift the downtrodden Muslims of India. For this uplift, in his opinion, it was but indispensable to revitalise their religious belief and provide a scientific and rational basis for Islam itself. Only such type of Islam was able to face the challenge of the modern mind. The chief characteristic of the modern mind was the belief in naturalism. Thus naturalism has a chequered history in western Philosophy. It has its root in Greek Philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Democritus, Empedocles and Atomists. It flourished in the hands of French materialists and blossomed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Darwin’s books, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859 C.E.) and *The Descent of Man*, had brought a great challenge to Christianity. The Christian dogmas were being shattered by the naturalists with their rational and scientific weapons with the result that atheism was gaining the upper hand. The only remedy open to the Christian religious thinkers was to rationalize their religious doctrines. Sayyid Ahmad Khán visualized the same thing for Islam. He categorically declared, “Today we are, as before, in need of a modern ‘Ilm al-Kalām (dogmatism), by which we should either confute the challenge of modern science to Islam, or show that science is in conformity with the articles of the Islamic faith. When I am endeavouring to introduce these modern branches of knowledge among the Muslims, it is also my duty to defend the religion of Islam, and to reveal its original bright face.”

**The Mu'tazilites and Sayyid Ahmad Khán**

This ‘Ilm al-Kalām has its own history in Muslim Thought. It has its origin in the Umayyad régime, the meteoric spread of Islam within eighty years of the death of the Prophet of Islam among different neighbouring countries and peoples, there arose the problem of the interpretation of the faith. To add to this was the fact that the Christians and the Jews were attacking the Islamic faith that it fostered superstition and blind belief. To fight these forces ‘Ilm al-Kalām came into being—the schools of Mu'tazilism and Ash'arism. The Mu'tazilites were the pure rationalists and the Ash'arites adopted a compromising attitude between reason and revelation, and accorded prominence to revelation over reason. In evolving a modern ‘Ilm al-Kalām Sayyid Ahmad Khán favoured Mu'tazilism more than Ash'arism. He, like the Mu'tazilites, considers the attributes of God as identical with His Essence, but he adds that we cannot be sure of the nature of His Being and Attributes. He agrees with them in accepting that the things are good and bad in themselves and that God only informs us about their character. He confirms their views that God is purely rational and absolutely just; He cannot do anything against reason and justice. Sayyid Ahmad says, “I am fully confident that the guidance which God has given us is absolutely in conformity with our constitution and our nature, and this is the only touchstone of its truth. It would be clearly absurd to assert that God’s action is different from His words. All creation, including man, is the work of God and religion is His word, so there cannot be any contradiction between the two”.

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4 Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khán, p. 11.
6 Majmu‘ah (lectures of Sayyid Ahmad Khán (Urdu)) (Lahore, 1900), pp. 276-296.
8 Ibid, p. 172.
9 Majmu‘ah (Lectures (Urdu)), pp. 284-286.
But he disagrees with the Mu'tazilites in so far as their view about the Qur'an is concerned. The Qur'an, according to Mu'tazilism, is the creation of God and, therefore, is not eternal in nature; but Sayyid Ahmad holds fast to the doctrine of eternity of God's speech as incorporated in the Qur'an without entering into the philosophical implications of his belief—an element of dogmatism in his thought which does not find any support from his rational criterion.

Secondly, about Beatitude Vision Sayyid Ahmad's position is vague. In one place he accepts the possibility of the spiritual vision of God; then later on in volume III of his Qur'an Tafsir (1885 C.E.), he rejects its possibility absolutely. He says that we cannot see God on the Day of Judgement; he asks, "How can He who is above space and time be visible to the eyes? But again, he adds that if Beatitude Vision is accepted, it would not be the vision of God but a reflection of the inner experience of the seer. He then quotes Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindî and the Imam Ghazzâlî who maintain in this respect that what one sees cannot be God but a mere projection of the seer himself.10

The great attraction in Mu'tazilism for Sayyid Ahmad Khán was their emphasis on reason. Mu'tazilism suborned revelation to reason to result in the final result that they presented a rational interpretation of the Qur'an. This approach to the reading of the Qur'anic meaning appealed to Sayyid Ahmad Khán. In his Qur'an Tafsir he adopted this course. But it would not be right to say that he followed the pure and simple reasoning of the Mu'tazilites. Rather it was the empirical thought of the nineteenth century to which the Qur'an also appeals. He defines it as "that inherent capacity in man by which he draws conclusions on the basis of the observation of objective phenomena or mental thinking processes, and which proceeds from particulars to generalizations or vice versa—it is this capacity of man which has enabled him to invent new things and led him on to understand and control the forces of Nature; it is by this that man is able to know things which are a source of his happiness and then tries to get as much profit out of them as possible; it is this which makes man ask why and where of different events around him."11

Though Sayyid Ahmad Khán was conscious of the limitations of Reason, there was no other alternative for him either. He was in search of certainty like the Imám Ghazzâlî and Descartes. He says, "I fully realized that without certitude, knowledge is possible neither in the sphere of the world nor in the sphere of religion. But what kind of certitude do we need? I know, for instance, that ten is more than three. If someone says to the contrary and in proof of his statement he changes a stick into a snake, I would no doubt be utterly surprised at his strange feat, but it would never shake me out of my stand that ten is more than three. . . . Without a certitude of this kind, it is not possible to proceed further". Ghazzâlî got his certitude in Volo-Ergo-Sum (I will; therefore, I exist), through Ibn al-Mukáshafah and Descartes in Cogito-Ergo-Sum (I think; therefore, I exist), but Sayyid Ahmad's certitude lies on reason alone. He says, "I came to the conclusion that reason alone is the instrument which can decide the matter, and bring about the necessary conviction. But is not reason fallible? Yes, it is, but we can not help it. As reason is used almost universally, so the reason of one man can be corrected by that of the other, and the reason of one age by that of the other age. Without it, nothing can be achieved."12

Sayyid Ahmad Khán's heterodox views on Revelation

Sayyid Ahmad Khán could not give any importance to revelation (waḥy) as has been given by the great Ash'arite thinkers and Muslim theologians. He considered the problem of revelation (waḥy) biologically. Revelation, in his opinion, is a natural development of man's inherent capacity to understand problems. Following the Qur'an, he called instincts in insects, animals and men as waḥy (revelation) (The Qur'an, 16:68), but in each grade of being, the quality of revelation also changes. Man is endowed with reason, which is the higher form of lower instincts found in insects and animals. Thus the prophets, according to Sayyid Ahmad Khán, are those in whom this natural aptitude reaches its highest level of development; and they become guides of mankind in spiritual matters; and nobody can hope to gain access to spiritual verities without their help. He further says that he who discovers the laws of Nature and he who invents a machine are all recipients of this divine revelation. The difference between the prophets and others is that they (prophets) are spiritual and moral healers while the latter are not. This definition of waḥy and the prophethood is not a new thing in the Muslim Thought, because the Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sînâ and Ibn Rushd, more or less, have said the same thing. But it could be said that for Sayyid Ahmad Khán, it was the result of his application of rational and the modern scientific method to religion. But Sayyid Ahmad Khán himself failed to stand up to this test. In justification of the finality of the prophethood in the Prophet Muhammad he says, "The Prophet Muhammad, therefore, is the last of the distributors, not only because he came in the last period, not only because there would come none after him for the distribution of divine gifts—for both these form the very connotation of finality—but also because with him this divine gift was fully distributed and there was left nothing to be distributed. As this gift

10 The Qur'an Tafsir by Sayyid Ahmad Khán, vol. III, pp. 204-208.
11 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
was the most valuable of all, and because these gifts were distributed in stages and he came to distribute it the last of all, hence his prophethood is also the last. So it was declared in the Qur’ān that “Today I (God) complete for you your religion and complete My favour on you and have chosen for you your religion Islam”.14

Thus, if it is accepted that revelation is a natural development of man’s inherent capacity to understand problems, and a prophet is simply the moral healer, then how did this capacity reach its highest level in the Prophet Muhammad and why did prophethood come to a close? And, secondly, does it not imply that the growth of reason has culminated in the Prophet Muhammad, and after him there is no possibility of any further growth of the rational faculty, at least, in the spiritual and moral spheres? This shows the contradiction in Sayyid Ahmad’s thought and also the limitations of empirical reasoning.

**SAYYID AHMAD KHĀN’S NATURALISM NOT THE SAME AS NATURALISM PREVALENT IN THE WEST IN HIS DAYS**

Taking this empirical reason as his guideline Sayyid Ahmad presents the teleological picture of this cosmos and infers the existence of God, which was just the reverse picture of Naturalism as was prevalent in Europe at that time. The logical conclusion of Naturalism was pure, and simple mechanism and atheism, but Sayyid Ahmad would say that Naturalism would lead us to atheism. In his *Khutabāt* he devotes several pages to this topic.

“Assuredly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and in the alteration of the night and the day; and in the ships which pass through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the rain which God sendeth down from Heaven, giving life to the earth after its death, and scattering over it all kinds of cattle, and in the change of the winds, and in the clouds that are made to do service between the Heavens and the earth are signs for this who understand” (The Qur’ān, 2:159).

“And it is He who sendeth down rain from Heaven; and we bring forth by it the buds of all the plants and from them bring We forth the green foliage and the close-growing green, and palm-trees with sheaths of clustering dates, and gardens of grapes and the olives and the pomegranates, like and unlike. Look you on their fruits when they ripen. Truly herein are signs unto people who believe” (The Qur’ān, 6:99).

On the basis of these and other such passages from the Holy Qur’ān, Sayyid Ahmad Khān argues the existence of God. He further says that the prophets came to realise God only through this process and quotes the example of the Prophets Moses and Abraham.15

**Sayyid Ahmad Khān’s definition of a Muslim and its illogicality**

From God Sayyid Ahmad comes to believers in God, i.e. the Muslims. A true Muslim, in his opinion, is one who believes in the unity of God irrespective of his allegiance to a particular school of law or thought. In an article “Islam is Nature and Nature is Islam,” he says, “Islam is such a simple and useful religion that even irreligiousness is included in it . . . What minimum beliefs an irreligious person may hold must be the basic creed of Islam. Every religion has certain special rituals and creeds on account of which it is differentiated from others, and anyone who does not believe in and follow these rituals is called irreligious, though we have no right to call him so, for religion pure and simple is above all these rituals and formalities with which it comes to be unfortunately bound up and that is true Islam, Nature and *fitrah*. He who does not believe in any prophet, avatarār, revealed scripture, or the ritualistic formalities (that are commonly called *jard* and *wājib*), but believes in one God only is a Muslim in the true sense.” He quotes the Qur’ānic verse,

“Whoever submits his whole nature to God and is a doer of good . . . he will get his reward with his Lord; for them there shall be no fear nor shall they grieve” (The Qur’ān, 2:112).

Sayyid Ahmad Khān further, following most of the Muslim rationalist philosophers such as Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd, emphasized merely the unity of God and considered it as sufficient to qualify as a Muslim. But he overlooked the many more passages of the Qur’ān in which the obedience to the Prophet has equally been emphasized. One may well ask if a Muslim is one who believes only in the unity of God, where lies the difference between a Muslim on the one hand and a Christian, a Jew, a Hindu Vedantist and those philosophers and scientists who believe in the unity of God on the other? Once the *Shari‘ah* is taken out of Islam, Islam loses its identity.

Sayyid Ahmad says, “but also because with him (the Prophet Muhammad) this divine gift was fully distributed and there was left nothing to be distributed. As this gift was the most valuable of all, so its distributor must be looked upon as the highest of all . . .”.16 One may well ask, then what was “this valuable gift”? It could be nothing else than the *Shari‘ah* of Muhammad.

Here it must be observed that despite these apparently heterodoxical views of his, Sayyid Ahmad Khān was not only loyal to his liberal interpretation of Islam, but also a practising Muslim all his life. Up to his last breath he observed the prayer (Salāh), the fast (Saum) and other laws of the *Shari‘ah* strictly, and saw to it that in the educational scheme which he framed for the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College of Aligarh, “Theology” was prescribed as a compulsory subject, and the institution of Islamic prayer (Salāh) was given an exclusive importance in the daily life of the Muslim resident students of the College campus.

Sayyid Ahmad Khān was so much influenced by the rationalist schools both in Islam and the Europe of the nineteenth century that he also interpreted the phenomenon associated with the Angel Gabriel different from the traditionalists Muslim view. The traditionalist view is that the Prophet Muhammad received inspiration through the medium of Gabriel, but Gabriel, in the opinion of Sayyid Ahmad Khān, is only a symbol of the natural aptitude which a prophet possesses. The Qur’ānic verse “Gabriel brings down the revelation to your heart by God’s will” (The Qur’ān, 2:97), is quoted by Sayyid Ahmad Khān in support of his statement. From this verse he infers that revelation (wahy) was not something which came from outside, but on the contrary, it was the Divine Mind working through the human consciousness.17

16 Ibid. (1879-80), pp. 41-42.
17 Ibid. pp. 41-42.

Continued on page 40
DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM, by Frithjof Schuon. Translated from the French by P. N. Townsend (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970. Price 35s.).

Reading Schuon's books presupposes some familiarity with the mystical language of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic literature. This is also true of his latest work Dimensions of Islam. At each stage of his exposition about the deeper meaning of Muslim doctrines, the author brings to his readers parallel examples from other religions. It must be borne in mind from the very beginning that the book is written from the mystic point of view, and if in the course of discussion terms and their interpretations remain vague and incomprehensible, that is no fault of the author. He is trying the hazardous task of defining what is indefinable by its very nature.

The book is divided in eleven sections which deal with: the use of hyperbole in Arab rhetoric; dimensions of the Universe in the Qur'anic doctrine of the Divine names; the relation between man as the servant and God as his Lord, and the concept of the Unity which transcends this polarity; some difficulties in the Qur'ân and other scriptures; the Phenomenon of Muhammad and his place in the Monotheistic tradition as a whole; the view of Jesus Christ and Mary; the Islamic doctrine of Angels; Earthly concomitances of the Love if God; Problem of the After life; the Five Divine presences.

Commenting upon the Qur'anic verse, He is the first and the Last and the Outward and the Inward, and He knows infinitely all things (57:3), the author says:

"The First' is the Principle inasmuch as It precedes Manifestation; 'The Last' is the Principle inasmuch as It follows. The Principle 'externalizes' Itself through Manifestation or Existence, but It is also the 'Inward' or 'the Hidden' in so far as It is veiled thereby like an invisible centre, although in reality It contains Manifestation. Universal Manifestation is the wave that 'comes forth' from the Principle and 'returns' into It if such a manner of speaking may be permitted despite its apparent emanationism. At the same time Universal Manifestation is 'the Principle in its aspect of outwardness', while in another relationship this same Principle remains transcendent and 'inward' with respect to its illusory 'crystallization'. 'Anteriority', 'Posteriority', 'Exteriority', 'Interiority': these four aspects of the Principle express the Principle-Manifestation relationship in terms of succession and of simultaneity, or in other words, from the point of view of 'becoming' and of 'being': in the first case the perspective is that of the cycle or Cycles, and then that of Existence as such' (pp. 30-31).

As compared to this the footnote on p. 31 contains the following passage from a Hindu scripture:

"Before this universe was, I alone was... After manifestation I continued to be, in myself as well as in the form of the world of phenomenon; and when the universe has ceased to exist, I will be... Just as one may say of the sensible elements that have entered into all living brains (since these beings live by them) or that they have not entered into them (since they constitute them a priori), so also one can say that I did not enter into them (since there is no reality other than I" (Shrimad Bhāgavata Mahāpurana, II, IX, 32 and 34).

The book goes on in this fashion tackling many intricate issues for which human language is an inadequate instrument. One has to depend on the "eye of the heart" to perceive the reality hidden behind forms, and such a subjective standard would, of course, be liable to contradictory interpretations of the same event or experience. But there are simpler texts also which make a direct and straightforward appeal to the reader. Talking about the modern man the author says:

"The curse of modern man is that he believes himself wholly free de jure, whereas no contingent consciousness could possibly be so; it could only be so on a higher plane than its own and beyond obedience, in the supernatural where the creature, in surpassing itself—by way of gnosia that is one with the grace of God—is reunited with the Liberty itself, the only liberty there is. But it is not the man who possesses Liberty, it is Liberty that has taken possession of man on earth. "The 'mystics'" of modern man is one of revolt. Between the spirit of revolt and the spirit of submission there is no communication: like oil and water they neither mix nor understand one another; they speak different languages or lead incompatible lives; there is between them a fundamental divergence of imagination and sensibility, to say the least of it" (p. 39).

The author has devoted one chapter to Jesus Christ. The Qur'ân does give various titles to this great prophet of God, but it must not be forgotten that the Qur'ân also emphasizes the fact that:

"The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; messengers before him had indeed passed away" (5:75). Thus any interpretation which places Jesus in a category other than that of mortal messengers (of which the Prophet Muhammad was also one) is unacceptable to Muslims. The Qur'ân does call the Messiah "Word from God", but according the Qur'anic terminology the "word" (Arabic: kalimah), the word used for Jesus, is also used in other places for other things, as for instance in the Qur'ân, 10:109: "If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, though we brought the like of it to add (thereto)." (See also 31:27.)

Similarly Mary was primarily a woman, although God chose her above the women of the world (3:41). The world (al-`alamin) refers to the contemporaneous world of Mary. The same expression has been used about the Children of Israel: "I made you excel al-`alamin" (2:47), or "Truly God chose Adam and Noah and the descendants of Amran above al-`alamin" (3:32).

The author at places develops his thesis on concepts which are, strictly speaking, not Qur'anic in their origin. One such example is that man was made in the image of God (pp. 37, 43, 72 etc.). Conclusions and comparisons drawn on the basis of such statements are therefore irrelevant.

Again the question of quoting hadith (sayings of the Prophet) is a tricky one. Even the Imám Ghazzâli in his Ihy` has quoted reports the authenticity of which is doubtful. Many Muslim Sûfis have accepted such reports, and too much reliance on them could lead a person away from the central doctrines of Islam. Apart from these observations the book is, however, a scholarly document about the study of Islam.

S. MUHAMMAD TUFAIL

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
DIALOGUE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS
By A. Rahmán I. Doi


Scientific study of religion and religious behaviour has recently gained momentum amongst the scholars of comparative religion and social scientists. In the 20th century, the world has come closer and the tools of sociological and religious analysis provide effective instruments for asserting the behavioural impact of various religions on man and society. As far as Islam is concerned, it is only in quite recent years that its relations with Christendom have been the subject of a serious study.

In the Middle Ages, the Western world virtually knew nothing of Islam as a religion and a way of life as preached by the Prophet Muhammad. For them Islam was only one of a large number of enemies threatening Christendom from every direction, and they had no interest in distinguishing the primitive idolatries of Norsemen, Slavs and Magyars from the monotheism of Islam, or the Manichaean heresy from that of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

The age of bitter exchange of attack and counter-attack, especially by the Christians and Muslims against each other is gradually disappearing. Therefore, the new writing which accepts as valid the best insights of both religions should be encouraged. The scholars of both the religions should examine the issues with, rather than against, the other faith. About a hundred and twenty years ago, an effort was made by the French scholar, Ernest Renan, to show the relations of Islam with medieval Christendom in his famous book Averroë et l’Averroïsme. But his example was not followed by other scholars. Later, during the years between the contribution of Islam to the development of Western thought, and the effect on Western society of the neighbourhood of Islam. Recently, a large number of books have been written to bridge the gulf between these two great religions of the world. Professor N. Daniel has given a full biography of such books in his valuable work Islam and the West: The Making of an Image, published in 1960.

A similar effort has been made by the Reverend David Brown, who has written a number of books in Christianity and Islam Series. As he puts it: “The aim of this series is to explain, with Muslim readers in mind, what Christians believe to be reasonable ways of expressing God’s revelation to them of Himself through the Messiah and the Scriptures. It is hoped that such a statement of Christian beliefs will help to clear away some of the more serious misunderstandings among Muslims, and enable them to listen to what Christians say about their faith.” In the same way, the Reverend Brown believes that the Christians should learn important lessons from the beliefs and practices of the Muslims. By learning about each other they will help to remove many a misunderstanding about each other. Thus a happy dialogue between Muslims and Christians can begin.

Professors Louis Gardet and Father Joseph Cuq have really given excellent guidelines for such a dialogue. They clearly state:

“The aim of such dialogue is not to ‘convert’ the other party, nor to make them doubt their own faith. It should quite simply stimulate those taking part not to remain inert in the positions they have adopted, but to help all concerned to find a way to become better people in themselves and to improve their relations with one another, so as to make the world as a whole a better place in which to live.”

Although the guidelines are mainly addressed to Christians who wish to practise an open dialogue with the Muslims with whom they are in contact, they are equally applicable to the Muslims also who wish to enter into a dialogue with their Christian counterparts. The only difference is that the present book guides the Christians to shape their attitude to the Muslims, the Muslims should work on the same lines to adopt a similar attitude to the Christians.

In order to get to know Islam better in its main outlines, The Guidelines suggests that a Christian “must first of all be willing to share their lives, to belong psychologically to their world... by acquiring a knowledge of their language and their culture, and the actual conditions in which they live along with their hopes for the future.”

The Guidelines further says that for a dialogue, the Christians should “show real friendship for the other person”, and “must accept the Muslims as the sort of man he chooses to be”. One’s heart must be guided by one’s intellect; sentiments alone is not sufficient. In the words of Professor Louis Massignon, “If we want to understand somebody, we must not try to take possession of him, but become his guest”. In order to do this successfully, a serious study of Islam is needed as a preparation. One must learn to listen and to see things in proper context. Above all, in a dialogue, he must know how to learn from one another, and one’s first concern must be to receive rather than give, to learn rather than to teach and, above all, to listen and understand rather than to do all the talking.

It is true that there exists a long list of Christian propaganda works against Islam as a religion. But this should be considered as a matter of the past. One wonders what can possibly be served by demonstrating that Islam “borrowed” much from Christianity or Christians “borrowed” much from Judaism as is done by some scholars. Imagine the incendiary implications of such allegations. Similarly, without having any sound knowledge of Islam, if one tries to show that the pilgrimage ritual of kissing the Black Stone at Mecca is the perpetuation of a pagan rite, what is he really going to achieve? The Guidelines realizes this fact when it observes: “We must admit that all too often the Muslims have met with little sympathy from the Christian world. Very few have taken a real interest in them.” It also points out that the “Muslims are saddened that their Christian friends are unwilling to recognize Muhammad as a Prophet when they readily admit that Jesus is one. The least that a Christian who is anxious to engage in dialogue can do is never to speak of Muhammad with disrespect, never to

FOOTNOTES
1 Ernest Renan, Averroës et l’Averroïsme, 1852.
2 See U. Monneret de Villard, Lo Studio dell’Islam in Europa, nel XII e nel XIII secolo (stud i e Testi, 110), 1944. Also, G. Théry, Telle da, Grande Ville de la Renaissance médiâve, 1944.
4 Guidelines For a Dialogue, pp. 9-10.
5 Ibid., p. 10.
6 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
7 Ibid., pp. 18-20.
8 Ibid., pp. 22-23.
9 Ibid., p. 24.
10 Such attempts are made even today by some narrow-minded over-enthusiastic people. For example, cf. Basilioys Ishq (a Coptic Orthodox priest of Alexandria), al-Haq. Alexandria, 1964, pp. 16-21.
11 Ibid., p. 18.
12 The Guidelines For a Dialogue, p. 17.
appear to despise the fervour with which Islam treats him”. 23

In the recent time, Catholic theologians, it seems, seek to reflect in a new spirit on the religious phenomenon of Islam, taking their starting point in the Biblical mystery of the blessing requested by Abraham (Ibrahim) for his son Ishmael (Ismail). 24 This approach, says Fr. Julius Basetti-Sani, “will lead to a new image of Muhammad, whose religious personality remains one of the most inspiring in the religious history of humanity. In order to penetrate deeply into the Muslims’ hearts and minds, it is necessary to study the charismatic force of attraction, which even today, after thirteen centuries, emanates from the personality of Muhammad. It is this charismatic force—a gift of God to this desert son and descendant of Abraham in the lineage of Ishmael—which shaped the original character of Muslim spirituality.” 25

The Guidelines for Dialogue frankly admits the injustices committed against Islam in the past, as a result of which there exists a deep feeling of bitterness towards the West in certain regions in the world. 26 To begin with, says The Guidelines, “We must remember that Western people, brought up as Catholics, have often acted unjustly towards Muslims.” 27 The Guidelines then suggests that “we (Christians) must make it quite clear that we dissociate ourselves completely from the past way of thinking as well as from certain things that are happening today.” 28 The Guidelines even suggests that: “We must go even further than this. Muslims are deeply convinced that even when Christians think highly of them and are fond of them as individuals, they continue to despise and dislike their community. Now this is just where we have to make an effort to revise our point of view, if we want to get away from a past which has erected and still continues to erect such barriers between the Muslim East and the countries of the West.” 29

The Guidelines thus marks a new era of peaceful cooperation between the Muslims and the Christians. It is true that the old European prejudice against Islam is disappearing as people from different parts of the world get more opportunities to meet together frequently. They now begin to discover “that Muslims could be good companions and, more than that, men and women whom one can genuinely respect. This would lead to the thought that Islam as a religion not be as bad as they had supposed it to be, and then to the further thought that the claim of Christianity to be vastly superior to other religions was not so well founded as they had supposed it to be”. 30 The Guidelines suggests a way out by saying: “We must get to know the values of Islam.” 31 This can be done by understanding the Islamic scriptures, the Qur’ân and the Hadith. It should be remembered that Islam is a religion of a book, explained by Traditions. 32 Therefore, one should understand the Five pillars of Islam, the Articles of Faith and the messages of the earlier prophets in which Muslims believe. The Guidelines for a Dialogue Between Muslims and Christians from the Libreria Editrice Ancora of Rome is a welcome food for thought for Muslims as well as Christians. It should not merely be treated as ‘academic round a table’, but a guide for a practical approach towards better understanding of the two great religions of the world—Islam and Christianity. Neither Islam nor Christianity can afford to remain in isolation, but a healthy dialogue between the religious ideologies of both should be tried to engage the daily interest of Muslims and Christians. The Guidelines For a Dialogue considers Islam as a faith, as progress towards God and final realization of all man’s potentialities. If this is well understood, it says, “We shall cease to look upon the Muslim with whom we are in contact as the adversary of conflicts past or present, or as a rival in our projects, or an anonymous witness to one particular culture among many others. We shall meet him as a man of faith, who like each one of us, is striving to live in the sight of God, and to accept His Holy Will in all things.

“In this way we shall discover a brother in this believer, and this will radically change the respect in which we hold him, and at last open the way to true dialogue.” 32

The Muslim scholars should also come forward and participate in the happy dialogue among “the people of the Book” (ahl al-Kitâb).

13 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
16 The Guidelines For a Dialogue, pp. 82-88.
18 Ibid., p. 85.
19 Ibid., p. 85.
22 Ibid.

The religious thought of the Indian Muslim educationist, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan

Continued from page 37

Thus we see that Sayyid Ahmad Khan, in presenting his religious thought, took pains to be more and more rational even though his rationalism, at some places, clashed with his belief and practice. This contradiction, in Sayyid Ahmad Khan, is the result of his motive which was to convince the young generation of the Muslims not only of the truth of Islam, but also of its superiority over all other creeds, religious as well as secular. 33
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