

**Islam** We believe in Allah and than which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from Their Lord.

We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

Quran 2:136.

## **I. MUHAMMAD: MAN, MESSENGER, MYSTIC**

### **The Prophet from Mecca**

THE ESSENCE of Islam is said to be captured in two beliefs: firstly, there is but one God, Allah; secondly, His prophet, messenger and apostle—the best and the last—is Muhammad.<sup>1</sup> Through him came God's final revelation—the Quran. Muhammad was its interpreter and living example.

The Prophet was born in 571 A.D., the son of an illustrious family in Mecca, Saudi-Arabia. Because his father died before he was born and his mother when he was only six, Muhammad was cared for by his grandfather and raised by his uncle. The young boy often accompanied his guardian on caravan journeys which took them far from Mecca. At age twelve he met a Syrian monk who predicted that someday he would become a great prophet of God. In the meantime, he worked as a shepherd—as did the earlier Moses and King David. Throughout his youth Muhammad was distinguished by his refined manners, extreme shyness and absolute chastity, so much so, that his companions nicknamed him "al-Amin" (the true and reliable).

At age 25 he married his employer, the rich and much older Khadijah. His wife had been a prosperous merchant and Muhammad was so capable as a trader that the couple lived in very comfortable circumstances. To repay his uncle's kindness Muhammad educated his cousin Ali. His love for Khadijah was deep and lasting. Until her death a quarter century after their marriage he took no other wife. Tradition reports his excellence as a father and grandfather, especially his affection for children.

Muslims recall their Prophet's attractive physical features and outstanding leadership qualities. He was taller than average, solidly built, with a large chest and broad shoulders. He possessed a

---

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad's name has been spelled in a variety of ways. The same is true for the Quran, spelled for example, as the Koran, Kuran, Coran, Qu'ran.

noble, always serene countenance.<sup>2</sup>

By temperament, Muhammad was restrained and talked little. Men were impressed by his good humor, sweet disposition and delicate manners. In dealing with others, he was impartial in his judgments. Where his own personal rights and prerogatives were concerned the Prophet was always yielding and indulgent. Even when he had subsequently won high position and great power, his life remained simple and frugal. Pomp and luxury were avoided at all times by the Prophet and his family.

Muhammad was forty years old when he was called to be a prophet. When he discovered that his dreams turned out to be accurate predictions of the future, he became interested in spending as much time as possible in meditation. While fasting and praying in solitude at Mt. Hira north of Mecca, he saw a vision of the archangel Gabriel.

Read! commanded Gabriel. I do not know how,  
replied Muhammad. Read!, the archangel repeated.  
How shall I read?

Gabriel then recited the first message from God:

Read: In the name of the Lord who createth,  
createth man from a clot.<sup>3</sup>  
Read: And thy Lord is the most Bounteous,  
Who teacheth by the pen.  
Teacheth man that which he knew not. (Quran, XCVI)

Before vanishing, the archangel declared: "Really, you are the messenger of God, and I am Gabriel."

---

<sup>2</sup> M.A.A. Draz, "The Origin of Islam", Kenneth W. Morgan, ed. , *Islam—The Straight Path*, Ronald Press Co., N.Y., 1958, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> The Arabic word translated "clot" has no clear meaning. Possibly it refers to black mud or sticky clay. Perhaps prior to his Mt. Hira vision Muhammad had heard the Genesis creation story.

Naturally, Muhammad was completely overcome, possibly even fearful of his sanity. When he told his wife what had occurred, she reassured him. So did her cousin—who predicted that he would be the prophet announced by Jesus six hundred years earlier.

Three years passed before a second message came. From then on until Muhammad's death Gabriel delivered them regularly. The Quran contains a compilation of the revelations the Prophet received.

The Prophet gathered disciples—Abu Bakr, <sup>4</sup> Khadijah and Ali, <sup>5</sup> also a Yemenite, an Abyssinian and a Roman. Persecution inevitably followed. Finally, Muhammad allowed eleven men and four women followers to seek refuge in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia where their preaching converted the monarch. A second group of refugees sailed to Africa somewhat later.

Mecca was the center of Arabia's religious life; its Kaaba or chief temple contained several hundred idols to which large numbers of people made an annual pilgrimage. When Muhammad insisted that there is only one God and vehemently denounced the worship of idols, he aroused intense opposition. Men called him a fool, a bigot, a mad poet, a man possessed by demons. Tempers flared; Muhammad was denounced as a troublemaker.

Mecca gradually broke up into warring factions, some determined to crush the new religion, others either favoring or at least tolerating it. For a time Muhammad was protected from violence by his powerful tribal kingfolk. Further persecution—including a plot to kill the Prophet—forced Muhammad to flee to the city of Medina where he had supporters in high positions. The flight to Medina—termed the Hejira (Hijrah)—marks a turning point in the Prophet's life.

In Medina, Muhammad was handed the reins of power. He assumed for the first time full authority. To quote Professor M. Abd Allah Draz, "It was religious and absolute in its framework, based on revealed commandments and general rules, but socialistic and

---

<sup>4</sup> Successor to Muhammad and first Muslim Caliph.

<sup>5</sup> Son-in-law of Muhammad and fourth Caliph.

consultative in the details and applications of the rules." <sup>6</sup> (By socialist, the Egyptian scholar does not mean Marxist or economic socialism but communal or democratic government).

Medina and Mecca were natural rivals. The presence of Muhammad made open warfare almost inevitable. After skirmishes between supporters of the two cities took place and blood was shed, the Prophet rallied his forces to march on Mecca. The city fell to him in 630 A.D., eight years after his escape to Medina. The people who had caused him such suffering and placed so many obstacles in his way were finally subdued. Not seeking revenge, he forgave them in a generous way. All Arabia was his within months. When Muhammad led the pilgrimage to Mecca in 632 A.D. , from Allah came the revelation:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and  
completed My favor unto you,  
And have approved for you as religion al-Islam  
(Quran V, 3).

Less than three months after his triumphant sermon in the Holy City, Muhammad was dead. He was buried at Medina, the place which first recognized his greatness.

Many and varied have been the judgments made of the Prophet. Dr. Shafik Ghorbal, one of Egypt's most noted scholars, gives a typical Muslim view:

Muhammad was a great-hearted man of supreme vision, the greatness of his vision equalled only by the extent of his delicacy of feeling and genuine humility.'

For a variety of reasons Christian assessments have been almost uniformly critical until fairly recently, even on the part of supposedly objective students of Islam. Missionary writers have

---

Draz, *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> S. Ghorbal, "Ideas and Movements in Islamic History", Morgan, *Ibid*, p. 48.

denounced Muhammad as a sensualist because he had twelve wives and two concubines—even though polygamy was a normal part of Arab life in the seventh century A.D. Pacifists have reviled him as a blood-thirsty militarist because he relied on force of arms to extend his dominions. Feminists have accused him of denying women their rights and subjecting them to degrading abuses. Those who believe religion is a merely private affair criticize the way he united church and state. Others condemn his fanaticism, ruthlessness and brutality. Why is there such hostility? One factor may be that hundreds of thousands abandoned Christianity for Islam and only a negligible number have ever been converted from Islam to Christianity.

In the western world only recently have scholars tried to be fair in their judgments. Professor H. A. R. Gibb of Oxford states that Muhammad's fundamental purpose was exclusively religious, whatever worldly motives may from time to time influenced his course of action. The hold he gained over the wills and affections of his original disciples was due to his moral qualities and the influence of his personality. The people of Medina welcomed him and made him their leader out of sheer admiration of him as a man. As for his character, Muhammad possessed an unmistakable "largeness of humanity": sympathy for the weak, a gentleness which seldom turned to anger, shyness in personal intercourse, and a glint of humor. <sup>s</sup>

Professor R.L. Slater of Harvard has written:

Islam begins with Muhammad and the first step taken in western reappraisal has been to give Muhammad his due. Earlier western caricatures which portrayed him as a religious lunatic, or an arch-heretic, or at best, a reformer who began well and became a scheming politician and a debauched sensualist have been suc-

---

A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism—An Historical Survey*, Mentor Book, N.Y., 1955, pp. 31, 33, 34.

ceded by tributes to Muhammad's remarkable leadership, genius and character."

In his marriages Muhammad resembles an Old Testament patriarch rather than the otherworldly saint. Multiple marriage, for him, as for Islam in general, was not so much for enjoyment as a means of strengthening the newly-formed society. Many of his marriages were political ones which, in the prevalent social structure of Arabia, guaranteed the consolidation of the Muslim community. His marriages, far from being a "weakness of the flesh," for the Muslim symbolize his patriarchal nature and function, as one who sanctified the life of this world.

### **Apocalyptic Preacher**

In his study of Muhammad, Swedish professor Tor Andrae maintains that the heart of the Prophet's message is the conviction that mankind is approaching a time of apocalyptic judgment. The Last Day—a period of judgment and retribution—is about to dawn. According to this understanding of Muhammad's mission, he was like another Amos, or a second Daniel. In the midst of a light-headed and thoughtless generation, the Meccan warns his contemporaries of an imminent Day of the Lord. Muhammad sees the storm cloud already darkening the horizon. He speaks of himself as a courier who arrives in tattered garments to sound an alarm about an approaching disaster.<sup>9</sup> He predicts that the heavens are about to be rolled back above the heads of his startled countrymen, and mountains of black lava around Mecca will collapse into rubbish heaps at the advent of the righteous Allah. A sudden natural catastrophe will usher in God's judgment. Men will

<sup>9</sup> H.D. Lewis and R.L. Slater, *World Religions, Meeting Points and Major Issues*, C.A. Watts and Co., London, 1966, pp. 85-86.

<sup>10</sup> Tor Andrae, *Mohammed*, Harper Torchbook, N.Y., 1960, pp. 53-59. The author admits that the Prophet never directly states that apocalyptic judgment would occur in his own day yet often shows that he believed he might himself witness it. According to Andrae, the important thing for Muhammad is not *when* the day is coming, but the certainty that it *will* come (p. 54).

be startled by a thunderclap, a wild cry, a terrible crash. The world will be shaken by a terrific earthquake. Mountains will collapse into dust and ashes. The moon will be split apart and darkened. Stars will be suddenly extinguished or start falling to the earth. A worldwide conflagration will break out, burning everything in its path.

At the first blast from God's trumpet, men will fall to the ground stunned. When the trumpet blows again, all the dead will emerge from their graves. From the heavens the throne of Allah will appear, carried by eight angels. A host of celestial courtiers, attendants and guards will surround the King of kings. Immediately, all men will be ordered to take their places before the Judge, the good standing on the right, the wicked on the left. As each individual is called to stand trial and receive his sentence, a complete record of his life will be read to him from the heavenly Book of Deeds. <sup>11</sup>

In the Quran there is barely a hint of the later Muslim idea that mediators are available at the last judgment pleading with Allah for mercy to be shown to their favorites. In Muhammad's original preaching no intercession was expected and no mercy granted. Allah would be guided by **the** strict demands of justice alone. Prophets will testify that men have been given due warning of the penalties to be exacted for wrongdoing. A man's own members—his hands, feet, tongue and eyes—will appear to witness to his faults.

Then, on the basis of the written record and the testimony of

---

<sup>11</sup> The influential Creed of al-Nasafi (circa 1150 A.D.) insists that the eschatological language of the Quran be taken literally, probably in response to a large number of educated Muslims who interpreted it figuratively:

And the Quickening of the Dead is a Reality, the Book is a Reality, the Questioning is a Reality, the Tank is a Reality, and the Bridge is a Reality; the Garden is a Reality and the Fire is a Reality.... (chap. 11)

The credal text refers to the resurrection of the body, the book of deeds, the questioning of men about their faith by two angels, a tank filled with a celestial drink, the bridge stretched over hell, the Garden of Allah for the righteous, and the eternal fires of hell for the unbeliever. In short, Islamic features of the apocalypse echo those of the earlier Zoroaster.

numerous witnesses, Allah will hand down His verdict. After judgment has been passed, angels will come to execute the divine sentence. In the case of the wicked, they will seize the sinner, bind him with chains and savagely whip him all the way to the gates of hell. According to Muslim eschatology, the archangel Malik is in charge of this infernal region. Under his supervision, the guardian spirits of God will smash the bones of the damned with iron clubs, force them to drink boiling water, and to wear robes of fire. Like all apocalyptic preachers, Muhammad painted a vivid picture of the hell awaiting those who fail to repent of their sins.

For those who did heed the Prophet's warning to become Muslims, the prospect was far different. Muhammad's Paradise was definitely designed to appeal to the hungry, the thirsty, the ill-clothed, the overworked—and he is as talented in describing its delights as the terrors of the fiery pit. By contrast with the hot desert life on earth, heaven promises sheer relaxation in a well-watered, well-shaded oasis. There, one lounges around upon soft divans and big cushions, and dresses in beautiful silks and expensive brocades. Food is plentiful (dates, bananas, pomegranates and grapes) and besides rivers of milk, honey and wine, the Garden of Allah has a special drink served by handsome young men—a delicious beverage which does not cause dizziness or result in hangovers, no matter how much is consumed.

Nor is the need for love ignored. For entertainment and the joy of married life, 'black-eyed Houris' are available in abundant supply. Each one of these lovely girls has all of the charms men have ever sought. According to tradition, Muhammad describes the Houris as follows:

They are devout wives, and those who with grey hair and watery eyes died in old age. After death Allah remakes them into virgins."

Al-Ghazzali, the famous Muslim mystic and philosopher, taught

---

<sup>12</sup> Andrae, *Ibid*, p. 57, quoted from Tabari.

that one of the greatest joys of Paradise is that every man who gets there will be provided with the companionship of 4,000 young girls and 8,000 attractive divorcees.'<sup>13</sup> Like orthodox Zoroastrianism no one has ever accused Islam of being too other-worldly or contemptuous of earthly pleasures. But Canon Sell exaggerates when he speaks of its "carnal views of paradise."<sup>14</sup>

Since it is easy to criticize the Muslim view of Paradise the conclusion of a western Islamic scholar like Andrae needs to be given careful attention. For the Swedish professor the fundamental purpose behind Muhammad's apocalyptic preaching is far more important than the details:

What made the Prophet certain that the message of the judgment and retribution must needs be true was a genuine glowing faith in the God of Judgment, in His incomparable majesty, and His unqualified right to punish those who oppose His sovereign will. . . .

When Mohammed attempts to state the content of his faith in the briefest possible form he refers to it as 'belief in Allah and the last day'. . . .

The absolute earnestness which is always conscious of judgment and eternity lends a characteristic stamp to Mohammed's belief in God. His God is above all the strict righteous judge, before whose gaze the mountains collapse into dust and men stand in silence with bowed heads. God is the powerful, the almighty, the sublime."

---

<sup>13</sup> Quoted S. Zwemer, *Islam A Challenge to Faith*, Student Volunteer Movement, N.Y., 1907, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> E. Sell, *Outlines of Islam*. Christian Literature Society for India, Madras, 1912, p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> S Andrae. *Ibid*, pp. 59-60, 61. Two observations are necessary in regard to Muslim apocalyptic. First, the harsh features of the Muslim doctrine of hell have been greatly softened as a result of greater spiritual sensitivity. Muhammad is said to have taught that he would save any disciple who had even a speck of goodness in his heart (Andrae, *Ibid*, p. 56). Secondly, Sufi mysticism, Muslim philosophy and modern thought have all tended to spiritualize Islamic concepts of the Last Day.

### **His Book from God**

It was once asked of the Prophet how he could be remembered and how the nature of his soul could be known in the generations to follow. He answered, "By reading the Quran. - <sup>16</sup>

The Quran is the central reality in the life of Islam. The Quran is to Muslims what Christ is to Christians—the Word, or *Logos*.<sup>16</sup> It is a theophany which expresses the eternal covenant between man and God, a record that man has accepted the responsibility of being a free and intelligent being with all the opportunities and dangers that such a trust implies. A Quranic verse reads, "Am I not your Lord?" and man replies to God, "Yea, we testify." (VII, 172)

For Islam, the Quran is the literal word of God—delivered to Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel. Both its spirit and letter are divine. Gabriel spoke every chapter, every verse; and Muhammad in turn merely *recited* to others what the archangel conveyed from Allah. The orthodox interpretation of its nature is expounded in this 9th century Muslim creed:

We confess that the Kuran is the speech of Allah, uncreated, His inspiration and revelation, not He, yet not other than He, but His real quality, written in the copies, recited by the tongues, preserved in the breasts, yet not residing there. The ink, the paper, the writing are created, for they are the work of men. The speech of Allah on the other hand is uncreated, for the writing and the letters and the words and the verses are manifestations of the Kuran for the sake of human needs. The speech of Allah on the other hand is self-existing, and its meaning is understood by means of these things. Whoso sayeth that the speech of Allah is created, he is an infidel regarding Allah, the Exalted, whom men serve, who is eternally the same, His speech being

---

<sup>16</sup> S.H. Nast, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1966. p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> Sometimes Muhammad is called the Christ of Islam. Muslims object and say, the Quran is the Christ of Islam.

recited or written and retained in the heart, yet never dissociated from Him.'<sup>8</sup>

In the light of this it is easy to see the central role Arabic has in Islam. Because God's speech was given through the medium of Arabic, the language itself takes on a sacred character. Like Sanskrit in Hinduism and Hebrew in Judaism, the efficacy of prayers is contained not only in the content but also in the very sounds and reverberations of the sacred language. In this way one's whole being is integrated in a practical, universal manner. Thus, all Muslims—except those who have begun very recently to translate the Quran into their native tongue—perform their rites and prayers in the providential Arabic."<sup>9</sup>

Some Muslim thinkers have contrasted the "uncreated" Allah with the "created" Quran. That is, they have questioned the rigid orthodox position, insisting on the need for allegorical or symbolic rather than literal exegesis of the scriptures. In an attempt to purge their concept of divinity of anthropomorphic qualities, they differentiate between the words of Allah and human speech, although affirming that a secret mystical message from God is hidden behind the written verses of the Quran. In such a way, rationalists and mystics have repeatedly escaped from the confinement imposed by Islamic fundamentalism."<sup>10</sup>

The Quran, it is said, is an extremely difficult book to translate and far from easy to read. In part, the problem arises out of the nature of the material: everything in it is a record of what Muhammad spoke while in a state of mystic trance. But the arrangement of the separate revelations adds to our difficulties. Instead of putting

---

<sup>8</sup> Wasiyat Abi Hanifa article IX, quoted in full in A.J. Wensinck, *The Creed of Islam*. Frank Cass & Co., London, 1965. p. 127. He dates this anonymous statement of faith somewhere between 767 and 855 A.D., the time of theologians Abu Hanifa and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. For a comprehensive scholarly study of the development of Muslim dogmatics, *The Creed of Islam* is highly recommended.

<sup>9</sup> Nasr, *Ibid.* pp. 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> For the Mu'tazilites, an important early school of Islamic rationalists, cf. Wensinck, *Ibid.* pp. 58-85. Prof. Nasr serves as an excellent example of a Muslim who insists on a mystical interpretation of the Quran. Rationalists and mystics testify to the need to avoid a deification of holy writ—what has been called bibliolatry (book-worship).

the messages together on a chronological or topical basis, the long ones were put first and the short ones at the end. Since many of the brief revelations date from Muhammad's early Meccan preaching and the lengthy ones come from his stay at Medina, this means that to a considerable degree the accepted text is the exact reverse of the historical sequence.

Supplementing the Quran and usually considered equally authoritative are the *Traditions* (Sunnah) about Muhammad. Stories of his actions and advice abound. His companions were naturally fond of recalling what he was like and what he said in specific situations. Other stories were added, in all good faith, to support this or that controversial opinion and practice in subsequent times. Bukhari, who lived from 809-874 A.D., said that he examined 90,000 stories and sayings in the Sunnah. He considered 4,000 authentic. <sup>21</sup>

For the Muslims, what Allah requires of man must be supported by a verse in the Quran or a reliable tradition. In theory at least there is a considerable difference between the authority of the Quran (as direct revelation) and the somewhat indirect manifestation of divine commands in the words or deeds of the Prophet. In practice, however, this distinction has been lost. Just one example of this is seen in the duty to pray five times a day, which is not found in the Quran, but is held to as if it were given by Allah Himself.

### **Religious Reformer**

Muslim writers speak of the climate of opinion in Arabia prior to the Prophet as "the time of ignorance, – the age of the barbarians. The disunited tribes of nomadic Arabs were morally degraded and religiously confused. However, because of an absence of reliable historical records about this period, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the political, social and religious situation. Islamic tradition naturally underlines the evils of the age in order to show how much light was revealed by the advent of Muhammad;

---

<sup>21</sup> D.S. Margo'loath, Mohammed, Blackie & Son, London, 1939. p. 12.

Christian interpretations tend to emphasize the positive factors in pre-Islamic culture in order to belittle the contributions made to civilization by the Prophet of a hostile faith.

Recent students of Islam conclude that Arabia at the close of the 6th century was in a state of religious flux. Generally speaking, the average Arab was an animist or polydaemonist: he believed the world was filled with divine or demonic spirits residing in the streams, deserted places, prominent rocks, particularly fertile oases. One would say prayers and offer animal sacrifices to obtain the friendship of good spirits; he would recite a magic formula or carry a charm to ward off "the evil eye" of lurking demons."

There were a variety of higher gods and goddesses worshipped in pagan Arabia. Hobal (Hubal) was the chief god of the Kaaba, the central sanctuary of the peninsula—comparable in influence to Israel's temple of Solomon. He was depicted in the form of a man and considered the creator of heaven and earth. Possibly his name is an Arabic transliteration of the Syrian god Baal, the Palestinian storm deity. Other gods who were worshipped were depicted in various forms: Suwah was represented as a woman. Nasr as an eagle, Yaghuth as a lion and Ya'ook as a horse. Several goddesses were known as consorts or "daughters of Allah." El Uzzah, the goddess of love, was particularly popular but there was also Duwar, a favorite deity of young women seeking a husband.<sup>23</sup>

Allah seems to have been the most popular god in the Arabic pantheon and by Muhammad's time was pushing the others out of the way. A growing number of people had lost their faith in the traditional idol worship of the gods and goddesses of fate, fortune and fertility. Such persons—the *Hanif*—were monotheists and claimed to be followers of the original faith of Abraham, father of the Arab people. Tradition reports that twelve of the companions of the Prophet had been adherents of the *Hanif* persuasion. Ibn Ishak, Muhammad's earliest biographer, wrote of them:

---

<sup>22</sup> For the Muslim experience of the supernatural, see D.C. Macdonald, *Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, AMS Press, N.Y., 1970, (original ed.. 1909).

<sup>23</sup> S. Zwemer, *Ibid.* p. 12.

They said, one to another: By God, ye know that your nation (the Arabs) is based upon nothing: truly, they have erred from the religion of their father, Abraham. What is a stone, that we should circle around it? (a reference to the sacred Kaaba stone, probably a meteor, regarded as the most holy object in Mecca.) It hears not, nor sees, nor injures, nor benefits. O people, seek for yourselves; for verily by God, ye are based upon nothing.<sup>24</sup>

As a religious reformer, Muhammad was known for his zealous devotion to Allah and his vigorous opposition to all idol worship. For him Allah reigned supreme; He had no partners, needed no helpers, and gave birth to no daughters. While Jews were living in Arabia and some whole tribes had adopted the Mosaic faith, Mohammed did not necessarily borrow any of his basic ideas from them. On the contrary, the Prophet found Arabian Jews to be deceptive, troublesome and treacherous.<sup>25</sup> Muhammad's contempt for idol worship and polytheism also led him into inevitable conflict with popular Christianity. In his eyes, Christians elevated Jesus and Mary into partners of God: their worship looked to him like idolatry. In fact, Muslim criticism of Christian idol worship may have led to the Iconoclastic controversy in Eastern Orthodoxy during which two Byzantine emperors denounced the church's use of statues and pictures of Jesus, Mary and the saints.<sup>26</sup>

Pre-Islamic Arabia recognized that no doctrine of the divine

---

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Zwemer, *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> The once-popular view that Islam borrowed most of its beliefs from Judaism has been largely abandoned.

<sup>26</sup> The Iconoclastic controversy lasted for over a century. Caliph Yezid about 720 A.D. ordered the removal of all icons within the Christian churches of the Muslim domains. Three years later the Byzantine Emperor Leo III began his attack on icons. The Ecumenical Council of Nicea (787 A.D.) upheld the veneration of holy pictures but Emperor Leo V opposed their use from 815-843 A.D. Empress Theodora's support of the icons marked the triumph of Eastern Orthodoxy and is commemorated annually the first Sunday of Lent. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin Book, London, 1964, pp. 38-39.

reality would be adequate without an appreciation of the cosmic masculine-feminine polarity; paganism erred only by separating deity into gods and goddesses. Muhammad correctly opposed idolatry and polytheism, but his legitimate attack on the divine "daughters of Allah" caused him to neglect the feminine aspect of the Godhead. For all its theological speculation and sublime mysticism, Islam subsequently continued to ignore the bipolar nature of divinity.

The reforming and reconstructive genius of the Prophet produced a religion known for its zeal. Nothing better characterizes Muhammad or the faith to which he gave birth than the virtue of determination. Islam from the outset was a crusading religion. In a book prepared for an international Christian missionary conference held at Madras, India in 1938, the Dutch professor Hendrik Kraemer said of Islam:

Islam is radically theocentric, and thereby proclaims in the clearest possible way its prophetic origin. It takes God as God with awful seriousness. God's unity and soleness, His austere sovereignty and towering omnipotence, are burning in white heat within Islam. . . . <sup>27</sup>

In a further comment—intended as criticism—Dr. Kraemer goes on to reveal a sort of grudging admiration:

Islam is theocentric, but in a super-heated state. Allah in Islam becomes white-hot Majesty, white-hot Omnipotence, white-hot Uniqueness....<sup>28</sup>

## II. ISLAMIC SALVATION-HISTORY

For traditional Islam Muhammad was the prophet of God whose revelation pointed out "the straight path" men should

---

<sup>27</sup> H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Kregel. Grand Rapids, 1956, p. 220.

<sup>28</sup> Kraemer, *Ibid.* p. 221.

follow to make the whole world submissive to His will and purpose of creation. As long as Muhammad lived, he performed the manifold functions of prophet, legislator, chief judge, commander of the army and civil head of state.' One cannot separate his religious mission from his role as an Arab political figure, a Medinan military adventurer and the founder of a distinctly Muslim culture. It is in this way that Muhammad can be compared to the Jewish Moses: he is a spokesman for God, a law-giver, communal leader and national hero. From this standpoint, the prophet from Mecca inaugurated a new dispensation in God's plan for the restoration of mankind.

For classical Muslim thought the history of Islamic expansion represents the gradual and inevitable reassertion of God's sovereignty over the entire earth. Some contemporary Muslim thinkers reaffirm that basic thesis: Islam created a revolutionary party of totally-committed believers determined to reconstruct the social order according to a religious pattern. For those influenced by the Judeo-Christian philosophy of "holy history," it is interesting to note how often Islam parallels the general outline of the Old Testament record and the similar course of Christian experience. <sup>2</sup>

### **The Muslim Age of the Judges**

Following Moses' death the people of Israel carved out for themselves a promised land in Palestine. Comparable to the military efforts of Joshua and the activity of the Hebrew leaders known as judges was the rule of the first four Muslim caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. All were intimate associates of Muhammad and advocates of his cause since the troubled Meccan days. Because the Prophet had no male heirs it was natural for his authority to be inherited by those closest to him: his *Companions*. Abu Bakr was the senior member of Muhammad's inner circle so there was general agreement that he should become the new leader of the Muslim forces.

The first caliph ordered Khalid ibn al-Walid, a brilliant Mus-

---

<sup>1</sup> Philip K. Hitti. *The Arabs*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1943, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Y.O. Kim. *Unification Theology and Christian Thought*, chaps. 7 and 8.

li in general, to suppress rebellions in Arabia which sprang up after the death of the Prophet. In a series of short but sharp battles Khalid reunited the country and made ready for further military adventures. A Byzantine attack on troublesome Arab tribes near the Syrian frontier prompted the caliph to dispatch Khalid and his camel-riding soldiers northward. The Muslims sped across the desert, besieged Damascus, the Syrian capital, and within six months forced it to capitulate. On August 20, 636 A.D. an Eastern Roman Empire army of 50,000 men was routed. All Syria bowed to its new ruler. Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq soon accepted Islam.

Persia was the next to fall. In 637 A.D. the Sassanid armies fled in panic. Muslims crossed the Tigris river, entered the Persian capital at Ctesiphon without a fight, and toppled an empire which had lasted for twelve hundred years. The Sassanid emperor was assassinated by one of his own subjects and Muslim armies reached the border of India in 673 A.D.

Another general, Amr ibn al-As, led 4,000 Arabs down the Palestinian coast to Egypt. One year later, Alexandria fell to the warriors of Allah. After the conquest of Egypt in 640 A.D. Amr moved westward to Libya. Within a single century, the Arabs came to rule from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, from southern France and all of Spain to Armenia on the border of Russia and Afghanistan on the Chinese frontier. The Muslim empire greatly exceeded anything Rome had governed at the height of its power.

In the Biblical book of *Judges*, the Hebrew leaders took four hundred years to solidify Israel's precarious hold on Palestine. Like Joshua, Gideon and Samson, the first four Muslim caliphs were men of war living in an age of violence. Life was hard and often harsh. Abu Bakr outlived Muhammad by only two years; Umar, his successor, ruled for a decade (634-644 A.D.). For the Muslim historians, the second caliph personified all the virtues a ruler should possess. He owned but a single shirt and cloak, slept on a bed of palm leaves, and was only interested in upholding the purity of the faith, the maintenance of justice and the ascendancy of Islam. A stern man with an uncompromising moral code, Umar learned that his son was guilty of drunkenness and immorality so

promptly ordered him to be whipped to death. While most admired the caliph's iron virtues, some did not. A Christian slave from Persia slew his master Umar with a poisoned dagger.

Uthman became the next caliph, ruled for twelve years, and was murdered by dissident Muslims. Ali, who followed him, reigned but five years before being killed by rebellious Arabs. With Ali's death, we mark the end of Islam's first period. From 632-661 A.D. Muhammad and his four ruling Companions had created a new nation of Islam (Dar al-Islam) centered in a unified Arabia and governed from Medina.

### **Islam's Age of Saul and David**

In Old Testament history, there was a clear change of policy and direction between the age of the Hebrew judges ending with Samuel and the time of the monarchy begun by Saul. With the tragic death of Ali and the accession of Mu`awiya, the shrewd governor of Syria, to the caliphate, the age of the Prophet and his Companions was over. Some Muslim historians claim that Islamic fervor cooled and faith grew dim. At this time Mu`awiya inaugurated dynastic rule. For about a century (661-750 A.D. ), the Umayyad caliphs, as they were called,<sup>3</sup> reigned from the new Muslim capital they established in Damascus. While Mecca and Medina remained the religious centers of Islam, the political and military focus of Muslim power shifted to an ancient city located on the crossroads of the Near East. Just as Hebrew life grew and flowered under the century-long reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, Muslim civilization prospered and greatly expanded under the Umayyad monarchs.

Saul and David were soldier-statesmen; so were the Umayyads. Under their guidance, Muslim armies pushed along the North African coast of the Mediterranean until they reached the Atlantic beaches of Morocco. In the east Muslims swarmed across the Oxus River, occupied Turkestan and invaded Mongolia. Even the Chinese were not able to halt the Arab advance and Islam firmly established itself over Central Asia. The most startling

---

Umayyad refers to followers of caliph Umar, enemies of Ali.

victories, however, were to occur in Christian Europe.

In 710 A.D. Musa, the Umayyad governor of North Africa, sent his Berber general Tariq and 7,000 warriors into Spain. The huge rock at the tip of the country was henceforth named for the Muslim invader: Gibraltar (Jabal Tariq)—mountain of Tariq. The Visigoth armies were no match for the Arab legions; city after city fell to the Muslims. The capital at Toledo was easily taken when Jews inside the walls betrayed their Christian masters. Governor Musa himself soon led an army to complete the subjugation of Spain. After a year-long siege Seville surrendered. Shortly thereafter even Saragossa in the north toppled.

Jealous of Musa's phenomenal successes, the caliph at Damascus ordered his governor back to Syria to answer charges of insubordination. The Spanish conqueror began the long overland trip across North Africa at the head of a seemingly endless caravan of Muslim dignitaries, European slaves, Christian prisoners and the spoils of war. Among his captives were 400 Visigoth princes, each wearing a gold crown and gold belt encrusted with precious stones. Musa's reception by the caliph in the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was one of the most magnificent spectacles in Islamic history. Musa won pardon and praise from his superior. Unfortunately, the heir to the throne was filled with envy. When he became caliph, he confiscated Musa's properties, stripped him of his rank and made him stand in the hot sun until he collapsed of exhaustion. The conqueror of North Africa and Spain died as a beggar in a remote Arabian village. <sup>4</sup>

By 718 A.D. Muslim armies had crossed the Pyrenees mountains to attack France. Narbonne was captured; Toulouse, however, temporarily stopped the invaders. Later Bordeaux was stormed, Avignon seized, Lyons pillaged. But the push north ended at Tours, significantly the burial place and shrine of St. Martin, the Christian apostle to the Gauls. There, in 732 A.D., Charles Martel, father of Charlemagne, defeated the Islamic warriors. Frankish foot soldiers clad in wolf skins with long matted hair hanging down over their shoulders formed an impenetrable

---

Hitti, *Ibid.* pp. 68-73.

wall—against which the Muslim horsemen plunged in vain.

For Western historians (like Edward Gibbon) the battle of Tours was one of the decisive military engagements in world history. If the Muslims had won instead of the Franks, Paris and London would now have mosques rather than Christian cathedrals; the Quran rather than the New Testament would be studied at Oxford and the Sorbonne. However, modern Arab historians (like Hitti of Princeton) offer a different view. Tours decided nothing in reality. Already a thousand miles from their North African starting place, the Arab conquerors merely reached a natural standstill, and the invasion had lost its momentum. All Charles Martel did was set the farthest limit of victorious Arab action in western Europe. The march of Islam had reached its climax; the glory of its first dynasty had achieved its zenith.'

According to the Bible, David at his new capital in Jerusalem celebrated the military triumphs which established the Hebrew nation from Dan to Beersheba. The Umayyad caliphate at its new capital in Damascus likewise gave thanks to God for the creation of a far vaster Islamic empire. Damascus gradually created an Islamic civilization famed for its medicine, poetry, architecture, jurisprudence, philosophy, arabesque designs, calligraphy and mysticism. The mosque called The Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem was built in 691 A.D. over the spot where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son; an equally famous architectural masterpiece, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, was built in 705 A.D. by renovating the Christian basilica of St. John, originally a temple to Jupiter. <sup>6</sup>

## **Islam Divided**

According to the Old Testament annals, the reign of Solomon provided the finest flowering of Hebrew culture while producing within it seeds of disunity, decadence and decay. For *Divine Principle* Charlemagne was a Christian replica of Solomon, creating a united empire in western Europe which his sons could not hold together. A similar misfortune befell Islam.

---

<sup>6</sup> Hitti, *Ibid.* pp. 75-78.

<sup>6</sup> Hitti, *Ibid.* pp. 87-88.

In 747 A.D. the Abbasids who claimed descent from an uncle of Muhammad (al-Abbas) openly revolted against their cousins, the Umayyad caliphs. The Damascus rulers had been widely criticized for their luxurious life-style, their epicurean morality, their merely nominal piety. As Jeroboam, the disaffected court official, and Abijah the prophet led the opposition to Solomon's son, so ambitious Arab generals and critical Muslim religious spokesmen mounted opposition to the Umayyads. Two rival religious parties, the Sunnites and Shi`ites, added fuel to the flames. The latter were known as partisans of the murdered caliph Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad and an exemplar of Muslim piety. The former, almost always a 90% majority, favored the Umayyad dynasty, accepted the traditional alliance of the mosque and the throne, and tolerated the status quo as a revelation of Allah's inscrutable will. Sunnites and Shiites have continued their division to the present day, the first dominant in most of the Islamic world, the second holding power in Iran with an influential minority living in the Indian subcontinent.] While one should not think of the Abbasid revolt as simply a victory of the supporters of Ali over the Umayyad caliphs, Shi`ite agitators did to some extent provide a religious cloak for ambitious generals, tribal rivals, anti-Arab subjects and political reformers.

The Abbasid rebels were resourceful, cunning and often ruthless in getting what they wanted.\* Civil war broke out in many places and blood was shed profusely. One of the generals invited eighty leading members of the Umayyad royal family to a banquet. In the course of the feast he suddenly ordered his attendants to murder every guest and after spreading leather blankets over the dead and dying, continued his meal. The Abbasids won the throne with a sword and remained in power because of the beheadings

---

In basic doctrines, Sunnites and Shiites do not differ. They divided merely over the practical issue of whether Islam should be ruled by the physical descendants of the Prophet, i.e. the family of his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali. Differences in practice and emphasis followed, especially after Shi'ism became the state religion of Persia.

\* Old Testament students will recall the similar bloody semi-religious, semi-political revolt of Jehu (II Kings 9-10:28).

carried out by their executioner. For five hundred years (747-1258 A.D.) Abbasid caliphs ruled the Middle East.<sup>9</sup>

Rehoboam and Jeroboam split the Hebrew nation into the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel. The Abbasid caliphs similarly wrecked the unity of the Islamic empire. A member of the Umayyad royal family escaped to Spain and established a new caliphate there which lasted until 1492 A.D., the year the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Moors." Nor were the Abbasids ever able to control the vast Muslim lands of North Africa. To govern what was left, they established a new city and capital at Baghdad which became a center of prodigious wealth, unrivalled luxury and matchless splendor for centuries.

As important as the luxurious scale of living in Abbasid times, say scholars like Hitti, was the fact that Baghdad witnessed one of the most momentous intellectual awakenings in the whole history of thought and culture. Muslims collected, saved, translated and studied all the Greek philosophical and scientific classics. In addition they also learned from Persian and Indian civilization—and transmitted their findings to the Christian West. Maimonides, one of the most revered Jewish philosophers, was educated in the universities of Muslim Spain and earned his living as a court physician in Islamic Egypt. The Carolingian intellectual reawakening, the Thomistic philosophy of the High Middle Ages, and the Renaissance were all the direct result of Christian contacts with the Islamic world."

Muslim Spain was as renowned as Abbasid Iraq for its philosophic endeavors, and had a direct impact upon the medieval European discussion over faith's relationship to reason. Averroes, a native of Cordova, was famous for his commentaries on Aristotle as well as his rationalistic approach to religious mysteries and

<sup>9</sup> Hitti. *Ibid.* pp. 89-91.

<sup>10</sup> The Umayyad dynasty itself ruled from Cordova, Spain from 756-1031 A.D.; minor dynasties like the Almoravides (1056-1147), Almohades (1130-1269) and Masrids at Granada (1232-1492) succeeded them. For a complete list of all the Islamic ruling houses. see Erich W. Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam*. Allen and Unwin, London, 1953, pp. 215-218.

" Cf. Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*. Capricorn Book, N.Y.. 1960, pp. 116-121, 124-129.

theological dogmas. Ibn-Arabi of Seville, by contrast, became the leading exponent of mystical interpretations of sacred scripture and has been called "the greatest speculative genius of Islamic Sufism."<sup>12</sup> Caliph Abd al-Rahman III (889-961 A.D.) founded a university which attracted students from Europe, Asia, and Africa; to its library the ruler personally contributed 400,000 volumes. As Hitti remarks, "All this when in Christian Europe only the rudiments of learning were known, and that chiefly by a few churchmen."<sup>13</sup>

### **Prophetic Warnings, Muslim Disasters**

In the Old Testament beginning with the prophet Amos, Israel was warned that materialism was corrupting Hebrew society; God would judge Israelite decadence, immorality and injustice. Muslim preachers appeared to warn the Arab world of similar divine retribution. More than a few condemned the caliph in person for his gross sins. Sufi mystics, like Christian monks, turned their back on a corrupt social order to spend their lives in a personal search for union with God.

Since the caliphs, sultans and grand viziers paid scant attention to Sufi preaching and Muslim prophets, disaster was inevitable. In 1009 A.D. an over-zealous Fatimid caliph from Egypt ordered the destruction of Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Christians were outraged by this wanton attack on their ancient shrine. In the closing decade of the eleventh century Pope Urban II asked the Eastern Roman Emperor Alexius Comnenus to join him in liberating the Holy Land. From 1095 to 1291 A.D. Christendom waged war on Islam. The results of the Crusades are well known. From the Muslim standpoint they were far less significant than they were in the eyes of the Christians. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox temporarily working together captured Tarsus, Antioch and finally Jerusalem by 1099 A.D. About a century later the Muslims made a successful counter-

---

Hitti, *Ibid.*, p. 160. Averroes, b. 1126 A.D., Ibn-Maymun (Maimonides), b. 1135 A.D., Ibn-Arabi, d. 1240 A.D.

<sup>13</sup> Hitti, *Ibid.* p. 145.

attack. Salah al-din (Saladin), a Syrian of Kurdish parentage who became sultan of Egypt, declared holy war on the Christian infidels. After badly defeating the crusaders in a battle near Tiberias and taking many Christian knights captive, he stormed Jerusalem and entered it within a week.

The emperor of Germany, the king of France and Richard the Lion-hearted of England soon launched a crusade against Saladin. In many ways Richard and Saladin represented the noblest examples of Christian and Muslim chivalry. When fighting seemed to be counter-productive, the Lion-hearted proposed that his sister should marry Saladin's brother and the couple be given Jerusalem as a wedding present, thus ending Christian-Muslim strife. Lasting peace, of course, could not be achieved by such romantic methods. Saladin did, nevertheless, live long enough to see a temporary armistice arranged. By 1291 A.D., a century after Richard, the Arabs had driven the last of the crusaders into the sea.

In some respects, the Crusaders' attack on Islam was comparable to the Assyrian invasion of Israel, conquest of Samaria and deportation of the "Ten Tribes." To the European invasion, moreover, must be added the even more disastrous Mongol assaults on Islam. Their leader—Jenghis Khan—described himself (according to the Muslims), as "the scourge of God sent to men as punishment for their sins."<sup>14</sup> In 1216 A.D. he and 60,000 mounted archers swarmed across the Middle East. Almost every cultural center in their path was virtually wiped out of existence. Great cities, splendid palaces, and famous libraries became shapeless ruins in barren deserts. The Mongol horde stabled their horses in the mosques of fallen cities.

In 1253 A.D. Hulagu, a grandson of Jenghis Khan, led a second wave of invaders. Again the Mongols looted, raped, massacred and burned their way westward. The Mongols were warned that if the caliph of Islam were harmed the whole universe would become disorganized, the sun would hide its face, rain never again fall and plants stop growing.'<sup>15</sup> However, Hulagu preferred the

---

<sup>14</sup> Hitti, *Ibid.* p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> Hitti, *Ibid.* p. 182.

advice of his astrologers who encouraged him to march on. In 1258 A.D. Baghdad fell. The caliph and three hundred courtiers were executed. Moving into Syria, the Mongols massacred 50,000 at Aleppo. Soon afterward Hulagu learned of the death of his brother and headed for home. An Egyptian general defeated the remains of the Mongol army in a battle near Nazareth. But the glory of Baghdad had vanished forever. And then, to complete the destruction, at the end of the 14th century, Tamulane (Timur Lang) led a Tatar horde westward. Claiming to be an heir of Jenghis Khan, he conquered Afghanistan, Persia, Kurdistan, Iraq, southern Russia up to and including Moscow, Syria and northern India. A particularly grisly practice among the Mongol-Tatars was their pastime of commemorating their victories by erecting huge pyramids of human heads. At Baghdad 120 such were built after that city's capture. After taking Ankara in Turkey and Smyrna in Greek Asia Minor, Timur returned to the East where he launched an attack on China.

During this whole period, Islam was politically weak, morally disorganized and religiously divided. In place of one empire, "Dar al-Islam," there were in fact a half dozen or so separate Muslim sultanates—in Spain and Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Persia, India, and the nominal Muslim empire of the Mongol khans. It was, then, from the ashes of a Muslim world mauled by Frankish crusaders and devastated by Mongol cavalry that the Ottoman Empire of the Turks was created. The Turks who had built a strong state between Russia and China—called Turkestan—were converted to Islam in the tenth century and provided soldiers for the Abbasid caliphate. In 1055 A.D. the Seljuk Turks even took control of Baghdad and a grateful caliph named their leader the sultan. Soon the warrior tribesmen moved toward the Byzantine provinces of Asia Minor as fierce fighters for Islam. By 1080 A.D. the Seljuks had established their capital at Nicea—site of the first Christian ecumenical council. To the north another Turkish state, that of the Osmanli or Ottomans, gradually appeared, prospered and expanded. When one of the contenders for the Byzantine throne invited them into Europe, the Ottomans quickly saw the

weaknesses of the Eastern Roman Empire and determined to take advantage of the situation. Rather rapidly in the 15th century they seized control of Bulgaria, part of Greece, Albania and Serbia. In 1453 A.D. Mehmed II entered Constantinople; for more than four and a half centuries it would remain the Turkish capital.

Christian Europe was aghast at what had happened. Writing to Pope Nicholas V, a leading Renaissance humanist moaned that the fall of Constantinople meant "a second death for Homer, a second oblivion for Plato."<sup>16</sup> A soldier sultan of Islam had become, as Mehmed II called himself, "Rum Kayseri"—Roman Caesar, heir of Augustus and successor of Constantine. Ever since, many have considered the capture of Constantinople the crucial event marking the end of the old world and the beginning of modern times.

In a single century the Ottomans expanded their suzerainty from the Danube to the Nile. The period from 1453 to 1566 A.D. is known as the golden age of the Turks. They took Damascus, Cairo, Mecca, Budapest, Algiers, the Crimea, Belgrade and finally besieged Vienna. Persia, however, under Shah Ismail, broke away from the old Arab empire and established an independent Shiite state. Suleyman, the tenth Ottoman sultan, whose long reign went from 1520-1566, is considered the greatest Turkish ruler. As he boasted with considerable justification, "with my flaming sword and my victorious blade – I am "the sultan of sultans, the sovereign of sovereigns, the distributor of crowns to the monarchs of the surface of the globe, the shadow of God on earth. . . <sup>7</sup> **His** successors would sit on the sultan's divan until after World War I. Perhaps significantly, the exemplar of Ottoman rule at its height bore the name Solomon ("Suleyman" in Turkish).

While the sultan-caliph of Islam reigned from Constantinople, northern Europe was engaged in the Protestant Reformation and Italy was experiencing its artistic, half pagan Renaissance. The brilliant colors of the Islamic triumph were in fact the

---

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Roderic H. Davison, *Turkey*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Davison, *Mid*, p. 47.

red and golden leaves of a Middle East in autumn." Like the Hebrew religion reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, Ottoman victories for Allah could not alter the course of history. Winter was imminent. As Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian-Chaldean armies and Israel went into sad exile, so Islam would soon suffer tragic decline and numerous defeats.

Vienna did not surrender to the Muslim beseigers of 1525 A.D. Henceforth for two centuries the Islamic tide ebbed.

### **The Waning Muslim Crescent**

Modern times were born during the age of exploration begun by Columbus and Vasco da Gama, the age of colonization and imperial conquest carried out by western European nations, the age of industrialization created by Britain and the United States. Each of these social phenomena undermined the Muslim world. Europe's merchant fleets destroyed Islam's power over the silk and spice trade between the Far East and the West. Each imperial power from Holland to Czarist Russia grew at the expense of Islamic and other non-Christian peoples. Perhaps worst of all, the Muslim lands took no part in the technological revolution.

For western Europe and the United States the nineteenth century was a great age of industrial progress, imperialistic triumphs, humanitarian reform and missionary enthusiasm. For Islam that same period was far different—a time of decline, defeat and disgrace comparable to Israel's Babylonian captivity:

1830: Serbia (part of Yugoslavia) breaks away from the Ottoman Empire.

France occupies Algeria.

1832: Greece rebels against Turkish rule, wins independence.

1857: Muslim mutiny against British imperialism in India put down, last Moghul emperor deposed.

---

<sup>19</sup> For Turkish contributions to Islamic life and thought, cf. Hasan Basri Cantay, "Islamic Culture in Turkish Areas", K. W. Morgan, ed. , *Islam—The Straight Path*, Ronald Press, N.Y., 1958, pp. 253-295.

- 1878: Bulgaria breaks away from Ottoman rule.  
 1879: Rumania achieves national sovereignty.  
 1881: Timisia occupied by France.  
 1882: Britain takes control of Egypt and Sudan.  
 1897: Crete becomes autonomous.  
 1898: United States defeats Spain, controls the Philip-  
 pines including the Muslim Moros of Mindanao,  
 etc.  
 1905: France and Spain tighten hold on Morocco.  
 1908: Austria-Hungary seizes Yugoslavian regions of  
 Bosnia and Herzegovina from Turkey.  
 1911: Italy invades and occupies Tripolitania and Lib-  
 ya.  
 1919: Ottoman Empire dismembered by victorious Al-  
 lies, Iraq—an independent kingdom with British  
 advisors,  
 Syria and Lebanon—French mandates,  
 Palestine and Jordan—British mandates,  
 Turkey reduced to Asia Minor and a tiny Euro-  
 pean bridgehead around Istanbul (Constantino-  
 ple).

If any single event symbolized how far Islam had fallen it took place when an Allied army of occupation moved into Constantinople at the close of World War I." Soon thereafter the Turks themselves voted to depose the sultan and abolish the caliphate. The visible sign of Islamic unity—what the Ottomans once called "the shadow of God"—had disappeared.

Since 1918 to the present day Islam has been in the process of rebuilding. From the ashes of the past Muslims have created a new world. While the West has declined, the Middle East and North Africa have been infused with new hope, witnessed changes of apocalyptic suddenness and produced a whole series of dynamic Muslim leaders noted for their impact on international affairs. The general Islamic mood is one of eschatological urgency and mes-  
 sianic expectancy.

---

" Geoffrey Lewis, *Turkey*, Praeger, N.Y., 1965, p. 53.

### III. SCHOOLS OF ISLAM

To consider the various forms of Islam and their intricate history at length there are several sources one may consult.<sup>1</sup> Here we shall present briefly the schools of Islam that exist today, their location and nature.

#### **Sunnism**

Most Muslims belong to the Sunnite branch of Islam; in fact, the Sunnites make up more than four-fifths of the world's Islamic population. They get their name from the fact that they follow the traditions (*Sunnah*) of Muhammad and his successors, the caliphs. That is, they claim to be the traditionalists, the orthodox, the main stream of Muslim thought and practice. In spite of political divisions and social upheavals, the Sunnites have remained loyal to the ruling caliphs, the recognized schools of Islamic jurisprudence and the orthodox Muslim theology taught at universities like Al-Azhar in Cairo.

Muhammad, in preaching a new religion, founded a community of believers—the people of Allah, Dar al-Islam. Sunnites defend both the value of the faith and the validity of the Muslim community ruled by the Prophet's representatives. On the basis of the Quran, and Muhammad's sayings and practices, Muslims worked out a standard theology, a moral code and a system of legislation by which every aspect of life could be governed by divine Law—much as Hebrews did with the Torah and Talmud.

This law from God was interpreted by the *ulema*, the learned," and enforced by the caliph, Muhammad's successor. The caliph was not supposed to deduct anything from the Law or add to it—he was to merely administer it and govern according to it. In the Sunnites' view, the first four successors of the Prophet (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali) were especially "rightly-guided caliphs" who provided a pattern for all subsequent development of Muslim government and culture. Sunnites neverthe-

---

<sup>1</sup> For the Sunnite viewpoint cf. Caesar E. Farah, *Islam, Beliefs and Observances*. Barron's Educational Series, N.Y., 1968, pp. 184-195. For the Shiite history and doctrine cf. John N. Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*. Luzac, London, 1953, pp. 24-100.

less recognized and obeyed all the caliphs after Ali, while admitting that some of them lacked the piety or wisdom of the original "Companions" of Muhammad.

Almost all Arabs, Turks, Egyptians, Pakistani and Indian Muslims are Sunnites. So are most Muslims in China, the Soviet Union, the Berber states of North Africa, the black Muslims of tropical Africa and worshippers of Allah in Indonesia, Malaya and the southern Philippines.

### Shi`ism

Dissenters at one time or another have broken off from the Sunnite community, the biggest and most influential of which call themselves Shiites ("the Followers"). They trace their ancestry to those who, at the time of Muhammad, believed that the successor to the Prophet should be someone in his family. As Sunnism may be called "the Islam of Abu Bakr," Shi`ism can be termed "the Islam of Ali"; Ali was a cousin of Muhammad and husband of his daughter, Fatimah. Shiites claim that Muhammad intended Ali to succeed him and more than once clearly stated as much. This tradition, however, is denied by the Sunnites and considered historically questionable by many western students of Islam.

Shi`ites contend that Islam erred in not making Ali the ruler immediately after the Prophet's death. They hold that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman had no suitable qualifications for such an awesome position. When Ali was murdered and the Umayyad dynasty was established at Damascus, his partisans turned against the Sunnite establishment and everything it represented. They threw their support to those who subsequently set up the Abbasid caliphate at Baghdad, but very soon became dissatisfied with them as well. Later, however, Shiites were able to seize control of Egypt, where they ruled through the Fatimid dynasty (910-1171 A.D.), named for Ali's wife. But it was not until a separate Muslim state was organized in Iran, that they would find a permanent base for their operations.

Today, Shi`ites represent the official Muslim party in Iran. In addition they comprise half the population in Iraq—where their

chief shrines are located—and are a substantial minority in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Other Shi'ite communities of lesser size are situated in East Africa, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Syria. Shiites sometimes claim to embrace nearly one fifth of the total Muslim population—a gross exaggeration, according to the Sunnites. In any case, the Shia constitute the major schism in Islam and their poetry, mysticism and metaphysics have made them widely known in the West.

For Sunnites the caliph was to be the executive and administrative head of the Muslim temporal order; for Shiites the successor to Muhammad was to be in addition a repository of esoteric knowledge and religious wisdom. Since Shiites repudiated the reigning caliphs in most cases, they looked to a descendant of Ali for guidance. This legitimate successor to the Prophet, a bearer of divine knowledge and mantic power, they call the Imam. Belief in the existence and authority of the Imam became the cardinal article of faith after belief in God and His messenger Muhammad.

Besides separating the functions of the caliphate and imamate, Shiites distinguish themselves from the Sunnites in other ways. Because they rebel against the political establishment and the orthodox theology, they are attracted to philosophic speculation and rational discussion of religious dogma. Because they are dissenters they also have been generally inclined to reject the 'official' doctrine of predestination and believe in the freedom of human choice. They "have kept open the door of *ijtihad*—individual creative thinking and interpretation of the dogma and the law—at least theoretically, whereas the Sunni 'door of *ijtihad*' has been at least theoretically closed since the 4th/ 10th<sup>2</sup> century."<sup>3</sup>

For hundreds of years Shiites and Sunnites opposed each other with every available weapon, much as Protestants and Catholics have warred in the past. In the eyes of the Sunnite, the Shiite is a dangerous rebel and damned heretic. In the opinion of the Shiite, the Sunnite is a merely nominal Muslim, a blind

---

<sup>2</sup> Fourth century Islamic calendar, tenth century Christian calendar.

<sup>3</sup> Nasr. *Ibid.* p. 174.

traditionalist and a narrow-minded authoritarian. Only recently have efforts been made to persuade Sunnite and Shiite to think of themselves as brothers in the larger family of Muhammad. A modern Shi'ite theologian, for instance, asserts: "Sunnism and Shi'ism are both orthodox interpretations of the Islamic revelation contained providentially within Islam in order to enable it to integrate people of different psychological constitutions into itself."<sup>4</sup> Shi'a, he goes on, is merely an expression of Islam geared to a different climate and "with a somewhat different spiritual fragrance."<sup>5</sup> A genuine Muslim ecumenicity, however, is at best in the formation stage, even if many recognize the need for a united front.

Shi'ism, like Protestantism, has split into many sects, e.g. the Bektashi dervishes of Turkey and Albania,<sup>6</sup> the Babi and Bahai<sup>7</sup> of Iran, the Druzes of Lebanon and Syria.<sup>8</sup> While all Shia believe in the Imamate, a division of opinion took place long ago over which member of Ali's family inherited his authority. After the death of the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (765 A.D.), "Seven Imam Shi'ites" followed the leadership of his oldest son 'small, and were henceforth called *Isma'ilites*, while "Twelve Imam Shi'ites" recognized Ja'far's younger son Musa al-Kazim as the new Imam. At a later time Isma'ilism divided into the Musta'lis who believe in a hidden Imam who will reappear to restore the world, and the Nazari who recognize a living Imam, the Aga Khan, who resides in India. Isma'ilism is professed by a substantial minority in India, Pakistan, Iran, Syria and East Africa.

<sup>4</sup> Nasr, *Ibid.* p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John K. Burge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Luzac, London, 1965. The Bektashi brotherhood was dissolved by order of the Turkish government in 1925 so its headquarters were moved to Albania, now a communist state and officially atheistic.

The Bahai were considered a Shi'ite sect during the lifetime of the founder and his successor but became a separate religion about 1925 under the guidance of Abbas Effendi.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. C.E. Farah, *Ibid.* pp. 181-183.

### **Twelve Imam Shiism**

The much larger group of Shi'ites who accepted the leadership of Musa, is the official religion of Iran. Twelve Imam Shi'ites believe in twelve Imams, the last of whom, the Mahdi (the "Right-guided One"), mysteriously disappeared." This Imam-Mahdi is considered the axis mundi, the invisible ruler of the universe and hidden guide of all the faithful. At the end of time he will reappear on earth to establish a just and peaceful world order, the kingdom of Allah. In the meantime he serves as the mediator between man and God. His help is asked daily by Shi'ite Muslims who consider him the axis around which the earth turns. For this branch of Shi'a, the twelve Imams are like the "constellations of the Zodiac in the spiritual firmament."<sup>9</sup>

At their centre stands the Prophet, the sun whose light illumines the constellations. The Imams are, for the Shi'ah, a part and continuation of the spiritual reality of the Prophet and together with him, who is their source and origin in both the metaphysical and biological sense, determine the contours of that spiritual universe in which the Shi'ah live."

### **IV. THE SUFI PATH**

When the believer submits to God's power and justice as revealed in the Quran, he comes under Divine Law or *Shariah*. This law sets the pattern for his life and includes such duties as the daily prayers, required ablutions, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, *Shariah*, coming from a root meaning "road to the water," covers every aspect of the Muslim's daily life, and that of the Muslim community as a whole. Hence Jews who live under Talmudic law are more in a position to understand *Shariah* than Christians. However, beneath the divine Law enlightened and

---

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 245-247, "The Hidden imam".

<sup>10</sup> " Nasr. Ibid. p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 166.

sensitive men have sought an esoteric message—a spiritual path. These Muslims are known to the world as Sufis.

Muslims prefer the term Sufism to that of "Islamic mysticism." For one thing, the term "mystic" often connotes one who is anti-intellectual, passive and otherworldly. Secondly, *Tariqah* (the Way) and *Shariah* (the Law) are very much interwoven, so that Sufis, instead of being withdrawn from the world, are actively engaged as teachers and scholars, artists and scientists, even statesmen and soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Al-Ghazzali, one of the greatest Islamic theologians, who is generally recognized to have influenced Pascal and Aquinas, was a Sufi. Another was the Persian poet Sarva't, whose *Treatise of the Nocturnal Ascent* served as an inspiration and model for Dante in his *Divine Comedy*. In many regions of the world Islam spread through Sufism. In certain sections of India, in Southeast Asia, and much of Africa, Islam was first accepted after the establishment of a Sufi order and through the personal example of Sufi masters.<sup>2</sup>

The word "Sufi" seems to have first appeared about 800 A.D. but its exact meaning has long been a bone of contention. Sufis themselves trace the word back to an Arabic root meaning "purity," in the sense of Jesus' "Blessed are the pure in heart. — The name can also be derived from the Greek and Christian Gnostic word "sophia" which refers to "holy wisdom," especially esoteric and occult knowledge. However, at present most are inclined to believe that the Sufi originally referred to an ascetic who wore a simple white woolen robe (suf= wool) which distinguished him from the Muslim aristocrat.

Sufis began with the inspired preaching of Maruf al-Kharki of Baghdad, a Persian of Christian parentage (d. circa 815). Though the devotional practices and expository literature of Sufism show clear traces of Graeco-Egyptian philosophy, Eastern Orthodox spirituality, Buddhist technique and Hindu thought, original Islam

---

<sup>1</sup> Nasr, *Ibid*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Chid, p. 125.

itself bore mystical features. <sup>3</sup> Louis Massignon, the leading French orientalist, wrote that if one reads the Quran several times he realizes that Sufism issues from it. <sup>4</sup> By all criteria used to distinguish a mystic from an ordinary person, the prophet of Mecca is certainly located among the former. Thus Sufism can be seen as a natural outgrowth of both the faith and experience of Muhammad as well as the Quran itself. Muhammad could only receive the Quran in light of his internal purity and inner directive toward God; hence he is considered the "greatest Su fi. –

In this connection, several Quranic verses indicate how Muhammad directed his followers to understand the immanence of God:

Unto Allah belong the East and the West, and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance. Lo! Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing (11,115).

And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So, let them hear My call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright (II, 186).

And the Sufi appropriately responds to this closeness, as in the words of this ninth century master:

O my God, I invoke Thee in public as lords are invoked,

---

<sup>3</sup> Reynold A. Nicholson (The Mystics of Islam, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1963), a leading English orientalist, argues against the extreme view that Sufism was borrowed from others to supplement a meagre Arabic faith. But though he recognizes the ascetic bent of the Quran itself, he thinks that early Sufism was inspired by Christian ideals, and treats Christian, Neoplatonic, Gnostic, Buddhist and Vedanta Hindu contributions to Sufism. Muslim writers sharply disagree with this interpretation of Sufism as well as Nicholson's idea that this school in Islam was a reaction in the face of the active, pleasure-loving spirit of Muslims. Nor do other European scholars share Nicholson's views: Cf. L. Massignon, *La Passion d' al-Hallaj*, 2 vols.. Paris, P. Geuthner, 1922, who maintains that Sufism is derived unequivocally from the Quran.

Nasr, *Ibid*, p. 127.

but in private as loved ones are invoked. Publicly I say, 'O my God!' but privately I say, 'O my Beloved!'"

The celebrated woman saint Rabia (d. 801 A.D.) is similarly devoted:

O God! if I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine everlasting beauty!"

The goal of the Sufi is to feel God's presence. A 19th century Sufi convert to Christianity recounts one of the curious techniques he employed to keep an awareness of God constantly in his mind. After observing the usual fasts and ascetic practices (like never wearing shoes), Imad-ud-Din reports that he spent his days writing the name "Allah" 125,000 times. Daylight and dark were devoted to concentration on the Holy Name, as a Sufi devotional manual recommended. .

Sufism has historically followed two main streams. The first, beginning soon after Muhammad's death, is that of individuals who felt a call to the mystical life. The second is the corporate pursuit of the *Tarigah* by groups who came together in Sufi Brotherhoods to follow one of the great saints of medieval Islam. But Sufi Brotherhoods are not at all a thing of the past: Sheikh Salama of Cairo founded the Hamidiya Shadhiliya about 1926<sup>8</sup> and al-Banna created the Muslim Brotherhood, which he led until his assassination in 1949.

---

<sup>8</sup> Nicholson, *Ibid*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted, Nicholson, *Ibid*, p. 115.

Imad'ud'Din, *A Mohammedan Brought to Christ*, Church Missionary Society, London, 1900, quoted in *Islam* by Samuel M. Zwemer, Student Volunteer Movement, N.Y., 1907, p. 146. Much the same sort of unceasing repetition of the Holy Name has been a standard practice of Eastern Orthodox monks for many centuries. Zwemer thought he was contrasting Islam and Christianity; all he really contrasted was the difference between popular mysticism, Christian or Islamic, and his own unmystical Protestantism.

.. Michael Gilson, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973—a sociological study of Salama's life, work and modern Sufi brotherhood.

The Brotherhoods are built around the recognized charismatic authority of a leader: the Muslim *sheikh*, *pir*, master, supreme guide or saint. He wins the loyalty of those with whom he comes in contact and they dedicate themselves to him without reservation. According to Sufi doctrine, a man can only find God if he discovers a teacher and guide to whom he commits his life. Since the sheikh is the trustee of God, the student cannot question his advice or ask for any proof for what he orders him to do. Besides his personal charisma or dynamic personality, the leader proves his special status by his ascetic life, occult power and esoteric wisdom. In most cases, if not all, the sheikh is able to demonstrate one sort of supernatural marvel or another. Among these are faith cures, clairvoyance, precognition and telepathy.

Because the Sufi sheikh possesses an unusual spiritual force, devotees claim to be blessed by kissing his hand or touching his robe. In his position as teacher and spiritual guide, the sheikh presides at the *dhikr*—the ritual recitation of the names of God. In this ceremony the faithful chant, sing, clap their hands and dance—working themselves into an ecstatic mood. Sufi Brotherhoods vary greatly in the use of these techniques.<sup>9</sup> Though the Salama Brotherhood in Egypt permits the swaying movement of all the brothers in unison and staccato rhythmical shouts, it forbids the use of musical instruments and has officials control any worshipper who becomes disorderly.

In our time Sufi fraternities have been vigorous in activities other than their ecstatic worship. The Senussi, a Sufi sect in Libya, actively agitated to expel the Italian fascists who ruled their country. As for the Muslim Brotherhood founded by al-Banna, a government teacher in the British-occupied Suez Canal zone, it published newspapers, magazines and books, set up village schools, ran textile factories, organized a secret army and—so say its critics—carried out the assassination of an Egyptian premier and the reigning imam of Yemen. The Brotherhood also won for a time the allegiance of Nasser, who sided with them in their successful

---

These services can sometimes become quite exaggerated and frenzied. In earlier times drugs and alcohol were employed to heighten the emotional frenzy of the worshippers.

efforts to rid Egypt of the British occupation forces and exile King Farouk, but who also quickly jailed their leaders when he discovered they were plotting to overthrow him as well."

While the Muslim world has numerous critics of the Sufi—in both their saint worship and political machinations—the Brotherhoods are still a potent factor in Islamic life today. Very recently, Sufi groups have even sprung up in Europe and America.

## V. DOGMATICS IN OUTLINE

For every school of Muslims, Islam means—quite literally—complete, unresisting and peaceful *submission* to the will of God. In this surrender one recognizes the truth and justice of God's revelations in past history, as well as that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and the Quran the final revelation of His will. In doing so, the Muslim achieves "external peace and internal peace, peace with God and peace with all creatures."

Muslims consider themselves heirs of both Judaism and Christianity. "God has ordained for you that religion which He has already commended to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus" (Quran XLII, 13). According to Muslim scripture Abraham and his firstborn son, Ishmael, constructed the Kaaba as a place of worship at Mecca in Arabia, and prayed, "Our Lord! Make us Muslims unto Thee and of our seed a nation of Muslims unto Thee" (II, 128). Further, Moses advised the Hebrews, "Trust yourselfs to God if you are true Muslims" (X, 85). And much later, the disciples of Jesus declared, "We have believed and you can be witness that we are Muslims" (V, 1 I 1 ). Since religion means submission to God's will and guidance, good Jews and Christians belong to the one true religion. "Lo, religion with God is Islam" (III, 19).<sup>2</sup>

For Muslims "there has been but one true religion on earth, the religion of God, to which believing men have belonged at all

<sup>1</sup> I.M. Huasini, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, Beirut, Lebanon, 1956.

M. A. A. Draz, "The Origin of Islam", Kenneth W. Morgan, ed., *Islam—The Straight Path*, Ronald Press Co., N.Y., 1958, pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

times and places." <sup>3</sup> That is, throughout history different messengers of God have appeared, each of whom has proclaimed the revelation of his will. Abraham, Moses and Jesus were three such prophets of the religion of submission.

Because the one God is the source of all revelations, "The prophets are required to show mutual recognition and acknowledgement of each other. The believers must accept and respect all revealed books and all messengers of God without distinction between them. To show preference among the revelations of God is to be guilty of a mortal sin which destroys the very basis of our belief.... Showing preference among the revelations of God is infidelity because it makes our own desire, our own passion and fanaticism, a criterion and principle of belief; because it resists the will of God which has been authenticated by the divine signs which appear with each of His messengers." <sup>4</sup>

In the past certain individuals in different ages have been commissioned by God to serve as His special messengers or prophets. Their mission was "to teach true belief about the one God and to establish justice among men." <sup>5</sup> In the opinion of the Muslims, the prophets agree in their proclamation of one God, thereby creating a union of their followers to form a unique spiritual nation, i.e. Islam. As God Himself declares in the Quran:

Here is your nation, one and united,  
and I am your Lord.  
Worship me, then (XXI, 92).

Professor A.A. Draz of al-Azhar University observes that Islam, the one true religion of God, has undergone a continuous evolution as a result of successive divine revelations: "Each new book and each new prophet constitutes a new element to be added to our creed. The most complete revelation has naturally been reserved for the latest revelation which summarizes and confirms all the others." <sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

The prophet, for Muslims, is strictly limited to receiving and proclaiming revelations. He cannot go beyond or modify it in any way. Nor can any believer. A human book can be discussed, controverted or contradicted by past, present and future events. But the Word of God, the revealed book, is perfection itself. Hence, it is "unchallengeably true, infallibly just, and inimitably good and beautiful." <sup>7</sup>

Muslim thought, at least in its most orthodox form, sharply distinguished between the divine message and the human messenger. The complete humanity of the prophet, for instance, is underlined in the case of Muhammad. <sup>8</sup> "The Prophet Muhammad was but a man, of a purely human nature. He was neither a great god, nor a small god, nor a sub-god, nor even an auxiliary God. He could not acquire any good or avoid any evil except through God's will. He knew only so much of the past or the future as God revealed to him. He was infallible in his judgments only when sustained by revelation. . . . However great our respect for him may be, and however deeply we may love him, in our eyes he is not raised above the level of man." <sup>a</sup>

Having learned from the sad experience of Christianity in which the messenger of the Word was transformed into a god to be worshipped, Islamic theologians sharply separate the content and medium of revelation. The true prophet never aspires to the rank of divinity. He is God's apostle, God's servant—nothing more. The prophet is not a proper object of worship. Followers should never pray to him but instead pray to God for him, asking God to heap blessings on him and his family.

Islam does not limit revelation to a specific chosen nation because the one God is creator and lord of all mankind. Shiite Muslims say that four of the great prophets were Syrians—Adam, Seth, Enoch and Noah; five were Arabs—Hud, Salih, Shuayb, Isma'il (Ishmael) and Muhammad. Of the " 124,000 prophets of

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Sunnite Muslims, about 4/5 of the total Islamic community, hold this view. Shi'ite Muslims stress the excellent qualities of the Prophet which set him apart from ordinary men.

<sup>a</sup> Draz, !bid, p. 40.

Allah," the number Shiites assign to the total whom God chose, the most eminent of all were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad."

Moreover, every prophet gave to his generation a sacred book. In the eyes of the Muslims the chief scriptures are the Books of Abraham, the Pentateuch of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospel of Jesus—and supplanting them all as the final revelation, the Quran of Muhammad. Some Muslims believe that there were 104 or 124 revealed books, most of which have been lost. However, Dr. Mohammad Rasjidi, a leading Muslim scholar from Indonesia and graduate of the Sorbonne, gives the prevailing view on Islamic belief in progressive revelation. Noting that the Quran mentions by name three revealed books prior to the message given to Muhammad—the Book of David, the Book of Moses and the Book of Jesus—he observes: "This does not necessarily mean that there were no other revealed books, but only that we do not know whether or not any other books were revealed."

In addition to revelation, of course, theology has developed to help the believer understand the meaning of his faith. Besides Sufism and the tenth century school of Ash'arite theology, which emphasized God's majesty and power, were four traditional schools of Islamic law formed in the eighth and ninth centuries—known as the Hanel, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools. Various efforts have been made by Muslims to separate the essentials of Islamic theology from the secondary accretions produced by centuries of religious meditation. Some modernists have contended that Muslims should return to the simplicities of the Quran. Prof. Khuda Bakhsh of Calcutta, for instance, declared: "Islam, stripped of its theology, is a perfectly simple religion. Its cardinal principle is belief in one God and belief in Mohammed as his apostle. The rest is mere accretion, superfluity." <sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> D.M. Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, Luzac and Co., London, 1933, p. 320. Saliḥ = Methusaleh. Shuayb = Jethro, Hud = Heber.

<sup>11</sup> M. Rasjidi, "Unity and Diversity in Islam", K. W. Morgan, ed., *Islam—The Straight Path*, p. 410.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1946, p. 32.

In some ways, since the decline of the Ottoman Empire and especially since the creation of numerous Muslim republics after World War II, Islam has been engaged in a search for a positive self-identity. Who is a true Muslim? What are the essentials of Islam? From Morocco to Indonesia, Turkey to the Sudan, men have been trying to find suitable answers to these key questions.

Dr. Hasan Basri Cantay, a distinguished Turkish Muslim writer, claims that the fundamentals of Islam can be found in the eleven requirements of belief prescribed by divine ordinance, i.e. definite orders from Allah Himself.<sup>13</sup> Included are six articles of faith and five obligatory practices. The articles of faith are:

1. The existence of Allah, the one God
2. the reality of angels
3. God's written revelation in the Old Testament, New Testament and Quran"
4. faith in all Allah's prophets
5. the coming Day of Judgment with rewards and punishments
6. a man's destiny is in Allah's hands and one must accept responsibility for his own conduct.

There is widespread, if not unanimous, agreement on these core precepts.

And the five obligatory practices are:

1. praying five times a day in the prescribed form
2. fasting during the month of Ramadan
3. pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca when health and wealth permit
4. a yearly almsgiving (zakat) of one fortieth of one's moveable property and wealth
5. pronouncing the Word of Witness (*Shahadah*)

---

<sup>13</sup> Morgan, *Ibid.* p. 268.

<sup>11</sup> Some Muslims would limit revelation to the Torah, Gospel and Quran—which would exclude much of the Old Testament and New.

openly and sincerely: "I attest and affirm that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his creature and Prophet." "

This summary of Islamic doctrines and duties has been recognized from the days of the first four Caliphs who were companions of the Prophet. In that sense it can be compared to the Nicene Creed professed by Christians since the fourth century. As for interpretation, differences of opinion appeared early in Islamic history and sectarianism has been as much a problem for Muslims as Christians. In the pages to follow we shall consider the variety of ways in which Muhammad's prophetic insights have been developed.

## **VI. THE MUSLIM DOCTRINE OF GOD**

Depending on where one directs his research he can find in Islamic doctrine an emphasis on God's power, His justice, His immanence, or His love. In the writings of al-Ash`ari (d. 935 A.D.) light is cast on the overwhelming power and absolute supremacy of God. Some contemporary Muslim thinkers highlight the justice of Allah. Sufis and mystical poets behold yet another face of God. Muhammad himself, of course, was God-intoxicated and theocentric rather than a theologian per se; the Prophet was neither an intellectual synthesizer nor a systematizer of dogmas, and the Quran itself is silent on such abstruse subjects as God's self-subsistence, omniscience and omnipotence. However, there is no shortage of expository material in the centuries that follow the receiving of the Quran to explain the God who was revealed in it.

### **God of Absolute Power**

Al-Ash sari was the founder of the most influential school of

---

<sup>15</sup> Morgan, /bid, p. 267. Some Muslims add a sixth duty: the willingness to fight a holy war (jihad) on behalf of the faith. Muhammad himself distinguished between the big jihad which takes place inside every man, a holy struggle between Allah and Satan. and the lesser jihad fought between Muslim and unbelievers. Muslims are not pacifists yet by and large their record has been no bloodier than that of the Christian West. Thus Zwemer is unfair when he states, "The genius of Mohammed mixed old ingredients into a new panacea for humanity, sugar-coated it with an easy-going morality, and forced it down by means of the sword"(Islam, p. 86).

Sunnite orthodoxy. His book *Highlights of the Polemic against Deviators and Innovators* (Kitab al-Luma) expresses clearly his views on the nature and attributes of God. As a systematic theologian he can be compared with St. John Damascene in the Eastern Orthodox Church or Thomas Aquinas among the Roman Catholics.

To prove that creation has a Maker and Governor, al-Ash`ari points to the fact of growth in the human body. "The completely mature man was originally semen, then a clot, then a small lump, then flesh and bone and blood. – ' One cannot control these physical changes. He cannot will himself to develop from a baby to a youth to maturity. An external Power governs this process. In the same way, as al-Ash`ari puts it, raw cotton cannot change into cloth without a weaver. Likewise, if a man went into a waste land and found there no castle already built, and waited for the clay to change into bricks which would join together without workman or builder, he would be witless. Now if the change of semen to clot, then little lump, then flesh and blood and bone be an even greater marvel, it proves all the more forcibly that there is a maker who made the semen and translated it from state to state.'

After proving that man must have a Creator, the Arab theologian asserts that this Maker is unlike His creation, and has no partners, equals, or visible form. In a similar fashion, Muhammad had vigorously opposed idolatry and smashed the statues in the Kaaba at Mecca. But by being iconoclastic, Islam had to wrestle with the problem of Allah's transcendence. To what extent if any, was God like man? Are there any resemblances between the divine and the human? Under the influence of Neo-platonic mysticism, some Muslims in al-Ash`ari's day argued for the total other-ness of Allah: God is unlike man in every way.

However, for al-Ash`ari although Allah is different from any of His creatures and superior to them, He must possess reason in

---

Kitab al-Luma' 1:3, Richard I. McCarthy, *The Theology of Al-Ashari* Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1953, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> /bid, 1:4, p. 7. Translator McCarthy points out that this argument is an elaboration of a Quranic text (LVI: 58-59).

order to create our intricate and lovely world—just as a man has to have skill and knowledge to "weave patterned brocade." Since Allah has made numerous works requiring intelligence and skill, He must be knowing, powerful, gifted with sight and able to hear. Although God is by His perfect nature free of temporal defects, in His reason, power and sensitivity He is like us.

Al-Ash`ari goes on to maintain that "God wills everything that can be willed." <sup>3</sup> Divine knowledge, one of Allah's essential attributes, embraces all that can be truly known. Since divine willing is also one of His indispensable qualities, it includes everything that can be truly willed. Nothing can exist which is not a result of His wishes. Otherwise God would be "one who is weak and dominated—and our Lord is very far above that." <sup>4</sup>

Are there no limits—not even moral limitations—to divine power? He is not bound by the Mosaic law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Allah can subordinate some persons to others without apparent reason. It would not be evil for God to create men and immediately place them in hell; He would be just even if He put unbelievers in the garden of paradise and punished believers with eternal damnation.

The proof that He is free to do whatever He does is that He is the Supreme Monarch, subject to no one, with no superior over Him who can permit, or command, or chide, or forbid, or prescribe what He shall do and fix bounds for Him. ..since the Creator is subject to no one and bound by no command, nothing can be evil on His part." <sup>5</sup>

The Islamic philosopher A.E. Affifi, a professor at the University of Alexandria, may typify contemporary Muslim reaction to the views of the 10th century Baghdad theologian. <sup>6</sup> According to him, al-Ash`ari's conclusions are rooted in the pessimistic attitude of the ancient Semitic mind. For the Semite, the world is at

---

· !bid, 3:49, pp055/560

· !bid, 3:53, p. 36.

· /bid, 7:170. p. 99.

A.E. Affifi, "The Rational and Mystical Interpretations of Islam", Morgan, ed., /bid, pp. 155-156.

best merely a fleeting shadow and man's real purpose in life is to prepare himself for a permanent abode in the hereafter. Feeling thus, men conceived of God as the absolute sovereign power, the supreme King whose authority must not be challenged. Submission is unqualified. True sons of the desert, these early Muslims preferred to think of Allah after the pattern of an authoritarian tribal God—like the sheikh whose power they respected, whose arbitrary rule they feared.

In the Quran can be found many examples of the idea of a heavenly monarch with unlimited power:

God should not be asked concerning what He does (XXI, 23).

He creates what He will (XXX, 54).

He it is who created you from dust (XL, 67).

He misguides whomever He pleases and guides whomever He pleases (XXX V, 8).

To quote a tradition of Muhammad, "The first thing which God created was a (divine) pen, and He said to it, 'Write'; it said, 'What shall I write?' And God said: 'Write down the fate of every individual thing to be created,' and accordingly the pen wrote all that was, and that will be, to eternity. ..God hath predestined five things to his servants: their duration of life, their actions, their dwelling places, their travels, and their portions."<sup>7</sup>

Hence Muslims readily believe in a God who can do everything—even that which appears unjust or unreasonable. Man becomes nothing but a tool in the hand of his omnipotent Lord.

### **God of Justice**

Whereas in Christianity the essential motive principle for virtuous conduct is love, in Quranic thought the fear of God provides the foundation for good behavior. Like the Old Testament Yahweh, Allah is primarily the God of righteousness. He demands

---

<sup>7</sup> C.E. Farah, *Islam, Beliefs and Observances*, Barron's Educational Series, N.Y. 1968, p. 120.

total obedience to His commandments, forgiving none but those who believe in Him and carry out His orders. The Quran concentrates on the inflexible rule of divine justice, man's consciousness of his own unworthiness, the perils of being a sinner and the inevitable coming Day of Judgment.?"

Love implies a reciprocal relationship between the heavenly Father and His children. But the Quran rarely enjoins love for God; Allah loves only the strictly pious. To love Him one must assume He loves us. To presume that is to presume one is worthy of His affection.

Fear of God fits in quite naturally with the idea of the Lord of justice and absolute authority. Piety therefore springs from reverential fear of Allah. A pious man is one who is "on his guard against God". In the Quran, to guard against Allah means to avoid His wrath. On Judgment Day God will overlook nothing. Fear of His justice—fair but strict—will give birth to faith and sustain it.

However, one must be cautious not to interpret falsely the nature and will of Allah. In the Quran the description of hell-fire may appear to be more terrifying than the description of paradise is tempting. But far too many Western writers on Islam overlook the *justness* of the justice of Allah. One, for example, has criticized Allah for being a vengeance-breathing tyrant towards His enemies and an indulgent God for His favorites. The Quran is accused of giving excessive prominence to the divine omnipotence and too little to the divine holiness. Actually, Muhammad proclaimed the God whose demands are strict, whose character is stern but who is no arbitrary ruler, no despotic sultan. °

The Quran emphasizes this last point:

We will not burden a soul beyond its power. . .they shall not be unjustly treated (XXIII, 62).

. . .God wills not injustice to mankind (III, 108).

Each soul shall be rewarded for what he has earned, and. . .they shall not be wronged (XLV, 22).

---

° M.D. Rabhar, *God of Justice*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1960, pp. 179-180.

° *Ibid.* p. 5.

Because Islam urges men to seek good and shun evil, it cannot be fairly accused of Oriental fatalism. Muslim religion attaches great importance to the positive role which man can and does play in his salvation. Al-Ash`ari presents only one side of the picture by overemphasizing the absolute authority of Allah. God is not only supreme power and irresistible will." How can a faith be called fatalistic which stresses the imperative to moral action'? As a contemporary Muslim lecturing at the American University of Beirut puts it:

Were Islam to be fatalistic it would not be able to conquer half the known world in seventy years." It is actually absurd to call one of the most virile, patriarchal and energetic civilizations which the world has known fatalistic.'<sup>2</sup>

### Lover and Beloved

'Tis selfish love that I do naught Save think on Thee  
with every thought. 'Tis purest love when thou dost  
raise The veil to my adoring gaze.

—Rabia (d. 801)'

Fear of Allah on the part of the devout made them obedient to His commandments. However, loyalty to Him gradually turned into trust. Muslims who aspired to be Allah's servants soon became His companions, His friends, His lovers. Islamic poetry thus

---

Canon Edward Sell, a Church of England missionary and Fellow of the University of Madras, once quoted with approval the complaint that Islam represents the "pantheism of force". God for the Muslim, he said, acknowledges no rule, standard or limit save His own sole and absolute will. Allah can be defined as "omnipotent and omnipresent action", the only Agent, the sole Act, the one Force. All other beings are nothing but pure unconditional passiveness. Men are naught else than God's slaves (Outlines of Islam, Christian Literature Society for India, Madras, 1912. p. 77).

" A reference to the conquest of the Persian empire and much of the area held by the Eastern Orthodox empire of the Byzantines.

<sup>12</sup> Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam, pp. 19-20.

Quoted, A.J.Arberry, Sufism, Allen and Unwin, London. 1950. p. 43.

contains many parallels to St. Bernard of Clairvaux's Christ mysticism derived from the Song of Solomon. Out of the depths of profound religious experience, Islam discovered the God of heart.

Muslim mystics meditated on the "99 beautiful Names" of Allah found in the Quran. Or by chanting over and over the phrase "Allah Akbar" (God is great) they were elevated to an ecstatic state. These techniques, by a perpetual recollection of God, draw the believer near to Him. Then the love of Allah cleaves to his mind, lurks deep in his inmost heart and never leaves him. His soul joyfully busies itself in secret conversation with God."

One mystic taught that for man to be raised to the celestial world he must long for what is above. When Allah becomes the first loved one, a man gains serenity of soul, freedom of heart and peace with the whole creation in this life while at death he ascends to the realm of eternal Light. This highest aim of our existence—total love for Allah—according to the writer, is comparable to a union of Socrates' devotion to the divine Intellect and Christ's dedication to the law of love."

Al-Ghazzali (1111 A.D.) goes even further in clarifying the love relationship between man and God. Human perfection, he contends, is achieved when divine love conquers the human heart and wholly possesses it. Love for Allah must predominate over love of everything else—money, family, fame, power or self. Once the inner eye is open to behold the beauty and perfection of God, all outward sights seem unimportant by comparison. Whatever we love, we love ultimately because it is a reflection of Him. "God alone is really worthy of our love and if anyone loves Him not, it is because he does not know Him."<sup>16</sup>

The Muslim who knows Allah—says al-Ghazzali--loves Him inevitably and intensely. Allah's loveliness is one of majesty and might; His is a loftiness of order and beauty. Every excellent thing, every example of splendor, every loved one in the world is

---

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed al Kharraz (899 A.D.), quoted, Margaret Smith. *The Sufi Path of Love*, Luzac and Co., London, 1954, pp. 121-123.

<sup>15</sup> Ikhwan al-Safa (10th cent.), Smith, *Ibid.* p. 123-124.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Ibid.* p. 124.

but a trace of Allah's generosity. Every good is but a spoonful from the sea of His bounty. Every beauty perceived by the intellect or by the senses is only a single grain from the vast storehouses of His power.

Love for God must begin to be experienced here on earth. If someone supposes it is possible to enjoy happiness in the next world apart from love for God in this world he is far gone in error, warns al-Ghazzali. The whole object of the future life is to arrive at God as an object of desire long aimed at and at last attained. Enjoyment of God is man's final goal. But if he had no delight in God before he dies, he will not find pleasure in Him afterward. If his joy in Allah was but slight here, it will be equally slight hereafter. Our future happiness can only be in strict proportion to the degree we now love God."

For the Sufi, the devotional and mystical love of God developed into an enthusiasm which could only be expressed in the sensuous imagery of human romance. Yet outsiders, ancient and modern, err when they complain that Sufis give a sacramental and symbolic interpretation to the wanton indulgence of their passions. Behind the "erotic and bacchanalian symbolism" lies the Muslim challenge to lose the phenomenal self in the exaltation of divine contemplation. ' 8

Language, of course, failed even the most gifted Sufi. The story was told of a certain mystic who had plunged deep into the sea of divine vision, as he put it. When he recovered from his state of ecstasy, a companion pleasantly asked what he had brought back from the garden of Allah. He answered, "It was in my mind, when I saw the rose-bush, to fill my robe with roses and bring them home to you, but their perfume so enraptured me that my skirt slipped from my hand . ""

### **God of Mystic Unity**

From an Egyptian mystical writer of the 10th century we learn

---

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Ibid.* pp. 124-127.

<sup>18</sup> R. A. Nicholson. *The Mystics of Islam*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London, 1969. p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> Sa'di of Shiraz, *Midi* p. 40.

that those who know-God move as God causes them to move, speak the words of God which roll upon their tongues, see via the sight of God which has entered their eyes. <sup>20</sup> As Allah declared to Muhammad, When I love a servant, I the Lord am his ear, so that he hears by Me and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and his tongue, so that he speaks by Me, and his hand, so that he takes by Me." <sup>21</sup> In the experience of religious ecstasy the Muslim attains illumination and union: God is all and there is naught beside Him.

Ecstatic contemplation of God by the divinely illuminated heart and the effacement of the individual self in the presence of Allah can occur only if the Muslim renounces the world. "Beware of this world with all wariness; for it is like to a snake, smooth to the touch, but its venom is deadly. . . For this world has neither worth nor weight with God; so slight it is, it weighs with God so much as a pebble or a single clod of earth...." <sup>22</sup>

The Muslim ascetic turns his back on the world in order to concentrate on the overwhelming power and presence of God. Negative renunciation is matched by positive contemplation. As al-Ghazzali phrased it, the Sufi aims to free the soul from the tyrannical yoke of the passions in order that there should only remain room for God. <sup>23</sup>

For the Sufi, mystical knowledge greatly resembles the gnosis praised by Hellenistic paganism and Gnostic Christianity or what Eastern Orthodox theologians term "deification". Duality disappears; there is no longer any difference between the human and the divine. The veil of otherness is ripped aside; knower and the known coalesce: God and man become one.

A1-Hallaj (d. 931 A.D.) carried this concept to its logical conclusion when he horrified his contemporaries by exclaiming, "I am God! – (Ana'l-Haqq!) Tried by the Muslim court for blasphemy, he was promptly sentenced to death. In the eyes of his

---

<sup>20</sup> Dhu'l-Nun (d. 859 A.D.), R.A. Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sufism*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1923 (1964 edition), p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> A famous traditional saying but not part of the Quran, quoted in Nicholson, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> M. Smith, ed., *Ibid.* p. 79. Written by Al-Basri (728 A.D.).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84, a quotation from *The Confessions of al-Ghazzali*.

judges, al-Hallaj denied the transcendence of Allah and was also guilty of teaching the monstrous Christian doctrine of incarnation. Actually, in the opinion of his defenders, he was merely affirming that the mystic who becomes one with God finds in himself the reality of the divine image which Allah imprinted upon man at creation."<sup>24</sup>

Al-Ghazzali and others refused to sanction the pantheistic implications of al-Hallaj's mysticism. For them Muhammad had to be the mediator between the utterly transcendent Allah and mankind. Muhammad served as the Logos, the connecting link between the world of spirit and the world of matter.

However, al-Ghazzali's solution to the problem of mystical experience was not the only one open to Muslims. A few Islamic mystics felt that al-Hallaj's ecstatic cry, "I am God", offered proof that Islam taught a monistic philosophy. If Allah had no partner, as the Quran maintained, then He alone was real. God is all in all; nothing exists apart from Him. What we see as a world filled with a variety of seemingly independent visible objects is but an imaginary veil covering the sole existence of God.

In memorable poetry Baba Kuhl of Shiraz (1050 A.D.) summarizes the creed and faith of the Islamic monist:

In the market, in the cloister—only God I saw.  
 In the valley and on the mountain—only God I saw. . . .  
 Neither soul nor body, accident nor substance,  
 Qualities nor causes—only God I saw.  
 I opened mine eyes and by the light of  
 His Face around me  
 In all the eye discovered—only God I saw...<sup>25</sup>

It has been said that Allah has as many forms as there are children of Adam. For some Muslims God is the transcendent monarch who creates men to be His slaves. For others He is the cosmic Lawgiver and supreme Judge ordering us to obey His

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson, *Ibid.* pp. 39-40.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *Ibid.* p. 23.

commandments if we wish to be happy here and hereafter. For a third group of believers Allah is our Lover and we are His beloved. And for the mystic He is the source from which we come and to which we return, the goal of our aspirations and the end of our striving: the One and the Only Reality.

## **VII. THE PURPOSE OF CREATION: THREE ASPECTS**

### **The Compact with the Divine**

With the creation of Pakistan after World War II, Islam scored an important psychological and political victory. Liberated from the colonial bondage imposed upon them by the British Empire and free of the social pressures exerted by the Hindu masses, Muslims in the Indian subcontinent welcomed the opportunity to create a modern Islamic Republic. Many Muslims in Asia and elsewhere felt that Pakistan—"the land of the pure"—provided an experiment in Islamic self-government which would inspire fellow-believers throughout the Third World.

One of the most provocative ideologists of Pakistan was Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. In many books and speeches, particularly the pamphlet *Islamic Way of Life*,<sup>1</sup> he sketched a picture of what a nation under God would be like. His work can be favorably compared to the Anglo-Catholic poet T.S. Eliot's *Idea of a Christian Society*. Both men believed that any new social order built upon the ruins of the pre-World War II Establishment must have a religious foundation; both were political conservatives, cultural traditionalists and inspiring writers.

Maududi asserted that the chief characteristic of Islamic ideology is that it does not separate the spiritual life from the mundane. Allah's domain extends over the entire gamut of human interests and activity. Islam "wants to mould individual life as well as the social order in healthy patterns, so that the Kingdom of God may really be established on the earth and so that peace, contentment and well-being may fill the world as waters fill the oceans."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Based on talks given over Radio* Pakistan, Lahore, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Abul Maududi, *Islamic Way of Life*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 1967, p. 1.

According to Muslim teaching God assigned His vicegerency on earth to man. Man has been granted the faculties of thinking, free will and moral judgment for this purpose. As Allah's terrestrial viceroy he also has power to use the resources of the world in any manner he likes, providing his sole objective will be "to merit the pleasure of Allah." If he follows the course of piety he will succeed in this world and the next. However, if a man rejects God's sovereignty by disregarding His commandments, his present life will be one of corruption, disruption and frustration while in the life-to-come he will meet colossal misfortune.

For Maududi, the whole Islamic concept of life is epitomised in a single verse from the Quran:

Verily Allah hath bought of the believers their lives and their properties for the *price* that theirs shall be the Paradise; so they fight in the way of Allah and slay and are slain. It is a covenant which is binding on Him in the Turah (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel) and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful unto his covenant than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph (IX, 3).<sup>4</sup>

Man and God become intimately related because of a bargain struck between them. Muslims refer to this as *Iman*, the act of reposing faith in Allah. *Iman* denotes a solemn contract by which man barter his life and his possessions with Allah in exchange for Paradise hereafter.

Man is free to acknowledge God's overlordship or arrogate to himself the position of total independence. He may regard himself completely autonomous, i.e. unfettered by any higher command or obligation to the Creator. Modern men especially think they enjoy unrestricted rights and powers over all they possess. Hence the need for a bargain.

---

Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> In Christianity a similar covenantal theology was expounded by 17th century Puritans and the 18th century New England Congregationalists. Cf. Perry Miller, *The Puritan Mind*, Beacon Press, Boston.

In Islamic thought the divine-human contract carries with it four stipulations.

First, God puts man to a test to see if he will recognize that his freedom actually comes from his Creator, and will voluntarily surrender his present autonomy in return for a promise about the future.

Second, he pledges all his talents, all his energies, all his possessions to God. Religion becomes an act of total commitment.

Third, for a Muslim, the political order, social organization, economic policy, legal system, international strategy and total culture must be in tune with the Code of Guidance revealed by Allah." <sup>5</sup>

And finally, the will of God is seen in the revealed plan for man's guidance. God not man is the ultimate legal authority in a Muslim society.

Then, because the Muslim should "seek the pleasure of Allah," Islam's moral law does not depend upon the pressure of mass opinion or the legislative and executive powers of a government. Maududi recognizes the fundamental difference between the Islamic state and a democracy in the popular sense. Derived from the ideologues of the French Revolution, secular democracy vests absolute sovereignty in the people. In Islam sovereignty is vested in Allah alone—"He has no partners"—and the people are His caliphs or representatives.

### **The Providence of Beauty**

Educated in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Saudi-Arabia, Abu'l-Kalam Azad (1888-1958) was a progressive Indian Muslim who did much to interpret the Islamic world view in a fashion which appealed to the educated class. In order to modernize Islam he rejected the Sunnah and relied on the Quran alone. <sup>6</sup>

According to Azad the Quran shows us how to look at the universe. By meditating on the meaning of verses dealing with

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 175-185.

creation' one can recognize the relationship between God and His universe. Allah exhibits His influence over the universe in the threefold manifestation of His providence, benevolence and justice.

In Azad's theology, providence means that Allah tenderly nourishes every form of life from moment to moment and stage to stage. Because of the divine plan, everything is carefully supervised in order to attain the fullest possible development. Existence runs smoothly; whatever is needed is provided at the appropriate time and in the appropriate quantity. The creation manifests order and law, uniformity and harmony. As the traditional theologians would say, these are the "habits of God."

Providence nourishes beauty in creation. A second divine attribute—Allah's benevolence—maintains our world with a certain balance in growth leading to perfection. At the heart of the universe is a law of ebb and flow, constriction and expansion, destruction and construction. Construction on every level aims at creating and externalizing the value of beauty. In shaping beauty, the creative flow of nature encounters obstructions and successfully overcomes them. Even what to us looks destructive is in actual fact a means by which new beauty is brought into existence. Beauty therefore becomes the chief clue to a religious understanding of the world.

God's justice too expresses the aesthetic law of balance and beauty in the sphere of ethics. Recompense means nothing but the cause and effect relationships applied to questions of morality. Man is good because he is moved by the fear of punishment and the hope of reward. The good life is the properly balanced one. Morality maintains equilibrium and hence is a further illustration of Allah's love for beauty. Even awesome, majestic titles emphasize justice, an act of balance, and therefore of beauty. Thus beauty for Azad represents the whole purpose of creation.

A Persian mystic put the same idea into memorable verse:

Wherever Beauty peeped out, Love appeared beside it;

wherever Beauty shone in a rosy cheek, Love lit his torch from that flame. Wherever Beauty dwelt in dark tresses, Love came and found a heart entangled in their coils. Beauty and Love are as body and soul; Beauty is the mine and Love the precious stone. They have always been together from the very first; never have they travelled but in each other's company."

### **An Activist for God**

In the writings of M. Iqbal, an Urdu-Persian poet," Indian philosopher and Muslim political theorist (1875-1938) one discovers a reaffirmation of Islam's original dynamism. For a variety of reasons, e.g. the fall of Baghdad in 1258 A.D. during the destructive Mongol invasions, the successful Western imperialist expansion for four hundred years prior to World War I, as well as the decline of the Ottoman Turkish and Moghul Indian empires, Islam was long felt to connote little more than resignation to fate. *Kismet*—*simple* unreflective submission to Allah's inscrutable will—was once thought to be the only Muslim message. Iqbal, a devout Muslim but one educated in the best European universities, changed all that; for him the genuine Islam was activist—creative, world-shaking and world-transforming.

The pith of life is contained in action.  
To delight in creation is the law of Life  
Arise and create a new world!  
Wrap thyself in flames, be an Abraham!°

According to Iqbal the Quran offers a naturalistic philosophy because it teaches that by careful observation of such physical

---

R.A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963, p. 81.

° Urdu is the language of Indian and Pakistani Muslims.

W.C. Smith. *Modern Islam in India*, p. 103. Smith's treatment of Iqbal is weakened because of his semi-Marxist bias. A more objective study can be found in Aziz Ahmad. *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*. Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 141-164.

phenomena as the change from night to day man can understand the energetic purposiveness of God.

Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the *Quran*, it is the habit of Allah. . . ." Nature, then must be understood as a living, growing organism whose growth has no final external limits. Its only limit is internal, i.e., the immanent self which animates and sustains the whole. 1<sub>2</sub>

Obeying the Quranic injunction to examine the physical universe for signs of Allah's presence and power, Iqbal took seriously the cosmology expounded by the modern theoretical physicists, biologists and psychologists. Following Whitehead, he defined nature as a continuous process, "not a static fact situated in an a-dynamic void but rather a structure of events possessing the character of a continuous creative flow."<sup>13</sup> For the physicist the universe consists of free creative movement, a ceaseless flow of unpredictable vitality. Knowledge of God means an understanding of His world. By observing nature the faithful become aware of Allah's behavior; their scientific endeavors virtually represent a kind of intimacy with Him. In effect, they signify a form of worship. The whole world is a mosque, as the Prophet said.

Above the purely physical realm exists the world of living things. Following the vitalistic philosophy of Bergson, Iqbal stressed the fluid, changing, unfinished state of nature, revealed by the biologists. Ours is not "a block universe," a finished product, a static reality. Behind everything visible is an *elan vital*, a restless

---

" This phrase "the habit of Allah" is an ancient Muslim synonym for natural law.

" M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, Pakistan, 1962, p. 56. Iqbal's modernism was inspired by diverse European and Muslim sources: the *élan vital* philosophy of Bergson, the process metaphysics of Whitehead, Nietzsche's writings, George Bernard Shaw's play "Man and Superman", Sufi mysticism, Jamal al-din Afghani's revolutionary Pan-Islamism and Kemal Ataturk's Turkish Republic as well as careful study of the Quran.

<sup>73</sup> (*ibid*, p. 34.

urge, a forward march of the creative spirit.

From his understanding of process physics and vitalistic biology, Iqbal reinterprets the specific role of mankind. Man is a restless being on a ceaseless quest after fresh scopes of self-expression. His life should be viewed as "an organizing principle of unity, a synthetic activity focalizing the dispersing dispositions of the living organism for a constructive purpose."<sup>4</sup> Man is challenged to *organize, synthesize, focalize, dominate, and construct*. Because he is created in God's image, man possesses a rational direction, a creative will, a centralizing ego, a purposive existence.

Like Nietzsche, the Pakistani writer felt that ordinary human beings should strive to become supermen. Christianity, said the German, turns men into slaves because it commands them to be meek, self-less, forgiving, merciful—in a word, spineless. But Islam, declares Iqbal, inspires men to change the world, master nature, conquer the universe in the name of Allah. Muhammad himself illustrates how men should change their society, transform their environment and subjugate their world. Above all else, Islam demands strong-willed, stout-hearted men of action. From the beginning the Muslim has recognized that he is the chosen of God, a soldier of Allah with a prayer on his lips and a sword in his hand.<sup>5</sup>

## **VIII. ADAM AND THE FALL**

### **The Quranic Account**

Like Torah-true Jews and the orthodox Christians, traditional Muslims believe in the primeval Fall of man. In their version, Iblis, the Muslim counterpart to Satan, whose name may well be an Arabic version of the Greek "diabolis," refuses to prostrate himself before Adam at the outset of creation. Unlike the other angels who heed God's command, Iblis in his pride rebels; for which he is

---

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal, *Mid*, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Quite naturally. Iqbal admired iron-willed Europeans like Mussolini and Stalin, men of energy, decisiveness, power—and if necessary, ruthless action. Modern Islam generally applauds military heroes, e.g. Kemal Atatürk of Turkey, Nasser of Egypt, because such figures, in their determination at least, resemble Muhammad.

banished from Allah's presence. However, he is given the right to tempt those he wishes to until the last day, at which time Allah surely "will fill hell with all of you (them)" (VII, 18)<sup>1</sup>.

Very soon, Iblis goes to work on Adam. Though Adam is explicitly warned that Iblis is his enemy and that he should be wary that he might try to cause him to lose the blessings of the Garden, Adam naively forgets his covenant with God and succumbs to Iblis' temptation to eat from the forbidden tree. Though promised immortality and power by Iblis, the result is that when Adam and his wife ate from the tree, they disobeyed their Lord and thus, "their shame became apparent unto them and they began to hide by heaping on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden."

From that point on, earth is made the scene of confrontation between Satan and man, and the Quran warns men not to follow the example of the first parents who lost their "robe of innocence."<sup>2</sup>

The Quran's version of the fall has provoked as much commentary and controversy as that of Genesis. Traditionally Muslims have been inclined to locate "the Garden" in heaven rather than on earth. According to this reading, Satan and man are expelled from a celestial paradise and forced to descend to our earth. Speculative mystics easily connected this view with the Platonic concept that the human spirit has become imprisoned in the world of matter or the Gnostic conviction that the immortal soul is in exile seeking to escape to the God above. Sufi metaphysics contains many descriptions of this descent and ascent of the soul.

According to Muslim doctrine, Muhammad had been instructed to clear up mistakes in the common rabbinic and Christian teaching of the 7th century A.D. Western students of Islam usually explain that the Meccan Prophet obtained his information about the fall from Talmudic tales or Christian stories circulating in Byzantine times. In the latter case they need not have come directly from

---

Quran VII, 11-18. There are three accounts of the Fall in the Quran. They are found in the second, seventh, and twentieth chapters.

<sup>2</sup> For the *Divine Principle* view, cf. Y.O. Kim, *Unification Theology and Christian Thought*, pp. 40-63. For rabbinic, pseudepigraphal and patristic evidence. cf. Y.O. Kim, *Ibid*, pp. 51-57, and F. R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*. Schocken. N.Y., 1968.

Eastern Orthodox tradition but may have originated in Nestorian, Monophysite, Jacobite, Mandaean or Manichaean groups.<sup>3</sup> Another possibility is that Muhammad in mystic trance derived his ideas directly from the world of spirit.

Whatever his source, Muhammad definitely believed in the existence of a supernatural being who was responsible for the fall of the first man and woman. When a Muslim makes his pilgrimage to Mecca, he concludes the ritual in the vicinity of the Holy City by casting seven rocks upon a large stone heap—a symbolic "stoning of Satan." For the Muslim the devil is as real as God.

While some interpreters claim that Iblis is a *jinn*<sup>4</sup>—more familiar in the West as "genii"—the Quranic text indicates that Iblis resembles the figure of Satan in the book of Job.

### Results of the Fall

Sir Mohammad Iqbal notes that a careful study of the Quran reveals that the fall has sexual undertones: "...in an old Babylonian inscription, we find the serpent (phallic symbol), the tree, and the woman offering an apple (symbol of virginity) to the man. The meaning of the myth is clear—the fall of man from a supposed state of bliss was due to the original act of the human pair."<sup>3</sup>

However, the Quran avoided a misapplication of this interpretation. When certain Christians suspected the sexual nature of Adam's fall, they concluded that celibacy was necessary to win back God's favor. Muhammad, as is well-known, was no advocate

---

<sup>3</sup> For a perceptive analysis of Muhammad's possible indebtedness to Syriac Christianity, cf. Andrae, *Ibid*, pp. 98-113.

E.R. Pike, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Religions*, Meridian, N.Y., 1961, p. 212. See also Margoliouth. *Mohammad*, pp. 43-48. In Arabia poets were said to be jinn-possessed. The Quran concludes with two sacred formulae used for exorcising the evil spirits (CXIII, CXIV). In Islamic theology and folklore, *jinn* are supernatural beings with ethereal bodies who can assume the form of humans, cats, dogs, or serpents. They eat, drink, mate with men or women, produce offspring. Some are good, some evil. While seldom referred to in modern theological literature, the *jinn* play an enormous role in popular Islam. Whammed is said to have preached to an assembly of them and converted a number to the Muslim faith.

s M. lybal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, Pakistan, 1962, p. 82.

of that sort of asceticism. To counteract any misinterpretation of the fall, he carefully stressed the difference between love and lust. From Allah came the revelation:

Say: My Lord forbiddeth only indecencies, such of them as are apparent and such as are within. . . .  
(VIII, 33)<sup>6</sup>

From Ibn Sa`d, a 9th century historian, comes an illuminating anecdote about Muhammad's hostility to the ascetic life. One day the companions of the Prophet boasted of how much they were giving up for the sake of Allah. The first said, "I am unmarried." The second said, "I eat no meat." A third said, "I sleep on the bare ground," and a fourth boasted, "I fast continually." Muhammad replied: "Praise be to Allah! I fast and I eat, I keep vigil and I sleep—and I am married. Whoever is not willing to follow my custom does not belong to me!"<sup>7</sup>

The Sufi mystics have their own version of our fallen nature. According to them there are seven stages along the path to God. In the first stage, man's physical nature or carnal mind is dominant. At the beginning man is controlled by his fleshly appetites. The self thus inclines quite naturally toward evil. As the Quran states,

Surely the self orders with utmost force the doing of evil  
(XII, 53).

Vices reign supreme: pride, lust, envy, anger, avarice and hatred. Like the Christian doctrine of original sin, the Muslim concept of man's primary condition emphasizes the animal pleasures which

---

<sup>6</sup> When Islam appeared on the scene, it had to face many groups of religious people who identified piety with sexual abstinence—Syrian and Egyptian monks, Manichaeans of Persia and Hindus in India. For a sizeable percentage of his contemporaries, Muhammad could not be a true prophet from God because he was married.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Andrae, *Ibid.*, p. 182. It must be added that stories of the Prophet's ascetic life also abound, and Islamic mystics were famous for their other-worldliness. For a discussion of the celebrate life in Islam, cf. Margaret Smith, *Rabia the Mystic*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1928, pp. 165-175.

pull the heart in the direction of baseness. He must struggle long and hard and against this first stage of the self and labor diligently to wipe out all its traces." Sufi theologians speak of seven cardinal sins: idolatry, murder, false charge of adultery, wasting the substance of orphans, usury, desertion at a time of the jihad (holy war) and disobedience to parents. Muhammad declared, "The greatest of sins before God is that you call another like unto the God who created you, or that you murder your child from an idea that it will eat your victuals, or that you commit adultery with your neighbor's wife."

Christian missionaries often charge that Islam lacks a profound sense of sin. Sometimes Muslim writers lend support to this criticism. Professor Mahmud Shaltout of al-Azhar University, for example, claims that man is born free from sins and remains free of sin until he is mature and has heard Allah's teachings. When he becomes a responsible adult, hears God's commandments and closes his eyes to them, only then—we are told—is he regarded as a sinner, with exclusive responsibility for his sins.<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian theologian makes this observation in connection with a discussion of the importance of responsible action and the danger of premeditated breaches of the divine Law. The sinner cannot be relieved of his personal responsibility. He cannot lay the blame on an accomplice. To quote the Quran: ". . . no laden one shall bear another's load" (L111, 38). All of which means that Jesus Christ or any Prophet of God cannot carry our sins, bear our iniquities, atone for our wrongdoing or cleanse us of an inherited depravity. As many commentators have pointed out, Islam has no doctrine of the atonement in the orthodox Christian sense because it has no doctrine of original sin in the Augustinian-Calvinistic sense.

For the Quran Adam was the original prophet because he recognized that God was his Creator, knew that he was expected to exercise dominion over the rest of creation and understood that he was supposed to serve faithfully as God's viceroy. Tempted by

---

Hasan Basri Camay in Morgan, *Ibid.* p. 272.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted Zwemer, *Ibid.*, p. 121 from *Mishkat*, III, chap. 2.

<sup>1</sup> M. Shaltout, "Islamic Beliefs and Code of Laws", Morgan, *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Satan, he simply forgot his chief aim in life and ignored his proper duties. For the Muslim man is not totally depraved but terribly forgetful. The allure of the world, the pleasures of life, the lusts of the flesh so easily turn man aside from his primary task of serving Allah.

### Modern Concepts

Since the middle of the 19th century large numbers of Westerners have accepted an evolutionary concept of human origins based on the biological investigations of Charles Darwin and the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. Ahmadiyyah Muslims, originating in 19th century India, interpret the Quran in such a fashion that the alleged conflict between science and religion disappears. Muslim scripture teaches, they say, that man was created through a gradual process. Allah formed man by making him pass through stage after stage and condition after condition. Human beings existed prior to Adam—creatures the Quran calls *jinn*, primitive, undeveloped men living in caves and unable to bear the responsibility of revealed Law."

For Jews and Christians relying on the "corrupted" Old Testament text, Adam is mistakenly considered the first man. For Ahmadiyyah Muslims, Adam was rather the most perfect man of his generation, a person possessing enough intellectual maturity and spiritual development to become the first prophet. When human intellect had arrived at the stage where men were capable of forming a society and living in accordance with an organized system, God sent His revelation to Adam. Adam was appointed vicegerent of Allah, his prophet and earthly representative. From his time on other prophets have been chosen to receive God's revelation, teach men His laws, and rule His community of believers.<sup>12</sup>

---

" Contrast the orthodox concept of jinn explained earlier.

<sup>12</sup> Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud Din Mahmud Ahmad, Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qu'ran, Oriental and Religious Pub.. Rabwah, Pakistan, 1969. pp. 251-253. Since the Quran does not contain any definite assertions that Adam is the first man and omits the creation of Eve from his rib, the Ahmadiyyah reinterpretation becomes possible.

Iqbal, a Shi'ite Muslim modernist, offers still another version of the Adam story. In his poem "The Subjugation of Nature" (Taskhir i Fitrat) the Pakistani philosopher contends that the so-called fall was in reality the first step up a ladder of man's glory.

He declares that there is no reason to suppose that "the Garden" means a supersensual paradise from which man is supposed to have fallen to this earth—the traditional assumption. The Quran describes the earth as our natural dwelling place. It further says we should be grateful to Allah for putting us here. Therefore—claims Iqbal—the notion that God threw us out of heaven because of Adam's disobedience is mistaken. For him, the Garden must refer to "a primitive state in which man. . . does not feel the sting of human wants, the birth of which alone marks the beginning of human culture." <sup>13</sup> Paradise is not a place but a state of mind; "Eden" refers to man's original condition prior to the dawn of self-awareness, self-assertion, self-determination.

At the advent of Adam, however, the whole universe is thrilled. That is, all but Satan, who refuses to bow before Adam because man looks so weak and quiescent. He mocks Adam's passivity and taunts him with being good for nothing but prostrations and supplications. Powerfully and passionately Iblis incites man to discard the static goodness of heaven and come forth into a creative life of struggle and daring endeavor. Why waste one's life in ceaseless adoration of what exists already? Why be satisfied with endless salaaming before God? Satan awakens man's desire, encourages his restlessness. Tempted by a life of action, Adam chooses to carve out a world for himself, to assert himself, to master the universe. The submissive Adam becomes the conquering Adam, the man of triumphant will-power.

Iqbal concludes his poem with a picture of Adam facing the Last Judgment. Man explains why he has acted as he did. He defends and justifies his restless activity. Adam left paradise in order to develop his personality. He became fascinated with the material world in order to conquer it. Man should not be ashamed

---

<sup>13</sup> Iqbal, *Mid*, pp. 84-85.

of his "sin" of disobedience and defiance. How else could he dominate nature? How else could he imitate the creativity and mastery of Allah? The true purpose of creation for man is not submission but supremacy."

From many angles Iqbal appears very un-Islamic—a defender of Nietzsche's superman rather than a disciple of Muhammad. He argues, however, that his studies of Western philosophy, literature and politics enabled him to discover the real genius of Islam: a zeal to subjugate the whole universe in the name of Allah the almighty. He envisions a second Adam, who out of his own determination and devotion, will create of our world a new Garden of Eden.

## **IX. MUSLIM MESSIANISM**

### **Moses and Muhammad**

Some Islamic apologists—especially those from the Ahmadiyah Movement—claim that the Jewish scriptures contain prophecies predicting the work of Muhammad. Since most Christians are totally unaware of such claims they deserve some consideration in our book.

*Deuteronomy* contains two brief texts which have exerted enormous influence over Jewish and Christian messianism. Moses tells the Hebrews:

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken (18:15).

And three verses later, God says to Moses:

I will raise them up a prophet from among their breth-

---

W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1946, p. 105. Smith's judgment is not uncommon: "Any modern Muslim who would talk about religion must begin where Iqbal left off; otherwise he is hardly worth listening to" (p. 110). Pakistan has recognized how much Islam owes to him by setting aside an annual holiday in his honor.

This Muslim sect originating in 19th century India was committed to missionary work among the Christians.

ren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die (18:18-20).

In the introduction to his commentary on the Quran Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad argues that this Mosaic prophecy could not apply to any Jewish prophet prior to Jesus and that Christians falsely apply it to the Nazarene.

Why?

One, the Promised Prophet was to promulgate a new Law. But Jesus was not a law-giver, as he admitted quite explicitly:

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets. . . (Matt. 5:17-18).

Two, the Prophet was to come not from Israel but from among the *brethren* of Israel. Arabs trace their ancestry back to Ishmael, the brother of Isaac and son of Abraham. An Arab therefore could be quite correctly called one of the brethren of Israel. A Jew, however, would be one of the Israelites and *not a brother* of the Hebrew people.

Three, God says, "I will put my words in his mouth." The Gospels tell the story of Jesus but do not consist of words which God put in Jesus' mouth. Muhammad, however, in the Quran quite definitely does nothing but recite a divine message transmitted to him at the hands of the archangel.

Four, *Deuteronomy* predicts the appearance of a prophet. For Christians Jesus is not a prophet but the son of God.

Five, the prophecy speaks of "words which he shall speak in my name." To quote Hadrat Mirza Bashir, "Strange as it may

---

seem, there is in the Gospels not a single example of words which Jesus may be said to have received from God with the command to pass them on to the people whom he taught."<sup>2</sup>

And six, the Prophet promised in *Deuteronomy* was to give the world a complete and comprehensive teaching. Jesus professed no such mission. He urged his disciples to await a revelation of additional truth in the future.

So far, the Ahmadiyyah argument has been negative in form. The positive counterpart is put no less vigorously. If Jesus was not the predicted Prophet to follow Moses, Muhammad was.

One, Muhammad was a descendant of Ishmael and therefore came from among the *brethren* of Isaac.

Two, he specifically claimed to be a prophet like Moses. As the Quran states, "Verily We have sent to you a Messenger, who is a witness over you, even as We sent a Messenger to Pharaoh" (73:16).

Three, whereas Muhammad specifically answered the prophetic call, Jesus seems to have thought of himself as the Messiah for the Jews rather than "one of the prophets" (Mk. 8:27-30).

Four, "Muhammad brought to the world the *Quran* which is from beginning to end only the Word of God, which God put into his mouth."<sup>3</sup> Every chapter begins: – In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful"; every verse contains a direct revelation.

Five, the Prophet-to-come would speak all that he was commanded. In the eyes of Muslims, Muhammad taught everything and kept nothing back. In Jesus's time men were not ready to receive God's whole message but by Muhammad's time they had evolved sufficiently to hear the complete revelation, say the Ahmadiyyah Muslims.

And six, *Deuteronomy* threatens the false prophet with certain death. The Holy Prophet, however, died "full of success." All Arabia had declared its faith *in* him and after his death his caliphs

---

<sup>2</sup> Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud Din Mahmud Ahmad, *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qur'an*. Oriental and Religious Pub. Corp.. Rabwah, Pakistan, 1969, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55.

spread Islam very quickly throughout most of the then known world. Allah protected Muhammad from the attacks of his enemies. According to the Jewish Torah if he had been a pretender he would have been killed.

Ahmadiyyah Muslims conclude:

In short, 1900 years before the advent of the Prophet of Islam, Moses declared that his own Law was, in the Divine scheme, not the last Law; that the world was to have a fuller Law later on; and that, for this, God would send in the Latter Days another Messenger of His. This Messenger was **to** teach all truths; it was he who was to mark the last stage in the spiritual advance of man. The world had to wait for another book and another Prophet.'

As we can see, Ahmadiyyah theologians provide an unusual commentary on the Judeo-Christian scriptures which deserves far greater study than it has so far received. Particularly noteworthy is the reminder that the Torah is not to be considered the final revelation and that Moses himself looked forward to a prophetic successor equal to himself. The Muslim interpretation of Jesus in respect to the Deuteronomic prophecy is, to say the least, extremely provocative and merits careful attention as well.

### **Isaiah, Jesus and Muhammad**

Christians, particularly at Christmastide and Easter, are fond of quoting prophecies from Isaiah to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. Ahmadiyyah Muslims also quote this Jewish prophet to prove that Muhammad was the long-awaited one:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the

---

' Ibid, p. 56.

Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem (4:1-3).

Like Christians, Islamic exegetes insist that references to Jerusalem, Zion, etc. in Old Testament prophecies should not be interpreted literally but symbolically. Jerusalem and Zion refer to "My holy places," Israel to "My select people," not a specific city, a mountain or inhabitant of Palestine.

For Muslim apologists, Isaiah 4:1-3 can only apply to the Prophet of Islam and no one else. The Promised Prophet, "the Branch of the Lord," will bring with him wealth and material splendor. He will have treasures of the earth laid at his feet. And polygamous marriages will be the rule at this time. Do any such signs apply to Jesus? asks the Muslim. Did the Nazarene inaugurate an age of visible wealth and outward splendor? Did he sanction polygamy? Muhammad then, not Jesus, was the one predicted by the ancient Hebrew prophet—for the Muslim leader did all these things.

Isaiah 5:26-30 is likewise interpreted as a prophecy of the appearance of Muhammad:

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and behold, they shall come with speed swiftly, etc.

According to a Muslim interpretation of this passage, a time was to come long after Isaiah's death—when somewhere outside Palestine, a man would raise a flag. He would thus call to the various nations of the Near East, who would swiftly answer his summons and rally around his banner. Those who responded would become zealous soldiers taking part in numerous wars for the new cause. So sudden would be their advance and so startling

their victories that men would compare them to a whirlwind. To what else, exclaim the Muslims, could the prophecy refer other than the brilliant successes of the Islamic armies under Muhammad and his immediate successors?

Even a Christian missionary like Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer, who devoted his life to combating Islam, has to admit that the Prophet was extraordinarily successful. After mentioning the birth of Muhammad, this Protestant writer remarks:

One hundred years later the name of this Arab, joined to that of the Almighty, was called out from ten thousand minarets five times daily from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic, and his new religion was sweeping everything before it in three continents. What is the explanation of this marvel of history?<sup>5</sup>

Among Isaiah's prophecies, none is as famous as the one:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall he called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (9:6-7)

Christians may be somewhat shocked to learn that Ahmadiyah Muslims apply this prophecy to Muhammad instead of Jesus. All commentators agree that the passage predicts the coming of a king whose subjects will honor with four (or five) titles. Muslim exegetes follow the older translations by treating "Wonderful" and "Counsellor" as two separate ascriptions of praise whereas

---

<sup>5</sup> Zwemer, *Islam: A Challenge to Faith*, Student Volunteer Movement, N.Y., 1907, p. 29.

recent Bibles combine them to read "Wonderful Counsellor." This seemingly insignificant difference becomes important, as we shall see.

According to Ahmadiyya apologists, not one of the signs mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy can apply to Jesus but all of them are appropriate in regard to the work of Muhammad. Did Jesus ever become a king? they ask. Were these titles that Isaiah mentions ever applied to the Jesus of history?

Since the Quran affirms the virgin birth of Jesus (a doctrine which some scholars say Muhammad learned from Syriac monks) Ahmadiyya Muslims concede that on the basis of his miraculous origin Jesus could have been called "Wonderful"—i.e. someone arousing awe or amazement. But this title does not seem to have been proposed by any of the Gospel writers or the disciples.

Muhammad was well-known as a wonderful counsellor. A whole nation of Arabs turned to him for advice. In the Quran it is clearly recognized that everyone consulted the Prophet, so much so that he instituted a voluntary fee for his services, with the proceeds used to help the poor (LVIII:13). Consulting Muhammad had become a regular institution in the Arabian peninsula. He later instituted the system of consultation as an essential condition of good government. Jesus by contrast seldom consulted with anyone and never did so on any considerable scale. The founder of Christianity, unlike the head of the new nation of Islam, was never in a position to play that public role.

Jesus gave no exhibition of his "might" and no one in the Gospels ever described him as "mighty," the Muslims remind us. Both friend and foe testified to the utter powerlessness of the Nazarene. If he had possessed some power, his disciples would not have deserted him and fled. Muhammad, by contrast, had to shoulder the responsibilities of State and found himself a virtual king. Jesus constantly dreamed of assuming royal power, yet never had the opportunity. Muslims quote Matt. 21:4-5, 27 and Lk. 23:1-3 as proof of Jesus' kingly ambitions.

Isaiah prophesied that the one-to-come would be given the title "Mighty God." In the Bible, insist the Muslims, Jesus is

called son of God, nothing more. Muhammad can more legitimately be called "a Manifestation of God." He resembled Moses as a prophet and therefore like the Hebrew Lawgiver could be compared to God. In Exodus, the Lord says to Moses, "See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh" (7:1) and earlier, ". . .thou shalt be to him (Aaron) instead of God" (4:16). Islam takes special pains not to deify the Prophet in any way while emphasizing his closeness to Allah.

In this argument, the Ahmadiyya theologian fails to mention that for large numbers of Christians, Jesus Christ is worshipped as the mighty God—even if Isaiah's original title for the king-to-come probably had no "Incarnational" meaning. In Muhammad's day, especially among Syriac Christians and Monophysite churchmen, Jesus was often considered a completely divine being, one in substance and of like nature with God the Father. Even the Prophet's monotheism represented in part a direct attack upon the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ professed by Nicean Creed churchmen.

On this matter the Quran offers disagreeable advice to 7th century Christians:

Allah will ask, "O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?' " Jesus will answer, "Holy art thou. I could never say that to which I had no right. . .I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me— 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord' " (5:117-119).

The coming one is to be called "everlasting Father." In the opinion of the Ahmadiyya apologist, this cannot apply to Jesus because he foretold the advent of one with greater truth to reveal. Jesus admitted his teaching was not complete or final. Muhammad, however, unambiguously claimed a lasting character for his teaching. His message was universal and eternal. It was addressed to all men in all ages.

---

Finally, Muhammad deserves praise as the Prince of Peace. Islam quite literally means "peace": in Arabic, *salaam*, in Hebrew, *shalom*. Muhammad became a ruler who because of his wise judgment and impartial justice could guarantee a peaceful social order. Even when he had the power to punish his enemies he chose to forgive.

Jesus neither functioned as a Prince of Peace nor ascended to the throne of David. Christians ruled Palestine for about 300 years—from Constantine's conversion to the appearance of Islam; Muslims controlled it for 1300 years. Who then have more truly been seated on the throne of David—Christians or Muslims? <sup>6</sup>

One final prophecy from *Isaiah* completes the Ahmadiyya case. Again, a passage which in no way fits the ministry of Jesus fits nicely in the mission of Muhammad, say the Muslims.

And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day; and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, and they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it... In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptian shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (19:21-25).

Assyria, Egypt and Israel (Palestine) became one people with one language and one faith as a direct result of the rise of Islam. Even though all three countries were previously ruled by the Byzantine emperors of Constantinople, they were far less politically, culturally, religiously and linguistically unified than they became after the Arab conquest. Islam gave the Near East one ruler—the caliph, one language—Arabic, one holy book—the

---

<sup>6</sup> /hid, p. 71.

Quran, and one God—Allah. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled by more than a millennium of Muslim unity.

With the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire before and after World War I, however, Islam's political cohesiveness was largely shattered. Nevertheless, the Arab re-awakening and the Pan-Islamic movement offer some hope for a gradual re-unification of the Muslim world. Most followers of Muhammad look forward with reasonable confidence to a new fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction. As for the Zionist State of Israel and the rivalries among ambitious Arab rulers, these are felt to be temporary irritants and anomalies which will surely vanish because of Allah's justice, Muslim zeal and Arab determination.

### **Daniel and Islam**

Ahmadiyyah Muslims offer in addition a new interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's famous dream recorded in *Daniel*. The Babylonian monarch, we recall, envisioned a huge image with a golden head, silver arms, brass thighs, iron legs and clay feet, which was suddenly smashed to pieces and blown away by the wind (2:31-45). The Hebrew prophet Daniel was able to read the hidden meaning of this dream, a practice which traditional Islam (as well as biblical Judaism) believes is a way for God to reveal the future.

According to most Jewish and Christian commentators, Nebuchadnezzar's dream referred to Babylon (the gold head), the empire of the Medes and Persians (the silver breast and arms), Alexander the Great's Macedonian empire (the brass thighs), and imperial Rome (the iron legs). Islamic exegetes, however, see in the sudden destruction of the statue a symbolic prediction of the rise of Muslim power. Jewish scholars had earlier explained it as pointing to the ruin of all Israel's oppressors, and Christians (sometimes) view it as a premonition of the eventual triumph of the Church.

*Daniel* mentions a stone which smote the image, grew in size until it became a great mountain and finally filled the whole earth (2:34-35). Christians sometimes claim that the stone symbolizes

Jesus Christ, the victory of Christianity over pagan Rome and the world-wide preaching of the Gospel. For Ahmadiyya Muslims, such an interpretation is mistaken. Here we have a clear prediction of the rise of Islam, they maintain.

The stone responsible for breaking the immense idol, i.e. Rome, could not be Jesus because he was unable to conquer the empire. In the Gospels he applies this prophecy to one with greater truth who appears long after his own death. Jesus labored merely as a herald for the coming one who possesses a complete knowledge of God, i.e. Muhammad.

Nor, declare the Muslims, can Christians identify the stone of Daniel's prophecy with the Church. After Constantine and for more than a thousand years, the Roman Empire was the temporal expression of the Christian Church, and thus the Church was not a separate entity from the State. Thus, the Church (stone) could not smash Rome (the idol).'<sup>7</sup>

Daniel's prophecy therefore points to Muhammad and his followers who fulfill the Old Testament prediction by destroying the might of the Roman empire. Since Islam defeated Caesar, the stone did become a great mountain, as the Bible promised, and for a millennium the direction of world affairs remained in the hands of Muslims. At least so claims the Ahmadiyyan exegete.

## Jesus

Since Islam appeared six centuries after the birth of Christianity in an area where various forms of post-Nicean churchmanship were known, it was natural that Muhammad gave his disciples an explanation of Jesus' life and work. Islamic tradition contains a large number of sayings attributed to Jesus which are not found in the canonical gospels. Some may be authentic; others could be borrowed from the teachings of the Christian communities of the Near East; many may reflect what pious Muslims thought were appropriate for the Prophet of the Graeco-Roman peoples and the Messiah of the Jews. For the Prophet the Torah of Moses and

---

<sup>7</sup> Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din, *Ibid*, p. 75. Material within parentheses added for purpose of clarification.

Gospel of Jesus were authentic preparatory revelations for his final Word from God. Christian authorities ordinarily attribute Muhammad's views to his acceptance of Christian opinions circulating in his day; the Prophet himself, of course, claimed that he had received an undistorted picture of Jesus directly revealed to him by Allah.

As briefly as possible, we will give the Quranic account and Muslim commentary upon it. To some extent the focus will be placed on the differences between Muslim and Christian Christology.<sup>8</sup>

## **Mary**

By the seventh century Mary, the mother of Jesus, was greatly venerated in the Eastern Church, and at least among the Orthodox of Syria and the Monophysites of Egypt and Ethiopia she was commonly called nothing less than —"Theotokos"—the bearer or mother of God. Islam holds Mary in high esteem but explicitly denies that she is the equal, associate, or mate of Allah. In this view, Muslims agree with the Nestorian Christians of that period.

Lo! Allah preferred Adam and Noah and the Family of Imran above all His creatures. .

Remember when the wife of Imran said: My Lord! I have vowed unto Thee that which is in my belly as a consecrated offering. . . .

And when she was delivered she said: My Lord! Lo! I am delivered of a female...I have named her Mary (Maryam, Miriam), and lo! I crave thy protection for her and for her offspring from Satan the outcaste.

And her Lord accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth and made Zachariah her guardian. Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary where she was, he found that she had food. He said: O Mary! Whence cometh unto thee this food?

---

<sup>8</sup> A well-documented and objective study is provided by Professor Geoffrey Parrinder of the University of London: *Jesus in the Qur'an*, Barnes and Noble, N.Y., 1965.

She answered: It is from Allah. Allah giveth without stint to whom He will. (Quran III, 33, 35-37)<sup>9</sup>

The Quranic account must be understood in line with the widespread Mariolatry of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Mary is mentioned by name 34 times in the Quran (as opposed to 19 in the New Testament). She is said to be either the daughter or the descendent of Imran, the father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.<sup>10</sup> Like the vestal virgins of ancient Rome, Mary lives in the temple. Christians in the patristic age also believed this, though there is no Old or New Testament evidence of women residing in the Jerusalem sanctuary.

According to the Quran III, 44, the Jerusalem priests argued for the right to serve as guardian over the innocent and beautiful Mary, and thus cast lots for this privilege.

That Zachariah, the priest and father of John the Baptist, was selected to be the guardian of Mary is a fact not mentioned in the New Testament. This would put him in much more intimate contact with her than our canonical gospels suggest. If this were the case—Zachariah serving as the protector and foster parent of Mary—the Quran has preserved a valuable fragment of early Christian tradition which for one reason or another the Church omitted when it compiled the gospels." Like Christians, Muslims have offered a variety of conjectures concerning the nativity of Jesus. Some affirm the virgin birth doctrine but deny that this gave Jesus any unusual status. If Jesus had no father, he was still inferior to Adam who was created without either mother or father.'<sup>2</sup> Some say the angel made Mary pregnant by simply blowing in her sleeve'<sup>3</sup>; some, that the angel appeared in the form of Joseph so as not to frighten her; some, that God merely commanded, "So be it!" and Mary immediately conceived. Several modern Muslims

<sup>9</sup> Pickthall translation.

<sup>10</sup> Numbers, 26:59.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Y.O. Kim, 'ibid, pp. 113-116.

<sup>12</sup> Parrinder. Ibid, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> This curious notion is connected with the idea that God gave life to His creation by breathing on it or filling it with His breath.

deny the virgin birth legend and claim that Jesus was the legitimate child of Joseph and Mary.'<sup>4</sup>

### **The Crucifixion**

A major disagreement between Muslims and Christians concerns the death of Jesus Christ. For believers in the Quran the Nazarene prophet did not die on the cross.<sup>5</sup> However, the Quranic text parallels the traditional account of Docetic Christians. Docetics denied that Jesus had a material body or died a physical death. He came from God the Father, merely looked like an ordinary human being, did not suffer the pain of crucifixion but simply returned to the world of spirit from which he originated. Some such view was held in certain sections of the church prior to the writing of the Johannine epistles because that author denounces Docetism.

Several Christian and semi-Christian writers (e.g. Basilides and Mani) suggested that someone substituted for Jesus and was crucified. Since Simon of Cyrene is reported to have carried the cross for Jesus, it has been conjectured that he was crucified in place of the Nazarene. Baidawi, a Muslim authority, believed that one of the disciples volunteered to die for his master. Tabari, another Muslim writer, reports that Joshua, a Jewish leader, was made to look like Jesus and despite his protests was nailed to the cross. As late as 1952 an Egyptian novelist asserted that Judas was executed rather than Jesus.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan, an Indian Muslim theologian of the late 19th century, contended that Jesus was nailed to the cross but taken from it after three hours while still alive. Muhammad Ali also believed that Jesus survived the pain of the crucifixion and was later taken away by friends. For Ahmadiyya Muslims, Jesus was removed from the cross, hidden by his disciples and in time escaped to Kashmir where he much later died.'<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Ali, *Translation and Commentary on the Holy Qur'an*, 4th ed., Lahore, Pakistan, 1951, pp. 141f., 597. Quoted by Parrinder, *Ibid*, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> For Quranic account, see Chapter IV. verses 155.159.

<sup>6</sup> Parrinder, *Ibid*, p. 113. Ahmadiyya Muslims claim that they have discovered Jesus' final burial place—the grave of a Muslim saint Yus Asaf. Yus is supposed to be a corruption

From the standpoint of Unification theology, the Muslim account of the crucifixion is interesting because it gives confirmation of the view that Jesus did not come just to die on the cross. The Quran reminds us that at least some Christians as late as the seventh century believed that Christ escaped the agony of the crucifixion.

Islam also denies the so-called theology of the saving cross associated with medieval Latin piety and fundamentalistic Protestantism. For Muhammad and his later followers Jesus served as the Messiah, the servant of Allah, the prophet of divine revelation and the teacher of God's love even if—in their opinion—he did not die on the cross. Muslims may disagree over exactly what happened at Golgotha but they are united in their conviction that the crucifixion was not part of God's plan for the redemption of mankind nor was it the conscious intent of Jesus himself.

### **Criticism and Commendation of Jesus**

In the light of thirteen centuries of unhappy relations between Christians and Muslims, it is not surprising that Jesus himself has been the subject of spirited Islamic criticism. Since Ahmadiyya Muslims are now engaged in widespread missionary work to convert churchmen, their allegations against the founder of the Christian religion are worth noting. Quoting the Bible to prove their points, they charge that Jesus-

1. was given to drunkenness,
2. exceeded all bounds in vulgar abuse of the Jews,
3. was a coward, afraid of death,
4. disrespectful to his mother,
5. friendly with women of questionable character,
6. often became angry and lost his temper,
7. was weak and helpless,
8. his teachings were too idealistic and impractical,

---

of the Arabic *Jasu* ("Jesus") and *Asaf* ("the gatherer" in Hebrew) refers to the Messiah's role in gathering together again the ten lost tribes of Israel. Murray T. Titus, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, YMCA Press, Calcutta, India, 1959, pp. 258-259.

9. he was very provincial in outlook, limiting his message to Jews,
10. his mission was a failure,
11. he did not die on the cross and there was no physical resurrection."

By and large, Muslims have been deeply respectful of Jesus and at least in recent years have often stressed the similarities between the two sister faiths. Rather typical are the sentiments of a famous Indian Muslim: "Muhammad never ceased saying that he had come to attest and complete the mission of Jesus and His predecessors, who were God's messengers like himself. The greatest and best rule of human conduct which Jesus laid down was 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' This is quite consistent with human nature, and is the most comprehensive rule of conduct which has ever been laid down for the guidance of mankind. To my mind, there is no better proof of the identity in spirit of Christianity and Islam than the confirmation of Christ's command by Muhammad himself. No one will be a faithful Muslim until he loves his neighbor as he loves himself. For this reason, I believe that there is no difference between the two religions, if the metaphysical doctrines engrafted on both be eliminated. Thus Islam is true Christianity writ short: <sup>18</sup>

### **The Imam and Mahdi**

For Jews the Messiah is the long-awaited man "anointed of God" to provide the chosen people and the world at large with a just, durable and peaceful social order in accordance with the Torah and God's ultimate purpose for mankind. For Christians Jesus was the Messiah (Greek: "Christ") who came to fulfill that hope, teach men the religion of love, serve as an example of what God expects of His children, cleanse them of original sin, and

---

<sup>17</sup> Murray T. Titus, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, YMCA Press, Calcutta, India, 1959, PP. 264-265.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Ahmad Hussain, *Notes on Islam*, Hyderabad, n.d., pp. 84, quoted by Titus, *Ibid*, p. 247.

point them toward the kingdom to come—wherein God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Since the first advent did not fully accomplish this, traditional Christianity looks forward to a return of the Messiah to complete the restoration of the world. Like many Christians, not all Muslims expect an end of the world in the immediate future. However, Sunnite doctrine teaches that at some future time, a Mahdi will come to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Shiites believe that this Mahdi to come will be the hidden Imam they have long awaited. For Muslims the Imam-Mahdi is a figure with a function comparable to that of the Christian Messiah. Thus, like Judaism and Christianity, Islam can be called a messianic faith.

### **The Doctrine of the Imam**

For Shi`ite Muslims the Imam holds the most exalted position available to man, second only to the Prophet Muhammad. Besides being considered the living Proof of God, he is called the Caliph of God, the Representative of those sent in the past (e.g., the Prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus), the Guardian of the secrets of the two worlds, the Last Gift of God, the Door of approach to God, the Light of God that will never be extinguished.<sup>19</sup>

Majlisi's *Life of Hearts*, a work of the late 17th century written by the most famous Persian theologian, provides a full explanation of the Imam in Shi`ite thought.<sup>20</sup> As in the Quran God says to Abraham, "Truly I appoint you as a Leader (imam) of men" (II, 118), an 8th century thinker declared: ". . .so the Lord of the Worlds has not left your members and senses without an *imam* or guide to explain what He desires and to banish their doubts. Can **we** think, therefore, **that** He has left all creation in confusion and has not given mankind an *imam* in order that they may take their doubts and uncertainties to him, that he may guide them to the truth and set them free from doubt?"<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 247.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. extensive quotations from this book in Dwight M. Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, Luzac and Co., London, 1933, pp. 305-319.

<sup>21</sup> Donaldson, *Ibid*, p. 313, the words of Hisham ibn Salin, a supporter of Iman Ja'far as-Sadik (d. 765 A.D.).

The Imams asserted: "We are the leaders of the Muhammadans and the Proofs of God among all men, and through us, on the Day of Judgment, the Shi'ites will approach Paradise with their faces and hands and feet pure white, as though they had been washed with light. As the leaders of the faithful we will save the people of the Earth from the wrath of God. As long as the stars are the guards of the sky, the angels also have no fear of the Judgment, for as long as we are on the Earth the Judgment will not come and punishment will not occur. But when we shall be taken from the Earth, this will be a sign of its destruction and of the death of all those dwelling upon it. . . ." <sup>22</sup>

Two corollary beliefs about the Imam follow from his high position. First, as the representative of God, the Imam is sinless. Since there are definite statements in the Quran that all men, including Muhammad, are subject to sin, the Shi'ite theologians have to qualify their belief in the sinless Imam. Sometimes the Imam himself must repent. Though usually the Imams' "desires are fixed on God and his service, and their thoughts are bound to exalted things," they occasionally "descend from these heights, and busy themselves in eating or drinking or in sexual matters, things that are inconsequential" and voluntarily "call these acts sinful and ask forgiveness for them." <sup>23</sup> Second, the Imam recognizes that all his purity, knowledge and talent are bestowed upon him as a gift—revealing the great kindness of God. For any human to be chosen to the imamate is nothing less than an act of divine grace. For the Shi'ite, therefore, the Imam serves as the mediator before God on behalf of his followers. <sup>24</sup> By following the Imam, they will be recipients of Allah's mercy.

The classic Imam for Shi'ite Muslims was Husain, the son of Ali. Husain was one of many casualties of the bloody disagree-

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pp. 309-310.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 328.

<sup>24</sup> For both Sunnite and Shi'ite Muslims, Muhammad is believed to be their intercessor on the Day of Judgment. In fact, all prophets, martyrs and Islamic holy men can intercede with God on behalf of their fellow Muslims. A popular tradition claims that 70,000 will be able to enter Paradise because of the intercession of a single faithful believer, sheikh or saint.

ments among those claiming to be Muhammad's successors, but because he died for his faith, he is treated as a valuable intercessor with God. His death is therefore commemorated as a voluntary and redemptive offering for the sins of the Muslim world. <sup>25</sup>

### **The Hidden Imam**

According to Twelve-Imam Shi'ism, Imam Hasan al-Askari of Iraq (d. circa 865 A.D.) appointed his six or seven-year-old son to succeed him. This child, Muhammad, seems to have been a remarkable person about whom all kinds of marvelous tales have been preserved." When Imam Hasan died, his words to his son were: "O my dear child, you are the Master of the Age, you are the Mahdi, you are the Proof of God on earth, my child, my Representative, and, as my offspring, you are Muhammad, my good son, a child of the Apostle, the last of the Imams, pure and virtuous. The Apostle of God has informed the people about you. -

Imam Hasan passed away, and soon after, the son disappeared. According to one story, he walked down the steps into the cellar of his home and vanished. Some sceptics of the time say that Hasan never had an heir. Others claim a boy was born who died during the Imam's lifetime. Shiites, however, believe he is still alive but in concealment, and by God's will he shall reappear at the End of Time. Iranian Muslims treasure a large number of stories about this Hidden Imam—how he miraculously reappeared at the funeral of his father, how he has revealed himself to believers in time of need, etc. For centuries it has been believed that the Hidden Imam can help those who send him brief letters. In Majlisi's handbook for pilgrims, a sample form is provided for those who wish to contact the concealed Master of the Age. These practices may be dismissed with derision by Westerners, but they testify to

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Donaldson, *Ibid.* pp. 79-100, 341-343.

<sup>26</sup> At the moment of birth he exclaimed, "I testify that there is no God but God, and that my grandfather was the Apostle of God and that my father was the Friend of God." His aunt, it is said, discovered to her amazement that he was born already circumcised. Another story relates how the baby was carried away by the birds to be taught by the Holy Spirit for 40 days. It is also reported that he grew in a month as much as ordinary children do in a year. His aunt testified that by the time a very few years had passed the child had become a grown man.

an apocalyptic dimension to Islam. For the Muslim, as for the follower of Jesus, life can be infused with eschatological and messianic hope. Orthodox Christianity awaits the second coming of Christ; Shiite Islam looks forward to the reappearance of the concealed Imam. In many ways there are remarkable parallels between the Messiah-to-come and the long-expected Mahdi.

According to the Shi'ite theologian, on the Day of Judgment a great resurrection of the dead will occur. The most evil men will return to earth to be punished for their wickedness, especially their persecution of the faithful. This resurrection will be limited to both the notorious evildoers and the Muslim saints and martyrs. Others will remain in their graves. In this preliminary judgment, followers of the Hidden Imam will be able to punish their oppressors. Ali himself will return to earth, carrying the staff of Moses and wearing the magical ring of Solomon. He will rally his supporters, assemble a vast army of Shiites on the banks of the Euphrates, and march off to destroy Satan and his host of infidels. Then Muhammad (the Prophet) who is the Hidden Imam will appear with well-armed battalions of angels. When Satan sees him he will recognize that his cause is lost. Finally—so the Muslim story goes—Muhammad will thrust a spear of light into Satan and God's victory will become assured.

Another prophecy, equally dramatic, describes the appearance of Sa'if ibn Said, the Anti-Christ or Dajjal (The Deceiver), who will attract a multitude of followers. According to the Muslim apocalypticists, the Anti-Christ will be a Jew and the son of a sorcerer. How can we know when he comes? Islamic writers warn that the approach of Dajjal will be marked by several ominous signs. Large numbers of people will no longer pray. Religion will lose its grip on the masses. Moral laxity will become widespread and fashionable. There will no longer be any of the traditional respect for law and order. And at least since Ibn Babawaihi, who died in 1053 A.D., Muslims have predicted that a women's liberation movement of the most shocking sort will signal the End of the Age.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> · Kamal ad-Din (The Perfection of Religion), Teheran, lith., 1883, p. 290, quoted in Donaldson, *ibid.*, p. 240.

Ever since the Twelfth Imam disappeared from his home in Samarra, pious Muslims have visited a shrine erected in his honor. At the entrance to the cellar into which the Hidden Imam vanished the faithful pilgrim prays for his return to inaugurate God's kingdom. With intense longing and great hope, the Muslim pleads to the long-awaited Mahdi: "I bear witness that thou art the established truth, that there can be no mistake or doubt, and that God's promise of thy coming is sure. But I am dismayed at thy tarrying so long, and do not have patience to wait for the distant time. . . O my Leader, if I am living on the bright day of thy coming, with its glittering standard, then am I thy servant to command. May I have opportunity for martyrdom before thee!"<sup>28</sup>

## **X. MUSLIMS AND MARXISTS**

Prior to World War II, aside from the Muslims in the Soviet Union, Marxism had little effect on *Dar al-Islam*, the people of Allah. For the Lebanese or Syrian the real enemy was the French soldier encamped on his soil; for the Iraqi, Iranian and Egyptian the chief task of the Muslim was to rid the Middle East of the British administrator and colonial advisor. Imperialism rather than communism held back Islamic hopes and frustrated Muslim ambitions, it was said.

As far as Marxist-Leninist propaganda made any impact on the exceedingly small coterie of intellectuals it was used as a means for criticizing the West. The Muslim was anti-European rather than pro-communist. In the opinion of an Indian intellectual, for example, the West meant capitalism which had produced "an inhuman economic system, an unjust social organization, a bitter conflict among groups and classes, a craze for armaments, a perpetual threat of impending wars and above all, a life of hurry, strain, frustration and an incapacity or distaste for the quiet enjoyment of humane culture."<sup>1</sup> Marxist denunciations of capitalism simply reinforced Muslim enmity for the colonial oppressor.

---

<sup>28</sup> Donaldson. *Ibid*, p. 248.

<sup>1</sup> K.G. Sayyidayn, a disciple of Iqbal, quoted in W.C. Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, p. 113.

Hence, a few Muslim activists reinterpreted the ancient concept of the *jihad* (the battle against the infidels) as a call to social reform and revolutionary change: "Go and fight, – commands the Quran. "Fight the devil in your own bosom first and fight evil outside. . . . Fight the devil of dirt and uncleanness in your surroundings, fight the devils of disease and poverty, fight malaria, fight plague, fight cholera, fight ignorance and illiteracy, fight the fat capitalist who defrauds and exploits the poor, fight the religious hypocrite who cheats the people under his cloak of piety, fight those who would deprive you of your birthright of free manhood. .

As for the political and economic programme of Soviet communism, most Muslim intellectuals condemned it as a new version of western materialism. In a famous poem, Iqbal consigned Lenin to hell alongside Kaiser Wilhelm II. Once in a moment of poetic fancy the philosopher declared that if he were made the dictator of a Muslim state, he would first make it a socialist state.<sup>3</sup> By socialism he did not refer to the government ownership of big industry, abolition of the free enterprise system, denial of the profit motive or suppression of the right of private property. All he meant by a socialist state is a society without racial prejudice, rigid class distinctions, unemployment, national hatreds and aggressive wars. In Iqbal's mind, the world of the future should be permeated by the spirit of brotherhood, social service and love.

Al-Banna, founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, seems to have interpreted "Islamic socialism" in a similar idealistic and utopian fashion. For him Islam implied total dedication to the pleasure of Allah and commitment to social reconstruction: "The teachings and injunctions of Islam are comprehensive, governing the affairs of men in this world and the next, and those who think that these teachings deal only with spiritual and ritualistic aspects are mistaken in this assumption, for Islam is: doctrine, worship, homeland, nationality, religion, spirituality, the Koran and the sword."<sup>4</sup>

---

z F.K. Khan Durrani, quoted by Smith. Ibid, p. 120.

Smith, Ibid, p. 114.

C.P. Harris. Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt, Morton, the Hague, 1964, p. 151.

The Last Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, before its suppression by Nasser, voiced the strongest possible repudiation of Marxist ideology: "Communism is a creed founded on purely materialistic grounds. It denies all religion and recognizes no relation between man and anything else higher than that between him and his daily bread. As for Islam, it was built first and foremost on the unity of God. It related man eternally to Him in all his deeds. . . . Thus you will find the differences between Communism and Islam tremendous. Communism conflicts with Islam's principles, manners, morals and social system. . . . As an ideal we cannot fear it if we execute the Muslim teachings as they should properly be, for then they must triumph over all other ideals."<sup>5</sup>

Iqbal explained the merits and vices of Marxism by means of a subtle interpretation of the *Shahadah*, Islam's succinct creed: "There is no God but God." Since, as Hegel taught, reality is a ceaseless process of development from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, Muslims recognize the positive as well as negative aspects of social change, the value of both affirmation and destruction. Soviet communism, however, represents an incomplete version of the Islamic synthesis. The Marxist says merely "There is no God," recognizing only the desirability of negation, the destruction of old social patterns, the elimination of old injustices. He fails to complete the Muslim creed: though rightly rejecting the false gods of paganism and idolatry, he ignores the sovereign existence of Allah. Consequently, the Soviet ideologist has no method of going beyond destructive revolution to constructive action.

Iqbal criticizes Marxism for its materialism in addition to its atheism. Speaking of Marx's overall philosophy of economic determinism, the Muslim philosopher concludes, "The religion of that God-ignoring prophet is based on the equality of all stomachs." "By basing everything on man's need for sufficient daily

<sup>5</sup> From a speech of al-Hudaybi, Aug. 18, 1953, quoted Harris, *Ibid.* p. 193.

<sup>6</sup> Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 158-159.

bread, Marx and his disciples minimize the spiritual dimension to human existence.

Finally, according to Iqbal, one should see the striking similarities between western imperialism and Russian communism. "Both are dynamic and restless. Both ignore God and betray man. One does this by revolution, the other by exploitation. Between these two millstones humanity is ground to dust."

Like the World Council of Churches, some contemporary Muslim ideologists point out that Marxism is not totally irreconcilable with a religious vision of the coming kingdom of God on earth. However, two fundamental issues differentiate Islamic and Marxist economic theories. Islam sanctions the inalienable right of private property—as in capitalist practice, within certain limits. Muslims also reject the myth of a classless society<sup>8</sup>

If the reader wonders how this theoretical anti-Marxism can be reconciled with the practical alliance of Muslim governments with the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China since World War II, he should take into account three aspects of Arab foreign policy. First, Arabs have not forgotten or forgiven the time of British and French colonialism which, rightly or wrongly, symbolizes to them the now-vanished ascendancy of the West. Secondly, the financial and political support the United States has extended to Israel has been countered by diplomatic and material aid provided to the Arabs by the communist bloc. Thirdly, while accepting military assistance from the Soviet Union and allying themselves with the Third World anti-Americans, Arab nations have seldom tolerated organized communist political action inside their own borders and repeatedly eradicated communist groups when they appeared.

Since 1917 the Muslim attitude toward Marxist dogma has been quite unambiguously hostile: – Between Islam and atheistic, totalitarian Communism there can be no compromise so far as the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 159.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad, Ibid. p. 204, quoting Sihwarwi's 1942 book. Vide "Three Theories of Islamic Socialism", Ibid, pp. 195-207 for additional materials on the Marxist-Muslim dialogue.

ideological basis of the two is concerned. . . . Dialectical Materialism is only a further installment of the Mechanical Materialism of eighteenth-century Europe. Mechanistic Materialism denies the reality of mind, and subjects all phases of life to physical determinism. This deterministic trend assumes a new form in Dialectical Materialism, the inevitable continuum of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The moral, social, and ideal *Weltanschauung* (world view) of Islamic theism, which it shares with other great religions, stands in contradistinction alike to western mechanistic or Marxist dialectic view of matter, existence, and society" <sup>9</sup>

A quick glance at the map will show how pressing a problem communism is for the peoples of the Islamic world. The Turk, Iraqi, Iranian, and Pakistani are confronted by armed communists on the borders of their nations. In fact, although located far from the Marxist heartland of Russia and China, the Muslims of Indonesia, Yemen, Egypt, Algeria and Tanzania likewise must decide whether Moscow and Peking represent friends or foes.

Immediately prior to World War I when Lenin and the Bolsheviks were brought to power, the Czar of Russia had more than 18 million subjects who were Muslim by religion. None were Slavs, but the worshippers of Allah inside the Romanov empire were by national ancestry Persian, Mongol, Chinese, Finnic and Turkish. Russian Muslims lived in Crimea, the Volga area, the Caucasus, Lithuania and Central Asia. In most cases they had been treated as second-class citizens by the czarist bureaucrats, hence would welcome a revolution which destroyed Russian colonialism and Christian bigotry, unaware, however, of its future character.

Marjani, a Tatar theologian and historian from Kazan (1818-1889 A.D.) initiated a reform movement among the Muslims comparable to those started by Iqbal in India and Muhammad Abduh in Egypt. He condemned blind obedience to tradition and defended the right of every man to find in the Quran what he required to meet his personal religious needs. Marjani's followers,

---

<sup>9</sup> Abd al-Hakim, quoted from Ahmad, *Ibid*, p. 205.

known as the *jadids* , aroused considerable controversy but were of enormous influence in promoting theological modernism, social progress and respect for the rights of national minorities within the empire.

On November 24, 1917 Lenin and Stalin signed a Bolshevik appeal to the Muslims:

.All you whose mosques and prayer houses have been destroyed, whose beliefs and customs have been trampled upon by the tsars and oppressors of Russia: Your beliefs and usages, your national and cultural institutions are forever free and inviolate. Know that your rights, like those of all the peoples of Russia, are under the mighty protection of the Revolution, and its organs, the Soviet of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants. <sup>10</sup>

Muslims believed what the communists had promised—only to learn later that Lenin and Stalin could not be trusted.

In general, Muslims in the Soviet Union have faced the same sort of persecution and oppression that the Eastern Orthodox Christians suffered. Nevertheless, after fifty years of communism there are still about 30 million of them in the U.S.S.R.—an eloquent tribute to the loyalty Islam inspires in its followers.

Recently, moreover, the Kremlin's effort to win the friendship of the Arab world may have forced the communists to lessen somewhat the oppression of Muslim minorities in the Caucasus region and Central Asia. Muslims inside and outside the Soviet Union though are still well aware that such a shift in policy is merely a tactical maneuver.

Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran distrust the Soviets because they are Russians whose imperialistic ambitions have been evident for centuries. Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Libya and Algeria also realize the dangers of dealing with the communists yet are not

---

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, Praeger, N.Y., 1967, p. 82.

averse to accepting Russian aid and have been almost forced into alliances with the Soviet bloc (they claim) because of America's "special relationship" with Israel. While these matters look solely political or economic, for the Muslim there is no wall of separation between the secular and the sacred; everything belongs to Allah and mirrors His will.

A similar record of deception, betrayal, oppression and persecution mars the story of communism in China. If Muslims in the northwest provinces thought of Mao only as an agrarian reformer and harsh critic of official corruption in Nanking, they soon learned differently—much to their sorrow. Unlike the Christians, however, who could be attacked as tools or dupes of western white imperialism, the Chinese Muslims had two things in their favor. Since they lived in the border areas facing the Soviet Union, the government had to be good to them or they might welcome Russian "protectors." Secondly, because the Soviet Union and the People's Republic were both anxious to make friends with Islamic nations, it was imperative that they enjoy the support of the Muslims inside their own countries. Even so, Mao has been no less committed to atheism than his Russian mentors, Lenin and Stalin. When the opportunity presented itself, as in the disastrous Cultural Revolution, Maoist mobs attacked the mosques with as much enthusiasm as they did churches.

Muslims are not blind to what Marxist theory and Leninist practice mean. In Indonesia, for example, when communists infiltrated the Sukarno regime and threatened to turn the country into a puppet of Red China, the Muslims reacted quickly and effectively. Muslim students and military men combined to put Gen. Suharto in power. Tens of thousands of communists and fellow-travellers were killed by Muslims who were determined to preserve the freedom of their nation. Because they worshipped Allah they refused to tolerate atheistic communism; because they were Muslims they felt no qualms about protecting their faith with the sword. Marxism may look like a messianic faith but those who follow the straight path trod by Muhammad will never accept any messianism without God.

## **XI. ISLAM: TODAY AND TOMORROW**

From the standpoint of *Divine Principle*, contemporary Islam is preparing for the advent of the messianic age. Like the older Christian churches, the Muslim world is engaged in the process of radical change, revolutionary upheaval, spiritual re-awakening and religious rebirth.

### **Muslim Independence**

Because of World Wars I and II Muslim peoples have broken the chains of western colonialism and imperialism. With the dismemberment of the Ottoman, British, French and Dutch empires in the twentieth century, millions of colonial peoples have become self-governing, self-conscious, and increasingly self-reliant. Almost forty independent Muslim states hold membership in the United Nations and together provide the largest single bloc of votes in the U.N. General Assembly. In addition there are 38 or more countries in which Islam is the dominant faith or the religion of the controlling minority.<sup>1</sup>

Further there are nations which have large Muslim minorities—Tanzania, Nigeria, Eritrea, India with over 40 million Muslims, China with at least 50 million (1958 figure), the Soviet Union with about 30 million (1968 estimate), and Lebanon with half her citizens adhering to Islam. The latter nation, a member of the Arab league, has a custom of choosing its president from the Maronite Christians and its premier from the Sunnite Muslims.

### **Islamic Religious Reform**

Contemporary Islam in almost every part of the world is in the process of a religious awakening and reform somewhat comparable to the Protestant revolt within Christendom during the sixteenth century. Shafik Ghorbal at the Institute of Higher Arabic Studies of

---

<sup>1</sup> They are as follows: Saudi Arabia, Arab Republic of Yemen, People's Republic of Yemen, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Muscat, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Maldives, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Somalia, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Niger, Uganda, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Brunei, Albania.

the Arab League is only one of many Islamic writers who confess quite openly that a return to the traditional way of life is neither possible nor desirable.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn'Abd al-Wahhab (circa 1740 A.D.) initiated a movement to purify Arabian Islam by returning to the original faith and practice of the Prophet and his first four caliphs. That puritan crusade took control of the holy cities Mecca and Medina, is officially supported by the ruling Saudi dynasty and continues to stimulate reform throughout the Muslim world. For similar reformist purposes the Senussi order of Sufi lodges was begun in 1837 A.D.; particularly popular in North Africa, the Senussi opposed European colonialism, and their leader, Idris I, became the first king of independent Libya in 1951. In Egypt theological and educational reform of lasting significance was begun by Muhammad Abduh, who served for a time as professor and rector at al-Azhar, Islam's most prestigious university.<sup>3</sup> Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Muslim University at Aligarh (estab. 1875) provided the stimulus for the modernist cause among the Indian adherents of Islam. Nor should one ignore the immense contributions made to the Muslim renaissance by Jamal al-din Afghani (d. 1897) in Persia, Syria, Egypt, India and even Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. His gospel of "Pan-Islam" is still bearing fruit.<sup>2</sup>

Repeatedly the Muslim world recovered its sense of mission when political "strongmen" dared to oppose the ultra-conservative leadership in the mosque. Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, Reza Shah in Iran,<sup>5</sup> Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt and Moham-

<sup>2</sup> K..W. Morgan, ed., *Islam—The Straight Path*, p. 78.

C. Leiden, ed., *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East*, University of Texas, 1966, pp. 90-99.

Cf. Caesar E. Farah, *Islam, Beliefs and Observances*, Barron's Educational Series, N.Y., 1968, pp. 233-234.

<sup>3</sup> Reza Shah, a dynamic military leader deposed Ahmed Shah of Persia in 1925 and ruled Iran until 1941 when the British and Russians forced him to abdicate in favor of his son. To modernize Iran he replaced traditional Muslim law with western legal codes, removed education from ecclesiastical control, prohibited the wearing of traditional headgear, altered marriage and divorce practices, abolished the veil, and most symbolic of all, forbade the frenzy and flagellations accompanying the public rites commemorating the martyrdom of the [man Husain, grandson of Muhammad. Cf. Joseph M. Upton, *The History of Modern Iran*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1961, pp. 56-57, 110-112.

med Jinnah, first governor-general of Pakistan, were all men of action who pushed their nations into the twentieth century, oft in defiance of Muslim traditionalists. Islam is now still alive and remarkably healthy because iron-willed men in high positions have forced their subjects to undergo painful surgery. Turkey, for example, abolished the caliphate, secularized the schools, suppressed the Sufi brotherhoods, and set aside the ancient Muslim law. Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia and Libya, though with less extreme methods have followed suit. <sup>6</sup>

### **Social Transformation**

World War II gave the Muslim world its political freedom, though not without a struggle. French troops and colonial administrators left or were pushed out of Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Somaliland, the Ivory Coast and elsewhere. The British flag was removed from India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Jordan and several other former colonies or protectorates. Indonesia expelled the Dutch. But political independence only highlighted the more basic need for economic development and social modernization. Thoughtful Muslims, however, may wonder how time-honored faith in Allah can adjust to oil wells in Saudi Arabia, land reform in Iran, radical socialism in Iraq and Libya, or five year plans in Pakistan. In that respect, Islam awaits a world leader who can affirm the eternal truths of religion in a technological age. Especially for the Muslim, the modern era is utterly unlike anything the desert nomad, the veiled woman or the people of the Baghdad bazaar have found familiar in their recent past.

Nevertheless, because they have looked in on the modern western world from outside and for centuries been its exploited victims, the less provincial Muslims are well aware of the need for a radical reconstruction of the whole social order. Abd al-Rahman Azzam, first secretary-general of the Arab League (1945-1952), hands down a typical indictment of the (Christian) West: "The Koran says, 'They have forgotten God and God caused them to

---

fi Carl Leiden, ed., *Ibid.*

forget themselves." In a few generations, spiritual life has been dealt a formidable defeat by the forces of materialistic life, aided by the deaf machine which has come to dominate man; and man has wrought havoc aimlessly, unrestrained by religion, moral character or law. Mankind's spiritual heritage has been of no avail. . . . We march on to ruin. In the name of freedom for women, we destroy the serenity of the home; in the name of freedom for the fatherland, we tear nations asunder. In the name of freedom for labor or capital we shall wipe out capitalism and oppress all classes; and on the contrary, in the name of resistance to abuse of these freedoms, we shall loose the freedom of the individual and the group as well as freedom of opinion. Men of judgment and intelligence, scholars and philosophers, have never exercised less influence on human society than in the age of the triumphant machine, the age in which we live today." <sup>8</sup>

### **Muslim Missionary Activity**

Many westerners assume in ignorance that Islam is primarily and essentially an Arab faith, beginning in the desert and expanding solely because of the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. Nothing could be farther from the truth. At least half the Muslims in the modern world live in areas over which Arabs have neither exercised political rule nor been a majority of the inhabitants. In fact, the largest Muslim states—Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia—are outside the Arab world entirely. <sup>9</sup>

Two Muslim missionary areas are particularly important: black Africa south of the Sahara desert and the communist republics of central Asia. The religion of Allah spread into black Africa in two parallel directions. Traders brought the new faith from Morocco down the west coast of Africa; others moved from Egypt

<sup>7</sup> Quran, 59:19 (Azzam's trans.).

<sup>8</sup> Abd al-Rahman Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammed*, Devin-Adair, N.Y., 1964, p. 210.

In 1966 Prof. Fazlur Rahman stated that the total Muslim population of the world was 594,000,000. The fifth World Muslim Congress meeting in Baghdad estimated that Islam was the religion of 650,000,000 people in 1962. For a variety of reasons all such figures are only approximate. Islam, Weidenfield, London, 1966, pp. 1, 9.

down the east side of the continent. Still more settlers sailed across the Red Sea to set up colonies and trading posts in Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Zanzibar. In many cases Arab and Berber merchants engaged in a profitable trade in black slaves who were purchased by Christian sea captains for resale in America.

Until the American civil rights revolution in the 1960's awakened interest in black history and until the newly freed African states became concerned with their pre-colonial past, the general public knew little about Islam in the black world. As we now realize, very large Islamic empires existed in west Africa prior to the imperialistic European conquests of the 19th century. For example, the Mandingo empire in Mali ruled by Mansa Musa, a devout black Muslim living about 1300 A.D. , covered an area as big as western Europe. In addition, in books about "Great Rulers of the African Past" Mansa Musa, Sunni Ali Beer, Askia Muhammad, Idris Aleomo and Affonso I, four Muslim monarchs and one Christian," become alive for the contemporary student. While the names of such African rulers may now seem unfamiliar, black educators hope that someday they will be as well-known as George III of England, Louis XIV of France or Russia's Peter the Great.

More important is the fact that Islam is presently on the move—to convert black Africa. In many cases, Muslim missionaries have successfully competed with Christian rivals for the allegiance of African peoples. Islam has the clear advantage of not being identified with the ousted colonial powers. For many Africans the Christian God is too closely associated with their former French or British masters. Islam has no such imperialistic taint. Consequently when free Africans are asked to choose between Jesus Christ and Muhammad they prefer the religion of the latter.

The African protest against the white man's God has a counterpart in American religious life. The Black Muslims, said to have already become 300,000 strong by 1960, represent a conscious,

---

<sup>1</sup> Lavinia Dobler and William A. Brown, *Great Rulers aline African Past*, Doubleday, N.Y. 1965. A scholarly study is J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, London. 1965.

widespread and vigorous repudiation of Christianity in favor of Islam. At first hostile to the Black Muslims, Arab leaders have now come to accept them as brothers and the vanguard of a mass conversion to Allah and the teachings of the Quran. Elijah Muhammad, prior to his death in 1975, had become one of the most prominent blacks in the United States; his subordinate, the martyred Malcolm X, is still very much the folk hero of young black intellectuals and activists."

The Black Muslims are both like and unlike the Muslims of the Middle East. No Egyptian, Iranian or Jordanian Muslim would concur with Elijah Muhammad's beliefs that only blacks are truly made in the likeness of God, that all whites are blue-eyed devils, that Christianity is merely a slavemaster's religion, or that we should not be interested in an afterlife.<sup>12</sup> Yet every Muslim would applaud Elijah Muhammad's reverence for the Prophet, his recognition of the Quran as divine revelation, his prohibition of drugs and alcohol and his affirmation of black pride.

The importance of the black world in the game of global power politics can hardly be overestimated. In several of the new African nations Christian work has been curtailed and in most of them white missionaries are unwelcome. Deprived of white leadership and foreign missionary largesse, the African churches face grim prospects. Nationalists continually criticize the Christians for being "un-African" so the older denominations founded by missionaries a century ago have been rent with dissension.<sup>13</sup> Since there is no real chance for a revival of the primitive African cults and since Islam has none of the cultural disadvantages of Christian-

---

<sup>12</sup> For a useful Christian evaluation, see C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961. A more or less favorable reaction to them is also to be found in the Arabic writer Caesar E. Farah's *Islam*, pp. 274-278.

<sup>12</sup> E. Lincoln, *ibid*, pp. 68-97. Black Muslim preaching was greatly improved and refined as a result of the work of Malcolm X as well as the visit of Elijah Muhammad and his son to Islamic centers in North Africa and their pilgrimage to Mecca. Wallace Muhammad, the founder's son and successor, should also be credited with a welcome change in Black Muslim doctrine.

<sup>13</sup> Not to be minimized are the many native charismatic which have decimated the established denominations.

ity, the Muslims offer an attractive faith for blacks.' -- Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, the World Council of Churches held its 1975 ecumenical conference in Nairobi, Kenya and for several years has given financial support to various controversial African liberationist groups of semi-Marxist orientation in an attempt to curry black favor.

Islam has no missionary organizations in any way comparable to those Christians maintain in Europe and America. Arab governments, however, indirectly favor the expansion of Islam in Africa by working for political alliances, promoting cultural exchanges and making trade agreements. Most of black Africa has turned against the state of Israel in recent years—as a result of Arab diplomacy. Also because of the success of a small group like the Ahmadiyya in converting a half million blacks to Islam, other Muslims will probably be inspired to organize direct missionary activities south of the Sahara in the near future. Temporarily at least, African nationalism regards Islam as an ally in its program of disengagement from western influence, even if the Muslim faith is not by nature a nationalistic religion.

In the arena of the Far East too, the existence of a well-established Muslim community should not be overlooked. At the Bandung conference of non-aligned nations (1955), Prime Minister Chou En-lai claimed that Muslims constitute 12% of the total population of Communist China.<sup>14</sup> What this means is that at least 50,000,000 believers in Allah lived in mainland China at the close of World War II.<sup>15</sup>

Chinese Islam should become better known among westerners. According to the historians of the Tang dynasty, Muslims arrived in China in 651 A.D., in the form of a gift-bearing diplomatic delegation from the Caliph Uthman to the imperial court of

---

<sup>14</sup> For example, in one Nigerian province Muslims grew from 33% to 75% between the years 1921 and 1954 while Christians grew from 1% to 5% of the total population. (Trimingham, *Ibid*, footnote, p. 230.)

Is Quoted, F. Rahman, *Islam*, Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1966, p. 9. The Bandung conference was convened in Indonesia by Tito, Nehru, Nasser and Sukarno.

<sup>15</sup> A figure accepted by Nationalist diplomat Dowood C.M. Ting in K. Morgan, ed., *Ibid*, p. 352.

Yung-wei. Although the emperor felt that Islam made too many religious requirements to suit his taste, he gave the Arabs permission to propagate their faith and personally ordered the building of the first Chinese mosque in his capital city, Ch'ang-an. As time passed, more Arab and Persian traders settled in China, particularly at Kwangchow, a southern port city.

A century later, another Tang emperor used 8,000 Muslim soldiers from the northwest to quell a dangerous rebellion. In gratitude the ruler gave the soldiers both land and Chinese wives. Many Muslims travelled to China via the overland route from Persia and Afghanistan, joined their compatriots and settled permanently in that northern part of the Tang empire.

The following Yuan dynasty was founded by Kublai Khan whose Mongol supporters were already converts to Islam. When the Mongols ruled China, over thirty high officials of the imperial court at Peking and the governors of nine provinces were Muslims. Islam became a popular Chinese religion as well as the favored one among the privileged class. Attached to the Mongol court were Muslim doctors, astronomers, scholars, diplomats and high-ranking military men from all parts of the Islamic world.

As the Umayyad dynasty provided the high point of Syrian Islam and the Abbasid caliphate the apex of Iraqi Islam, the Mings produced the golden age of Chinese Muslim civilization. Possibly Ming T'ai Tsu, founder of the dynasty, was a Muslim; we can be sure of the Islamic faith of his wife, Empress Ma, and a large number of his courtiers. During the Ming period (1368-1644 A.D.) the Muslims of China were gradually sinicized.

The last imperial dynasty—that of the Manchus—ruled as an alien minority, so were hostile to Muslims who might favor a restoration of the Mings. Four major rebellions had to be suppressed because of the animosity which Chinese Muslims felt toward the Ch'ing usurpers. When the Republic of China was established, Sun Yat-sen proclaimed that the Muslim (Hui) people were equal to the other four races of the country. In 1938 the government asked a respected general to form the nationwide Chinese Muslim Association to consolidate Islamic support for the

republic; at the time the Nationalists were forced to set up a temporary capital on Taiwan, the Muslim officials joined them there.'<sup>7</sup>

Chinese Islam is important because it shows the universal scope of the Muslim outreach. Prior to the creation of the People's Republic of China, that nation had five times as many Muslims as Saudi Arabia and even more than Egypt, Turkey, Iran or Iraq.

### Modern Islamic Messianism

**Throughout the Muslim world the post-World War II** era witnessed the birth of a mood of messianic expectation. In various ways—politically, economically, culturally and religiously—Islam radiates an extraordinary hope.

As mentioned earlier, some sects of Shiites look forward to the reappearance of the hidden Imam—an actual heir and religious successor of Ali—who will bring new truth from Allah, provide infallible guidance to all believers and establish the reign of God on earth. Others believe that in every century, when faith grows dim and morality slumps, a new prophet will be sent by Muhammad to restore religion to its pristine state. A third group claims that the last days will see the advent of the Mahdi, the Muslim equivalent of the Jewish-Christian Messiah. Whatever the form this eschatological hope takes, it has never been absent from Muslim piety, although often submerged.

Quite significantly, at about the same time in the nineteenth century when Christians were experiencing a revival of apocalyptic hope, Muslims were aroused to feverish pitch by talk of the coming Mahdi. In 1843 the Millerites in America proclaimed the imminence of Christ's second advent; in 1844 Sayyid Ali of Shiraz, Persia announced that he was the "Bab" (gateway) through which Allah was announcing the coming of *the great* promised One. In the hundred years prior to World War **II**, Islamic messianist movements appeared in such widely separated places as the Sudan, India, Somalia, Nigeria and Iran. Out of them grew the

---

<sup>7</sup> D.C.M. Ting, "Islamic Culture in China", K. Morgan, *ed.*, *!bid.*, pp. 344-374.

Ahmadiyya and the Bahai—two influential groups which survived the deaths of their alleged messiahs.

Ahmadiyyah Muslims—a radical sect which believes Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani of India (d. 1908) was the Messiah—are significant because they think of the messianic mission in inter-religious terms. In their doctrine they deliberately merge Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Hindu thought. The Christ whom Christians expect is not only the Mahdi of Islam, but also a reincarnation of Krishna for the Hindus.'<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the success of their efforts for political liberation and their rising living standards, non-Ahmadiyya Muslims still await the coming Mahdi—their hidden 'man and long-delayed Messiah. Such a Messiah, they believe, will unify men on the basis of their devotion to God, and inaugurate an era of peace and plenty.

---

C.E. Farah, *Islam*, Barron's Educational Series, N.Y. 1968, pp. 240-243.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- M. Abdullah, ed., *Religion and Society*, Muslim Society of U.S.A., Hayward, Calif., 1972.
- Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, Oxford University Press, 1933, London.
- Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*, Oxford U. Press, London, 1967.
- Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, *Communism and Democracy*, Rabwah, Pakistan, (n.d.).
- H.M.B. Ahmad, *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qur'an*, Oriental and Religious Publ., Rabwah, Pakistan, 1969.
- H.M.B. Ahmad, *Islam and Communism*, Ahmadiyya Pub., Rabwah, Pakistan, 1962.
- Hazrat Mirza Ghulum Ahmad, *The Teachings of Islam*, Al-Tabshir, Rabwah, Pakistan, 1966.
- Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, S.K. Lahiri & Co., Calcutta, 1902.
- Tor Andrae, *Mohammad, The Man and His Faith*, Harper Torchbook, N.Y., 1960.
- A.J. Arberry, *Sufism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1950.
- Farid al-Din Attar, *Muslim Saints & Mystics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966.
- Abd-al-Rahman Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*, Devin-Adair, N.Y., 1965.
- John Kingsley **Birge**, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Luzac and Co., London, 1965.
- Dwight M. Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion*, Luzac and Co., London, 1933.
- Nabih A. Faris, ed., *The Arab Heritage*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1944.
- Mirza Abul Fazl, *The Bahai Proofs*, Bahai Pub. Co., N.Y., 1929.
- Claud Field, trans., *The Confessions of Al Ghazzali*, John Murray, London, 1909.
- Louis Gardet and M.-M. Anawati, *Introduction a la Theologie Musulmane*, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 1948.
- H.A.R. *Gibb, Mohammedanism*, Oxford University Press, London, 1948, (Mentor, 1955).
- H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1947.
- Michael Gilseman, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973.
- Gustave von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953.
- M. Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*, Centre Culturel Islamique, Paris, 1969.
- C.P. Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt*, Mouton, Hague, 1964.
- Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, Pakistan, 1962.
- Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1956, pp. 215-226, 353-365.

- Carl Leiden, ed., *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East*, University of Texas, Austin, 1966.
- H.D. Lewis and R.L. Slater, *World Religions, Meeting Points and Major Issues*, C.A. Watts & Co., London, 1966.
- Duncan Black MacDonald, *Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, A. M.S. Press, N.Y., 1970 (1909 original).
- George Makdisi, trans., *Ibn Qudama's Censure of Speculative Theology*, Luzac & Co., London, 1962.
- D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed*, Blackie & Co., London, 1939.
- S. Abul Ala Maududi, *Islamic Way of Life*, Islamic Pub., Lahore, Pakistan, n.d.
- Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965.
- Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals & Realities of Islam*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1972.
- Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963.
- R.A. Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sufism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1923 (Lahore ed., 1964).
- R.A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qu'ran*, Barnes & Noble, N.Y., 1965.
- Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in Africa*, Penguin Book, London, 1969, pp. 171-220.
- Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, Mentor Book, N.Y., 1953.
- Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1966.
- F. Rahman. *Prophecy in Islam*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958.
- M.A. Rauf, *Islamic Religious Knowledge*, Bk. III, Islamic Center, N.Y., 1968.
- Canon Edward Sell, *Outlines of Islam*, Christian Lit. Soc. for India, Madras, 1912.
- Edward Sell, *Studies in Islam*, Diocesan Press, Madras, 1928.
- Sir Jogendra Singh, *The Invocations of Sheikh 'Abdullah Ansari*, John Murray, London, 1959 (Sufi).
- Margaret Smith, *Rabia the Mystic*, Cambridge Un. Press, London. 1928.
- Sad al-Din al Taftazani, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, Columbia University Press, N.Y., 1950.
- Murray T. Titus, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, YMCA Pub., Calcutta, 1959.
- Arnold J. Toynbee, "Islam and the West", *The World and the West*, Reith Lectures 1952, Oxford University Press. London, 1953.
- Arnold J. Toynbee, "Islam, The West and the Future", *Civilization on Trial*, Oxford University Press, London. 1955.
- E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1962.
- Joseph M. Upton, *The History of Modern Iran*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1961.
- W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, University of Edinburgh Press, 1962.
- A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, F. Cass & Co., London, 1965.
- Samuel M. Zwemer, *Islam, A Challenge to Faith*, Student Volunteer Movement, N.Y., 1907.