

PROGRESSIVE ISLAM

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EDITORIAL:

The Regeneration of Islamic Societies

The world of Islam is at the moment experiencing one of its most momentous periods in the history of its existence. In one part of the world we find mankind ushered unwillingly into one of its greatest crises. On the other part of the world, we find the people of Islam slowly waking up from a deep slumber caused partly by the stuns of certain blows, and partly by the internal forces of disruption which remained amongst the Muslims from the very beginning of their history. With the amazing achievements of modern means of communication which the world had never realized before, and with the rapid and bewildering development of technology, it would be indeed miraculous if the world of Islam remains unaffected and unstirred by the forces released by modern industrial civilization. We had succeeded controlling the spread of infectious diseases amongst various people of the world. But in the case of ideas and cultural influences, we had achieved just the opposite result. Ideas and suggestions which are extremely harmful for the welfare of human society, are disseminated in a much greater scale and efficiency than had ever been witnessed before. Islam, in the course of its historical existence, has always been very sensitive to new influences. Although it is enthusiastically receptive towards beneficial influences, it has not, however, been denied that Islam is also emphatic in rejecting everything which is considered to be harmful. In our confrontation with the challenge of the time, we shall not encourage a passive or pessimistic attitude. Such an attitude is always the outcome of either despair or decadency. The religion of Islam, which requires its followers to build up a strong character and a perfectly integrated system of thought, shall not tolerate the existence of a life-diminishing process rooted in the attitude of confusion and despondency. It is true that an influential section of the Western population has been paralysed in their thinking and behaviour by such an attitude. It is true that the possibility exists that these thought and attitudes of this group of people shall influence the Muslims. But it is also true that the Muslims could adequately digest the problems of modern time provided they take up the challenge in the right moment and do not consider it lightly.

The faith of Islam, and the character it engenders amongst its believers, is certainly capable of assimilating new ideas and maintaining that particular state of mind which is a requirement in all periods of transition and reorientation.

When considering the nature of Islam and the problem it has to face in connection with the reform of Islamic society, Prof. Alfred Guillaume of London University, made the following remarks: "The history of Islam has shown that it has extraordinary powers of adaptation: it has succeeded in absorbing apparently incompatible philosophies, and mutually contradictory religious conceptions, and it has silently abandoned others which it has tried and found wanting."¹ We have put forward the opinions of non-Muslim writers, not so much that we depend on them for our self-evaluation, but more for the sake of impartiality. Furthermore, the works of some of these writers are of such a nature that they deserve sound appreciation and due approval. Before we commence to discuss further the nature of the Islamic revival, let us briefly and superficially take two major factors into consideration.

One is the situation in which the people of Islam found themselves at the moment. The other is the desultory forces which are gradually working its way into Muslim society at present. The latter is primarily the result of contact with the West.

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM SOCIETY. In discussing the problems of the Muslim society we shall also endeavour to trace its relation with the West and some other factors of great influence amongst the Muslims themselves. Furthermore we shall try to understand its relation with Islam.

We absolutely believe that all the problems which had harmfully affected Muslim society are not caused by Islam. We shall deny with all the might at our disposal any attempt to attribute the backwardness of a large number of Muslims at present to the influences exerted by Islam. On the contrary, there is not one single evil in Muslim society now which had not been vehemently condemned by Islam. There is not one corrupt Muslim leader or government official who does not realize that all his evil doings are vigorously condemned by his religion.

THE GROUP IN POWER. It had been a deeply felt misfortune amongst the people of Islam that the group that is usually in power from amongst themselves are people who neither are inspired by the lofty, humanitarian ideals of Islam nor by any sense of proportion. These people abused the trust vested in them by the community and shamefully raped the good name of Islam by claiming to be its followers. No amount of correct thinking will convince them about the necessity of promoting the general welfare. As we all are aware, it is not merely the presence of knowledge that induces a man to do a certain thing. What is more important still is the proper psycho-emotional attitude in which all striving and thinking is rooted. The only way left to us is to find adequate means to relieve this type of people from the responsibility of leadership. Signs are not wanting that the people of Islam have become conscious of this fact and are trying its best to change the composition of its leadership. As Karl Mannheim and other social scientists rightly observed, every type of society requires a particular type of leadership. A decadent leadership can never be instrumental in creating a progressive society. Many sincere efforts of Muslim reformers and well-wishers have been suppressed just for the sake of maintaining power in order to enjoy the fruits of its abominable abuse.

LACK OF SOUND PLANNING. In our method of social analysis, we sympathise with Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun, the founder of modern sociology and scientific history, and those thinkers of the present who believe in the conditioning nature of the social situation in which a certain people found themselves. In other words, if we want a man to behave in a good manner, we must create for him the situation in which he would be able to express all his good qualities. As Ibn Khaldun pointed out, there is hardly any sphere of thinking and doing which is not influenced by the social situation which forms the background of such a thought or behaviour. It is therefore the duty of all serious Muslims to introduce into his own circle the belief in the necessity of planning. This implies that we also have to be

aware of selecting the most immediate and vital problems. It is true that we have also heard of plans being made by this or that government to attain this or that object. This is not the kind of planning we mean. The planning we mean is to comprehend the working of society as a living organism whose structure and parts are interdependent and whose activity ought to be directed to attain a humane and well-defined ideal. One of the vital problems that challenges the world of Islam to-day is the socio-economic condition of the Muslim people.

Although we do not believe in the primacy of matter over the spirit, as Karl Marx would like us to do, yet we do believe in the primacy of economic reforms as compared to the others. We believe this because economic backwardness and oppression is the worst kind of oppression that ever existed. No other social deficiency had caused a greater evil than economic backwardness and oppression. There is hardly any social vice that could not be traced to economic maladjustment and unjust exploitation. We cherish this belief with the complete blessing of the Prophet of Islam who said that poverty is the cause of unbelief. People do a lot of forbidden things in order to satisfy their wants. Our assumption of this attitude must not be identified with that of the historical-materialist or the positivist. Always to identify the thinking of the Muslim to this or that influence is the same as denying them the minimum originality which a human being ought to possess. A little study of the history and principles of Islam would convince any reasonable person that Islam is original enough to device its own plan and select the proper problems to be solved.

UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF VITAL PROBLEMS One of the pressing problems of Muslim society is the absence of a group of thinkers which is large enough as to be able to become a force in the revival of Islam. At the moment, the size of this group is too small to satisfy the requirement of an effective dissemination of thought in all layers of Muslim society. As a result of this, the proportion of Muslims who are aware of vital problems is perturbingly small. It is a task of great magnitude to disseminate ideas and instill attitude into the minds of millions of men. This unpleasant situation is aggravated by the fact that there is a tendency amongst leading Muslims to recline themselves on the comfortable state of complacency. A large proportion of modern Islamic literature breathes this spirit in glaring contrast to those of the former periods. This state of affairs is such that a modern Muslim would find it extremely profitable and instructive to return to the works of former thinkers like Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Al-Ghazali, Jalaluddin Rumi, Ibn Arabi, Abdul Karim Djalil, Al-Ashari, and a host of others, instead of reading the works of recent writers (with a few exceptions). Apart from this, the spirit that moved the former thinkers, besides from being Islamic, was also marked by depth of thought and serious concern. It is not in the least a piece of anachronism if Muhammad Iqbal looked to Rumi in quest of inspiration.

DESULTORY INFLUENCES FROM THE WEST. If there is a thing which had been uncritically adopted and so passionately believed by a considerable number of nominal Muslims, it is the new gospel of nationalism. We are using this word in the sense of the significance given to it by the founders of the philosophy of nationalism. Despite frequent denials of certain nationalists from Muslim countries that the nationalism they believed in is not completely identical with that of the West, yet the symptoms and manifestations are inclined to be alike. The sources of their inspiration are the same. We have here the same glorification of territorial extension. The same glorification of past imperial greatness. The same exaltation of national glory. The same desire to separate religion from the life of the state. The same habit of thinking primarily in terms of their own interests. The same tendency towards indifference in matters of ethical principles. The same inclination towards a parochial view of human history. In other words, judged from the standard of universal principles of human action, the behaviour and thinking of these nationalists are found wanting. We exclude, how-

ever, those people who claim themselves to be believers in nationalism but are in reality not so. Islam, however, agrees in everything with nationalism but in two points. One is the subordination of ethical and moral principles to that of national interests. The other is to adopt as the philosophical foundation of the state a belief merely because it is derived from the history of our respective countries. We are, by no means, suggesting that we ought to neglect the history of our own country. Absolutely not! But we do not believe in adopting philosophical principles merely because of their geographical location in time, or even if such a consideration does not exclude the experiences of other societies.

MATERIALISM AND POSITIVISM. A section of the nominal Muslims are gradually being drifted away by the tide of materialism and positivism. One could notice this in their attempts to analyse social phenomena. Due to occupational and political considerations, they think it best to conceal their sympathy to such kinds of philosophy. We do not question the sincerity of their motives, but we do concern ourselves with the possible result that would accrue from it. The experience of Europe had taught us that materialism and positivism were greatly responsible for the rise of fascism and national chauvinism. Recent research in the social and historical sciences have verified this. In reviewing the causes that contributed to the rise of fascism, John H. Hallowell, presented the following opinion: "By the end of the nineteenth century, and especially in Germany, science had achieved a prestige never accorded it before. Few, if any, could resist the dominant intellectual current of the age. And it is not strange, but rather on the contrary, inevitable that students of social phenomena should have turned to the methods that seems to yield predictability, certainty, and security. Hoping to achieve for the study of human phenomena the same calculable certainty that seems to characterize the natural sciences, students of social phenomena accepted the perspective of positivism and empiricism." Hallowell continued to describe the effects of the influence of positivism in the following words: "When law is viewed from the standpoint of positivism, 'true law' appears to be not that which is secured transcendently but rather, simply and purely, a product of the strongest will within the community, whether the will be that of the numerical majority or the numerical minority. Positive law appears to be the only 'real' law, since it is the only law that can be empirically experienced."

It can not be a product of reason but only a product of will. It can not embody truths and values transcending individuals but only desires and interests peculiar to particular individuals living at a certain time in a certain place. The task of the jurists is no longer a creative but simply an analytical one. The reason individuals submit to law can not be the inherent justice of the law (since justice is a metaphysical concept) but simply the compulsion behind the law. By logical implication if not explicitly, the formal liberal jurists of the late nineteenth century came close to saying that law is the command of superior force. And by so saying they anticipated the brutal nihilism of National Socialism."² From the believers of materialism, in whatever form it may be, we fear the same consequences as those of positivism.

We welcome any reader who shares a different opinion than those set down here, to inform us about his thoughts that we may the better probe into the nature of this problem. All these desultory influences have been influential in distracting the nominal Muslims from not to say the study of, but even an acquaintance with the simple elementary principles of Islam. In many cases they argued against a thing which they never bother to know or understand. The aim of Progressive Islam is to draw the attention of people towards Islam and the Muslims in an objective and logical manner. Due to the magnitude of the task, we hope that the readers would extend their generous toleration to us if they discover any errors and shortcomings in our effort to present our views.

¹ Islam, by A. Guillaume.

² The decline of liberalism, by J. H. Hallowell.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF ISLAM

By Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maudoodi

Maulana Maudoodi is an eminent Muslim scholar and leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami, an opposition party in Pakistan. Maulana Maudoodi was sentenced to death by a military court on the 11th of May 1953 accused of „promoting feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes in Pakistan.“ On hearing it, the whole world of Islam flared up in a unanimous protest against the death sentence awarded to Maulana Maudoodi. The government of Pakistan, considering the sympathy of the world of Islam for Maulana Maudoodi, committed the death sentence to 11 years of rigorous imprisonment.

Maulana Maudoodi is author of more than 60 books on the various aspects of Islam. He took a prominent part in bringing about the birth of Pakistan. So great was his service in this direction that the famous philosopher-poet of Pakistan, Muhammad Iqbal, invited Maulana Maudoodi to come to the Punjab and make it the centre of his activities. The indictment against Maulana Maudoodi which resulted in his being sentenced to death appeared to be the contents of a pamphlet entitled „The Qadiani Problem“. Maulana Maudoodi urged the government to declare the Qadiani community in Pakistan as a religious minority instead of accepting them into the fold of the Islamic community. Again in this point the whole world of Islam is united. Dr. Iqbal himself had urged the Muslims not to recognize the Qadianis as being a member of their community.

We are reproducing below, a radio talk of Maulana Maudoodi given at Pakistan Radio, Lahore, on the 20th of May, 1948.

authority within the limits prescribed by you for him and fourthly, that in the administration of the trust he should execute your will and fulfil your intentions and not his own. These four conditions are so inherent in the very conception of representation that they must come to mind as soon as one utters the word representation. If any representative does not fulfil these four conditions you will blame him for transgressing the limits of his representative capacity and breaking the covenant which was implied in the very meaning of representation. Exactly the same meaning is intended when Islam lays down that man is the caliph of God. Hence these four conditions are involved in the concept of Khilafat. The state that is established in accordance with this political theory will in fact be a human caliphate under the sovereignty of God and will have to fulfil the purpose of God by working on God's earth within the limits prescribed by God himself and in conformity with the instructions laid down by Him.

In connection with this explanation of „Khilafat“ you might also like to know that in the light of this political theory no single person or dynasty or class is a khalifah, but the status of caliphate is delegated to such a society as a whole which is ready to fulfil the conditions of representation after having agreed to accept the Tauheed (unity of God) and Rissalat (prophethood). Such a society bears the burden of the caliphate as a whole and each one of its individuals is a caliph of God. This is the point at which democracy begins in Islam. Every single person in an Islamic society enjoys the rights and powers of the caliphate and in this respect all individuals are equal. No one takes precedence over another or considers any one else of his powers. The government that is to be formed for running the affairs of the state will be formed in consonance with the will of all these individuals and these very people will delegate a portion of their powers to it. Their opinion will count in the formation of the government which will be run with their advice and consent. Whoever will gain their confidence will undertake the duty and obligations of the caliphate on their behalf; and when he loses this confidence he will be removed and give up his office. From this aspect the Islamic democracy is a perfect form of democracy as perfect as a democracy can ever be. Of course what distinguishes the Islamic democracy from Western democracy is that while the Western political theory implies democratic sovereignty Islam believes in democratic caliphate. In the first the people are sovereign, in the other sovereignty vests in God and the people are merely His caliphs or representatives. In the first the people make their own laws (shariat); in the second they have to follow the laws of God (shariat) which God has given through His Prophet. In one the government undertakes to fulfil the will of the people; in the other the government and the people who form it have one and all to fulfil the purpose of God.² In brief the Western democracy is a kind of absolute godhood which exercises its powers in a free and unfettered manner while, contrary to this the Islamic democracy is Law-abiding obedience which exercises its powers in conformity with the injunctions of God and within the limitations prescribed by Him. I will now place before you a brief but clear outline of the state which is built up on the foundations of Tauhid (the unity of God), Rissalat (the prophethood of Muhammad) and khilafat (the caliphate).

The Holy Quran clearly states the aim and purpose of this state as the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues with which the God of this Universe wishes that human life should be adorned, and the prevention, suppression and eradication of those evils the existence of which in human life is utterly abhorrent to God. The state in Islam is not intended for political administrations only nor for the fulfilment through it of the collective will of any particular set of people. Rather Islam places a high ideal before the state for the achievement of which it must use all the means at its disposal and exercise all the powers that it can exercise. And this purpose is nothing else except that the qualities of purity, beauty, goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which God wants to be exhibited in the life of His people should be engendered and evolved and that all kinds of disorders which, in the eyes of God, are ruinous for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures are suppressed and prevented. Simultaneously with placing before us this high ideal Islam gives us a clear outline of good and evil morals in which are clearly exhibited the desired virtues and the undesirable evils. Keeping this outline in view the Islamic state can plan its reformist programme in every age and in any age.

The permanent demand made by Islam is that moral principles must be observed in every sphere of life. Hence it lays down an unalterable policy for a state to base its politics on impartial justice, objective, truth, and unadulterated honesty. It is not prepared under any circumstances whatsoever to tolerate fraud, falsehood and injustice for the sake of any political, administrative or national expediency. Whether it be the mutual relations of the rulers and their subjects within the state, or the relations of the state with other states in both instances the state must give precedence to truth, honesty, and justice over its aims and objects. It imposes the same obligation on the state as on individual. Namely to fulfil all covenants made and obligations undertaken, to have one measure and standard for give and take, to act in accordance with pledged word and to conform our actions to our words; to remember our obligations along with our duties and rights and not to forget the rights of others when expecting them to fulfil their obligations; to use power and authority for the establishment of justice and not injustice; to look upon duty as nothing more than a sacred obligation and to fulfil it; and to regard power as a trust from God and use it in the belief that one has to render an account of one's actions to Him. Although an Islamic state is set up in some portion of the earth, Islam does not seek to restrict human rights or the rights of citizenship within any geographical limits. As far as humanity is concerned Islam lays down some fundamental rights for every person and commands that they be respected under all circumstances whether such a person is resident within the four corners of the Islamic state or outside it, whether he is a friend or foe; whether he is at peace with the state or at war. Human blood is held sacred in any case and cannot be shed without a rightful claim. It is not permissible to oppress women, children, old people, sick persons or the wounded. The honour of women is worthy of respect under all circumstances and conditions and it must not be violated. A hungry person is deserving of food, a naked one of clothes, and a wounded or diseased individual of care and attention irrespective of whether he belongs to your community or that of your enemies. These, and a few other, rights have been laid down by Islam for every man by virtue of his status as a human being and they have been treated as fundamental rights in the constitution of an Islamic state.

As regards the rights of citizenship even these are not conferred by Islam on those persons only who may have been born within the boundaries of its territory. Rights are granted to every Muslim irrespective of whether the place of his birth be in any other part of the world. A Muslim automatically becomes the citizen of an Islamic state as soon as he sets foot on its territory and thus enjoys equal rights of citizenship along with those who acquire its citizenship by birthright. Citizenship has therefore to be common among all the Islamic states that may exist in the world and a Muslim will not need any passport for entry within the boundaries of any one of them. And every Muslim is to be regarded as eligible and fit for all positions of the greatest responsibility in an Islamic state without any distinction of race, nationality or class.

Islam has also laid down certain rights for the non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic state and these must necessarily form part of the Islamic Constitution. According to Islamic terminology such non-Muslims are called Dhimmis (the covenanted), implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and guaranteed their protection. Their life, property and honour of a Dhimmi is to be respected and protected exactly like that of a Muslim subject. There is no difference at all between a Muslim and a Dhimmi in respect of the application of the civil or criminal law. The Islamic state shall not interfere with the personal law of Dhimmis. They will have full freedom of conscience and belief and be at liberty to perform their religious rites and ceremonies. Not only can they propagate their religion but they are entitled even to criticise Islam within the limits laid down by law.

These, as well as many other rights, have been granted to the Dhimmis by Islam in its Constitution. Whether it be the mutual relations of the rulers and their subjects within the state, or the relations of the state with other states in both instances the state must give precedence to truth, honesty, and justice over its aims and objects. It imposes the same obligation on the state as on individual. Namely to fulfil all covenants made and obligations undertaken, to have one measure and standard for give and take, to act in accordance with pledged word and to conform our actions to our words; to remember our obligations along with our duties and rights and not to forget the rights of others when expecting them to fulfil their obligations; to use power and authority for the establishment of justice and not injustice; to look upon duty as nothing more than a sacred obligation and to fulfil it; and to regard power as a trust from God and use it in the belief that one has to render an account of one's actions to Him. Although an Islamic state is set up in some portion of the earth, Islam does not seek to restrict human rights or the rights of citizenship within any geographical limits. As far as humanity is concerned Islam lays down some fundamental rights for every person and commands that they be respected under all circumstances whether such a person is resident within the four corners of the Islamic state or outside it, whether he is a friend or foe; whether he is at peace with the state or at war. Human blood is held sacred in any case and cannot be shed without a rightful claim. It is not permissible to oppress women, children, old people, sick persons or the wounded. The honour of women is worthy of respect under all circumstances and conditions and it must not be violated. A hungry person is deserving of food, a naked one of clothes, and a wounded or diseased individual of care and attention irrespective of whether he belongs to your community or that of your enemies. These, and a few other, rights have been laid down by Islam for every man by virtue of his status as a human being and they have been treated as fundamental rights in the constitution of an Islamic state.

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tution. And they are rights of a permanent nature of which they cannot be deprived unless and until the Dhimmis go outside the covenant. Whatever the oppression which a non-Muslim state may perpetrate on its Muslim subjects it is not permissible for an Islamic state to retaliate on its non-Muslim subjects in the slightest degree so much so that even if all the Muslim outside the boundaries of an Islamic state are killed the state cannot shed the blood of one single Dhimmi non-Muslim living within its boundaries.

The responsibility for the administration of the Government, in an Islamic state, is handed over to an Amir (leader) who may be likened to the President in a democratic state. All the adult men and women who believe in the fundamentals of the constitution will be entitled to vote for the election of the Amir.

The basic qualifications for the election of an Amir are that he should command the confidence of the largest number of people in the matter of knowledge of the spirit of Islam, he should possess a truly Islamic characteristics of fear of God and be endowed with statesmanship. An advisory council to be elected by the people set up for assisting the Amir. It will be incumbent on the Amir to administer the country with the advice of this advisory council. The Amir can retain office only so long as he enjoys the confidence of the people. He will have to vacate office when he loses this confidence. But so long as he retains such confidence he will have full authority to govern and exercise the full powers of Government. He can exercise the power of veto against the majority of the advisory council if and when he considers this council to be incompetent. He will have the right to criticise the Amir and his Government.

Legislation in an Islamic state will be restricted within the limits prescribed by the law of Shariat. The clear injunctions of God and His Prophet are meant for acceptance and obedience and no legislative body can make any alterations or modifications therein. As for the commandments which are liable to two or more interpretations duty of ascertaining the real spirit and intention of the Shariat in such cases will devolve upon such people as may possess a knowledge of the Law of Shariat. Every citizen will have to be referred to the subcommittee of the advisory council comprised of Ulama (men learned in religious law). A vast field will still be available for legislation on questions about which the Shariat has not given any instruction and the advisory council will be free to legislate in regard to these matters.³

In Islam the judiciary is not placed under the executive Government but is the direct representative of God and answerable to Him. The judges will no doubt be appointed by the executive Government, but every judge will have to be referred to the subcommittee of the advisory council comprised of Ulama (men learned in religious law). A vast field will still be available for legislation on questions about which the Shariat has not given any instruction and the advisory council will be free to legislate in regard to these matters.³

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¹) This is not a negation of human freedom. It only emphasizes the transcendental element in all thought, action, political beliefs and ideas. Maulana Maudoodi is a great believer in human reason as all conscious Muslims are. See his book „Towards understanding Islam“. ED.

²) The commands of God, as elucidated in the Quran are those permanent principles of human life which ought not to be affected by time and place. Maulana Maudoodi here implies those principles. Western political and philosophical thinking at the moment realized the necessity of believing in the limitation of democratic sovereignty.

³) There is a difference amongst Muslims concerning the extent of the validity of the Shariat at present. ED.

Objectivity and the writing of history

The Conceptions of History of Al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, Dr Iqbal and other Historians

By Hussein Alatas

Al-Ghazali introduced a new era in the historical development of objectivity.

The crises and confusion in the world of thought that characterized the nineteenth century resulting from the philosophical inquiry into the nature and meaning of mind, matter and life, had centred itself around the question, „What constitutes objective knowledge?“ Since time immemorial, the attention of mankind has been drawn towards this problem. But this does not mean that the problem of objective knowledge today is similar to that of bygone ages. A new era in the historical development of objectivity was introduced by the Muslim philosopher and jurist al-Ghazali (d. 1111 C.E.) when searching for an unshakable foundation for his belief. Al-Ghazali pointed out that philosophers had been disputing with one another about their respective systems based on empirical and rational certainty. He formulated the problem in another way. The problem, as al-Ghazali put it, was not to be certain of our belief but first to be certain of what certainty is. Before we can say that a certain knowledge is convincing and provable, that it

makes us certain of what we have thus known. We ought to find out what we mean by certainty. In other words, before we regard any knowledge to be objective, we ought to know what we mean by the word „objectivity“ and what really constitutes objectivity. Today people do not distinguish any longer between objective and unobjective history, but between what is objectivity and what is history.

Ibn Khaldun's attempt to give an objective account of history. History, as it was conceived and written before, had merely been a compilation of recorded events selected at random or at the instigation of the writer's interest and preferences. In the fourteenth century, 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, the Muslim historian of North Africa (1332-1406), wrote his monumental *Universal History*, in which he simultaneously laid down the principles of modern sociology.¹ He conceived history not as a mere succession of events but as a process resulting from the operation of certain laws in human society. This idea of history

The political system of Islam has been based on three principles viz: Tauhid (Unity of God), Rissalat (Prophethood) and Khilafat (Caliphate). It is difficult to appreciate the details of the Islamic political system without fully understanding these three principles. I will therefore give a brief explanation of them.

Tauhid (Unity) means that God is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of this universe and all those living in it. The sovereignty of this kingdom vests in Him. He alone has the right to command or forbid. Service and obedience is due to Him alone without anyone else having a share in it. Life which is the source of our existence, our physical faculties and potentialities, and the authority which we possess over everything that exists in this universe as well as all these things themselves: none of them has been created or acquired by us. No one is associated with God in His bountiful provision of them for us. Hence it is not for us to fix the aim and purpose of our existence or prescribe the limits of our powers and faculties, and no one is entitled to interfere in this matter. This right belongs to God only, who has created us, endowed us with those powers and faculties, and handed over to us all these things for our use. This principle of the Unity of God negates the sovereignty of human beings altogether. Nothing can claim sovereignty be it a human being, a family, a class or group, or the human beings in the world taken together. God alone is the Sovereign and His commandments are the Law of Islam.¹

The means through which we receive the Law of God is designated as Rissalat (prophethood). We receive two things from this source: first the Book in which God Himself has expounded His Law; secondly the authoritative interpretation of the Book of God which the Prophet by his word and deed has vouchsafed to us in his capacity as the representative of God. All the principles on which the system of human life should be based have been stated in the Book of God. Further the Prophet of God has, in accordance with the intention of the Divine Book, set up for us a pattern by framing a system of life putting it into practical effect and explaining to us the necessary details thereof. The combination of these two things according to Islamic terminology is called the Shariat.²

Let us take the Khilafat now. In the Arabic language this word is used for representation. According to the Islamic viewpoint the real position and place of man is that he is the representative of God on this earth; that is to say by virtue of the powers delegated to him by God, man is required to exercise the authority in this world which really vests in God.

Now take for example the case of your estate which someone were required to administer on your behalf. You will see that four conditions are fulfilled in this. First, that the real ownership of property remains vested in you and not in the administrator; secondly that he should administer your property in accordance with your instructions; thirdly, that he should exercise his

as a process was first introduced by Hegel, as far as Europe is concerned. The subject matter of Ibn Khaldun's *Universal History* is "the record of human society, of world civilization: of the changes that take place in the nature of that society, such as savagery, sociability, and group solidarity; of revolutions and uprisings by one set of people against another, with the resulting kingdoms and States, with their various ranks; of the different activities and occupations of men, whether for gaining their livelihood or in the various sciences and crafts; and, in general, of all the transformation that society undergoes by its very nature."¹ We are here not so much interested in the subject matter of his history and the meaning he attached to it, or in the laws that he discovered operating in human society, but in his attempt to give an objective account of history.

Ibn Khaldun enumerated seven principal sources of error in the writing and recording of history. He wrote:

"The first factor is partisanship towards a creed or opinion. For when the mind receives in a state of neutrality and moderation any piece of information, it gives to that information its due share of investigation and criticism, so as to discharge the truth it contains from the errors; should the mind, however, be biased in favour of an opinion or creed, it at once accepts every favourable piece of information concerning this opinion. Therefore, partisanship acts as a blinker to the mind, preventing it from investigating and criticizing and inclining it to the reception and transmission of error."

The second factor is over-confidence in our materials and sources. The third is failure to understand what is intended. The fourth is a mis-I take belief in the truth. The fifth is "the inability rightly to place an event in its real context, owing to the complexity and obscurity of the situation. The sixth is the desire to gain favour and social approval. The seventh cause of error," continued Ibn Khaldun, "and the most important of all, is the ignorance of the laws governing the transformation of human society. For every single thing, whether it is an object or an action, is subject to a law governing its nature and any change that may take place in it. If, therefore, the historian understands the nature of events and changes that occur in the world, and the conditions governing them, such knowledge will help him more than anything else to clarify any record and to distinguish the truth it contains from the falsehoods."²

Modern attempts at objective account of history. Ever since the time of Ibn Khaldun, more factors that affect objectivity in the writing of history have been brought to light. Scientific researches have indicated that still more factors will be discovered. Thus the concept of objectivity is also subject to change in the same manner as the subject about which it tries to give an objective account is also subject to change. The Dutch historian Jan Romein enumerated among the factors which affected objectivity, the class, the environment and the age to which the historian is related. He also mentioned some highly important factors which are generally considered as the central problem of epistemology and philosophy. They are what Karl Mannheim classified as the "collective unconscious," or the irrational and emotional drive in human thinking that draws people to pursue one way of conceiving life or another.³ Our mind, the mould by which the infinite quantity and quality of historical facts are shaped into an intelligible and interpretative process of events, is also not free from the influence of this irrational motivation. I shall attempt to present the solution of the problem of objectivity which has been given by some historians and see what we can make of it. But, before that, let us find out what people mean by history.

The meaning of history

It is, generally accepted that our conception of history is also influenced by our conception of objectivity. Ibn Khaldun's history left no room for the improbable and the impossible such as the legend about Alexander the Great descending in a glass case to the bottom of the sea to make pictures of certain sea monsters which were preventing him from building the ports of Alexandria. This legend was recorded and believed by the chronicler Mas'udi, whose conception of objectivity differed from that of Ibn Khaldun in the sense that it was less scientific and thereby provided another view of history. But we can consider it as set aside the influential factors interacting between our conception of history and objectivity.

In the first place, all conceptions of history, like all conceptions of objects of phenomena, are abstractions of the human mind. To cite an instance, let us make an analogy between history and water. Our knowledge about water should be infinite. We can know about water from the chemical and physical points of view, but these two are not the only ones. The properties of water, such as the capacity to quench our thirst, to wet our hands, to erode soils, to produce sounds, etc., can be known only when we come into contact with many points of view but never totally and wholly. So it is with history. In his discussion with the Dutch historian Pieter Geul, being aware of the nature of history, Arnold Toynbee made it plain that his *Study of History* was one of those shots in the dark. He wrote:

"I should never dream of claiming that my particular interpretation is the only one possible. There are, I am sure, many different alternative ways of analysing history, each of which is true in itself and illuminating, as far as it goes, just as, in dissecting an organism you throw light on its

nature by laying bare either the skeleton or the muscles or the nerves or the circulation of the blood. No single one of these dissections tells the whole truth, but each of them reveals a genuine facet of it."⁴

We can write about the historical process with religion, science, philosophy as our main subjects selected from the total and infinite historical reality. Besides this, to each selected subject we can give different and sometimes contradictory meanings and interpretations. Thus history is just like a river flowing in many directions and containing different elements. The historians are those who have hurried to the banks, each with a bucket in his hands. The buckets are various of shapes and the water they fetch is sometimes muddy and sometimes clear, depending on many circumstances connected with the river. Sometimes the bucket itself is not clean, thus making pure water dirty. The historians then hurry back and vie with one another to sell the water poured into different bottles and with different labels. It is thus clear to us that the historical reality can give us many possible interpretations of history. A lucid example of this was the fall of Rome and the Renaissance. Historians had not agreed to the cause of Rome's decline and to the significance of the Renaissance. Each historian advocated a different view supported by a mass of evidence equally refutable by their opponents.

The conceptions of history of Toynbee, Marx, Dr. Iqbal, and other modern historians

Arnold Toynbee conceived history as the development of religious systems with the basic law of challenge and response. Muhammad Iqbal thought of history as men's efforts to transform themselves into more or less perfect individuals in whom thought and action, instinct and reason, become one. The aims of these individuals in life are the continuous creation of desires and ideals

based on the unity of God and mankind. Karl Marx viewed history to be the struggle between different classes centering on their modes of obtaining a livelihood. Benedetto Croce believed history as the act to comprehend and understand the requirements of practical life in the moral, aesthetic, political, scientific and other spheres of activity.

It may then be asked, why have we not agreed what history is? Knowing that a continuous dissension in regard to such a fundamental aspect of our life as a conception of history is not natural and desirable, yet we persist in it. Is the difficulty inherent in itself or is it our error in giving history its wrong meaning or our adapting a wrong manner of approach? To answer these questions we must consider two highly important factors connected with them. In the first place no conception of history can exist independent of and isolated from our conception of life in general. Thus the interdependence of belief and the conception of history is established. In the second place, owing to this interdependence, a conflict between diverging systems of life in a given time and place will produce a similar result in the way history is regarded by those who live in that particular time and place. Bearing these factors in mind, let us now attempt to answer the above question.

The truth is that the problem lies not in the inherent difficulty of formulating a true conception of history but in the quest of the true system of life. In other words, the solution to the crisis in our conception of history lies not in the technique and method of writing history, i.e., the concepts and methodology employed, but in the discovery of a generally accepted system of life which is based not on the experience of a particular race, country or class but of mankind as a whole. Ev-

Continued page 4

The contribution of Islam to civilization

by Muhammad Natsir

Not original? Professor Sattar Chauri, a lecturer in Berlin¹, requested us to remind ourselves how we would feel our debt to Islam if we imagine ourselves to live without paper, weighing machines, compass, sugar, underwear and chemistry. This opinion of Chauri is brief but to the point! But we also heard something different. The Muslims, according to this other opinion, had certainly contributed much to their civilization, but they were not the ones who gave us something new. They transferred what had been already there. In other words they were not original! This reminds us of a joke once made by Mark Twain. One Sunday Twain listened to a sermon given by a famous priest. He was so carried away by the eloquence with which the sermon was delivered that he desired to be introduced to the priest. Soon afterwards he was introduced to the priest and expressed due praise for the sermon. But he said that not one of what the priest had said was original. In his house there was a book wherein all that which the priest had said could be found. It appeared that the priest lost his temper after hearing Twain's challenging remarks, and he vehemently declared that the sermon was of his own authorship, and that he had written it only the night before. It would thus be impossible to find it in any other book. Twain replied that in that case he would seek him the book the next day so that he might witness it himself. On the morrow the priest received a post-parcel containing the book. It was a dictionary!

This can serve as an illustration concerning the argument as to whether or not the originality of Islamic contribution towards civilization was due to the labour of Muslim scholars in that golden age. It is not our intention to say that Islam alone is the fountain of all knowledge for it would be absurd to say so. There were amongst Muslims scholars, just as there were amongst any other scholars, those whose brilliance was like the rays of the sun, genuine, penetrating, but there were also those whose brilliance glowed with borrowed light. We cannot accept those who said that Muslim scholars like Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and some others were merely the executors of Greek science like horses drawing the chariots of Aristotle and the other Greek philosophers. These preposterous statements by one of the Western writers is contradictory to facts. It is always the case that when one tries hard to rekindle a flickering flame, one's opponents will strive as hard to extinguish it. But thanks, however, to the presence of the universal laws of nature, which continually recur, every truth, however much it is concealed, shall always make itself known.

IBN HAITHAM. In an age when the technical progress of photography had reached the stage as it is now, the name of Ibn Haitham was beginning to make its appearance in the libraries of the West. It had been proved that it was he who in the 11th century laid out the foundation relating to the use of photographic instruments known to-day in the 20th century. Thus he anticipated Leonardo da Vinci and the other Western scholars².

Ibn Haitham, known to the West as Alhazen, had contributed much to the knowledge of optical science dealing with the behaviour of light (penetration and travel of light). During an eclipse, Ibn Haitham made a small hole in a window. After covering the window, it was seen reflected against the wall of the room facing the window a figure in the shape of the sun caused by the penetration of light into the room through the hole in the window. This figure of the sun was not spherical as usual, but in the shape of a crescent, due to the eclipse. Subsequently Ibn Haitham discovered the Camera Obscura, that is about two hundred years before Western experts such as Levy Gerson, Don Fafnuce, Leonardo da Vinci etc.

IBN HAITHAM'S CRITICISM TOWARDS THE ANCIENT MEN OF LEARNING.

Ibn Haitham's criticism towards the ancient men of learning concerning the behaviour of light created a revolution in that branch of knowledge at that time. Euclid and Ptolemy thought that the reason why we see things was because of rays which radiated from our eyes to the objects, whereas Ibn Haitham thought the opposite. According to him it was the things we see that produces the rays which pass through the retina. His influence in the theory of light can be traced in the writings of Leonardo da Vinci, and not less also in those of the wellknown Western men of science like Kepler and Bacon and the other scholars of this particular science in the Middle Ages. They based their theories and writings on the theory of Ibn Haitham which had been translated into Latin and circulated under the title of 'Optice Thesaurus'.

THE CRITICAL SPIRIT. Meanwhile let one not forget that civilization in reality is indebted to Islam not primarily because of the fruits derived from the labour of Muslim scholars in that period, but in the propagation of the use of the critical spirit, that is the drive to discover and to investigate the truth, which was embedded in the hearts of every Muslim by the religion of Islam. It was this critical sense which urged them to use reason and to investigate with utmost precision, and to restrain them from blind belief. This is written in The Quran in the following words: "(And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge. Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, of all of these it will be asked)". (17:36).

To illustrate the result of this refined and lofty conception of the Quran, let us listen to what Abu Muslim Djabir Ibn Hayyan, a famous authority on chemistry at that time, had to say. He said that knowledge from hearsay without empirical proof had no value in chemistry. It is a requirement in chemistry, without exception, that the value of an argument which is not based on concrete proofs is not more than the value of a statement which contains the possibility of being true or false. Only when one comes with concrete proofs to strengthen one's view can one say we could accept your view³.

To judge how great is the value of such an attitude it is necessary to remember that in that

period, or even two or three centuries after Djabir Ibn Hayyan, the whole of Europe, which is now holding the reins of modern civilization, was still completely enwrapped by all sorts of superstition and blind belief. The anatomy and psychology of antiquity had been smashed to pieces. The method of diagnosing a disease was decided by a kind of formula or guesswork in a capricious manner. Of botany, only its skeleton was left. Medical science was nothing more than a collection of writings accompanied by all sorts of sorceries. Such was the picture visualized by a Western historian when commenting on the deterioration of knowledge in the West during that period. Concerning the principles of knowledge, together with the attempt to attain and to decide the basis of Ijtihad⁴, it had become part and parcel of the Muslim community. Consider how careful and precise had the Muslims selected and examined the Hadith⁵ that were to become the basis for fatwa⁶ and for the principles of religious jurisprudence. The chain of transmission was scrutinized and the transmitters were also investigated as regards their persons and characters. Which religion, which philosophical school, and which cultural trend has taught its followers to exercise their critical spirit which attained such a high degree? In this respect it would not be out of place if we Muslims were to answer this question clearly and immediately: "That which had taught us to attain such a thing is none other than our religion, that is the religion of fitrah — the religion of the true nature of man."

It is this critical spirit that had become the root and foundation of our thinking. All sorts of discoveries gathered in the various branches of science were the results of this critical spirit. These results of the critical spirit shall again be in our possession if it will be alive again and grow in the minds of the Muslims.

The opposite is also true. When the Muslims have lost their hold on this invaluable principle their standard in the scale of civilization gradually decreased. The courage that in the beginning flourished amongst the Muslims had given way to a feeling of inferiority. The spirit that in the beginning faced life enthusiastically became serene. The Muslims started to bury tombs and holy places. They became enslaved to talisman and divination. The hands that were first used to investigate the world of nature and the universe in order to create benefits for human society were withdrawn without any use except in counting the beads of the rosary and reciting formulas to win over the angels of paradise.

Bearing this in mind, every effort from our side to reawaken this critical spirit and to discard 'the garment of fear' with every thing possible within our reach, cannot be regarded as something insignificant. The Muslims started to bury tombs and holy places. They became enslaved to talisman and divination. The hands that were first used to investigate the world of nature and the universe in order to create benefits for human society were withdrawn without any use except in counting the beads of the rosary and reciting formulas to win over the angels of paradise.

It is not fair if we regard this effort of ours as merely a matter of furu'iyah⁷, and to ignore it completely. We must not forget that those who concern themselves with various such problems, which appeared at that time as something unimportant, are in reality those who distinguish what is fundamental from what is erroneous which had strayed us away from the blessings of God. The association of superstition and blind belief could be compared to that of the critical spirit and the result of a glorious civilization. The way to uproot the spirit of blind belief is to expose clearly and honestly the confusions brought about by superstition and innovation. Such a task requires strength, capacity, perseverance and tact of no small calibre.

We have all seen the results of a civilization which has separated itself from the spirit of Tawhid which is pure and true, and sound moral and devotion. All these are related to one another in an interdependent manner. This is a very clear lesson given by history for us all.

¹ This article was first written in 1937 and reprinted in 1952.

² E. Wiedemann, "Über die erfingung der Camera Obscura" in, "Verhandlungen der deutschen Physikalischen Gesellschaft".

³ Ijtihad, which means, to exert, to strive after something, is the principle of reasoning which allows a Muslim or the community, to form an opinion concerning the teaching of religion and its various legal ramifications and then to act on it. Since about 1000 years the door of Ijtihad had been closed for certain noteworthy reasons. Progressive Islam believes in re-opening the gate of Ijtihad but with great caution and thorough investigation. Due to the dynamic structure of life and the labour of Quran, let us listen to what Abu Muslim Djabir Ibn Hayyan, a famous authority on chemistry at that time, had to say. He said that knowledge from hearsay without empirical proof had no value in chemistry. It is a requirement in chemistry, without exception, that the value of an argument which is not based on concrete proofs is not more than the value of a statement which contains the possibility of being true or false. Only when one comes with concrete proofs to strengthen one's view can one say we could accept your view.

⁴ Fatwa is a judgement on a religious matter which is not binding on the believers. This judgement is usually given by a person of authority. ED.

⁵ The details of religion which have no bearing upon the fundamentals. ED.

OBJECTIVITY AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY

every attempt to formulate a philosophy of history will not be rewarded with success unless the intellectual and ideological background of which it is an inseparable part is first strongly and concretely established. There is a tendency among historians to separate the writing of history from its last errors and evaluative framework. They follow the habits of scientists in dissecting and analysing human experience into scattered bits and compartments. Such an attempt will not contribute to solving our problem. It only reveals to us the phenomenon that lies deep in the substratum of our intellectual and emotional turbulence, the desire to find relief by avoiding the real problem.

The problem of objectivity

Let us now return to the problem of objectivity. The word objectivity contains several factors and aspects. These can be divided into two parts for the purposes of analysis. They are the technique and method on one side and the values and attitudes on the other. By technique and method I mean the conceptual tools and principles of reasoning which are employed to account for historical facts devoid of value judgements. They are necessary to prevent logical errors and inconsistencies. This technique and method does not exclusively belong to one or two historians but is the common property of all. For example, the conceptual tools and method of reasoning employed in the theory of evolution could be used by different biologists to ascertain their various and sometimes contradictory conclusions. The other side of objectivity is the attitudes and values. Every concept of objectivity implies a criterion on which it is based. It is thus a concept consisting of certain relations. In other words, when we speak of objectivity we mean that it is objective in comparison with certain values and ideas which we have accepted as a standard. Some historians, when dealing with the problem of objectivity, include only the technique and method as the subject matter. They avoid the affective and evaluative side of objectivity. I shall explain this further by citing as an example Professor Romain's interpretation of objectivity. Objective history, in the eyes of Professor Romain, is to understand and to comply with the requirements generated by the spirit of the age, that is, the most dominant force operating in it. This compliance with, and understanding of, the spirit of the time means taking into consideration the socio-historical unit as a whole and by siding with the dominant force. To take sides with this force Professor Romain considered as one step forward towards objectivity. He wrote:

"Precisely, his choosing a party makes him impartial because it makes it possible for him to understand the spirit of the time as a unified whole and thus leading him to understand the past, that is, to have an objective picture of it that is, to have the certainty of it."¹

The party which he had chosen is that of the peasants and labourers, for they represent the force of the present.

"For my part I have made the choice. I see the true spirit of the present in the emancipation struggle of the labourers and the peasants, and as long as it exists, the critical form of knowledge connected with it is for me the dialectic-materialistic one. To my mind, it reveals to us the greatest possible degree of objective knowledge concerning the past."

Professor Romain separated here the values and attitude which determined his choice from the conceptual and the methodological apparatus, which he inserted into or derived from dialectical materialism. That his conception of history did not represent an advance in the problem of objectivity can be clearly shown. To comply with and to understand the spirit of the time, does that really mean to be objective? It is definitely certain that without taking into account the spirit of the time and its basic forces, one cannot hope to understand history. But to base objectivity merely by associating it with the spirit of the time is nothing more than degrading the concept itself, for by this we exclude the other factors in objectivity, which are above any spirit or any time. I shall make this point clear. In 1649, a party called the Diggers came into being in England representing the exploited class. As a result of the dissension between themselves and Cromwell, a book was written by Gerard Winstanley in 1652 exposing the views and aspirations of the Diggers. Gerard Winstanley desired a kind of communistic social order based on non-sectarian and non-theocratic Christian belief. True freedom as he saw it, should be that all could have equal access to the earth and its produce. This also meant economic equality. Without this, there would be no equality because wealth gave power and power meant the ability to oppress. The views and desires of Gerard Winstanley neither complied with nor understood the spirit of the time, which was then feudalistic and precapitalistic. But these same views and desires contained a lot of truth and manifestation of positive justice. Thus there existed a separation between truth and justice on the one hand and the force which represented the spirit of the time on the other. To put it plainly, the force that dominated the socio-historical unit was not always the carrier of truth and justice. This was the case with feudalism and bourgeois capitalism. For this very reason a conception of objectivity cannot be correlated with either capitalism or feudalism. The same thing applies to the emancipation of peasants and labourers which Professor Romain called the

force of the time. If this emancipation does not itself carry the essentials of truth and positive justice, Professor Romain would certainly not correlate his conception of objectivity with it in the same manner that he did not correlate objectivity with feudalism and capitalism. This proves that the part of objectivity which has something to do with truth and justice is above any spirit of any time. It is an indispensable element in our conception of objectivity which is not touched by the force to which many historians like Professor Romain have tried to correlate it. The force of the time can only prevent or assist in the realization of these truths and justice. The main indictment of Marxism against capitalism is that capitalism failed to comply with the requirements of positive justice. Marxism claimed for itself the honour of being the new and decisive force in the historical process. Professor Romain shared the Marxist belief, with much truth, that the most important and significant force is the proletariat and the peasantry. The process of change induced by the new force also made use of certain principles of truth and justice which had long existed. This process is still happening. Since this process is not yet complete, it would then be logical to wait first before pronouncing our judgement. We could never correctly have pronounced our judgement on the feudalistic order before it had passed away from the historical scene. The same thing applies to the capitalistic order. Is it not, then, reasonable to adopt the same attitude towards the order of the proletariat and the peasantry? If so, why then, we may ask, did Professor Romain correlate objectivity with a process, the process of emancipation, which had not yet been completed? The answer to this is that he excluded that indispensable and absolute element dealing with truth and justice from his conception of objectivity. Only if we exclude these elements can we manage to correlate objectivity merely

with a process, or laws of historical development, such as the struggle for emancipation, as is the general habit of historical materialists. This would only lead us, as the above views of Professor Romain have revealed, either to historical relativism, which can never be rationally founded, or to permanent scepticism, which is an impossibility, or to an exclusion of value judgements above time and space, which means avoiding the core of the whole problem. By burying its head in the sand, the ostrich does not solve its problem.

Conclusion

The above analysis has made it clear that our concept of objective history has never been and never can be separated from what Mannheim called "the irreducibly residue of human valuation". This valuation, in turn, constitutes an inseparable and indispensable part of our conception of life. It may be organized into a system or it may not be so, but the fact remains that it is a conception of life which we cannot exclude from our views of objectivity and history. It is in fact a component part of it. The problem therefore lies not so much in history and in our ways of reasoning but in our very conception of life. The clashing views of history and objectivity in our present age reflect a similar happening in our conceptions of life. In the attempt to solve these problems our historical and intellectual horizons ought to be extended to the whole world and not to any particular spot, as was the case with those who suggested the solution based on the experience of Europe only. Sociology and social psychology have made this move and it is to be hoped that the philosophy and the science of history will follow suit. Mankind is neither a class, nor a race, nor a culture, nor a religion, nor a belief. It is a whole which we have not yet understood, and on the complete or incomplete understanding of which depends the future of humanity.

¹) C. Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History*. Selections from the Prolegomena of Ihsa Khaldun, London, 1950.

²) *Ibid*.

³) *Ibid*.

⁴) Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.

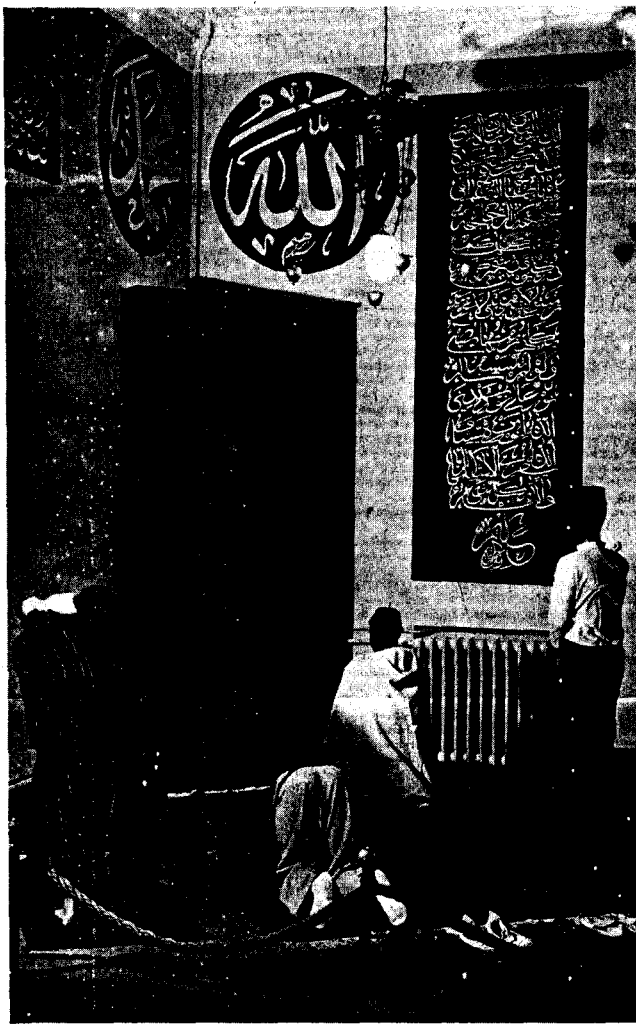
⁵) Pieter Geyl and Arnold Toynbee, *Can We Determine the Pattern of the Past?* p. 29.

⁶) J. Romain, *In opdracht van de tijd*, Article: "Zekerheid en onzekerheid in de geschiedwetenschap."

An urgent appeal!

With all earnestness and fervent hope, we direct this appeal to any of our readers who sympathize with Progressive Islam, to help us in the following things:

- To inform us that he or she has received a copy of *Progressive Islam*.
 - Whether we ought to continue sending the forthcoming issues.
 - To send us suggestions concerning *Progressive Islam*.
 - To send us the names and addresses of persons who might be interested to receive the issues of *Progressive Islam*.
 - To introduce or acquaint us to writers who might be requested to contribute to *Progressive Islam*.
 - To assist us in distributing some copies of *Progressive Islam*.
- Progressive Islam* is maintained by those who are in dead earnest of strengthening the foundation of Islam and disseminating the proper knowledge of modern philosophical and scientific investigations. Our thinking, our money, and our sweat are offered to this cause. We therefore appeal to these readers who sympathize with our aim to grant us the above requests that our efforts need not be in vain.



The above is a photo of the interior of the section where the niche is situated facing the Ka'bah. The calligraphy seen on the wall are verses of the Quran and the words Allah and Muhammad. The long lines of calligraphy on the right is a contribution from Mr. Mohd. Nagib Alatas, an officer cadet from Malaya studying in the English military academy at Sandhurst.

Changing attitude towards Islam

In our first issue we published some informations concerning the Institute for the Tropics in Amsterdam which opened a new section dedicated to Islam. This inaugurated a better appreciation of Islam, as a result of contacts with the Islamic people and the efforts of modern scholarship in this direction. Drs. R. L. Mellema, an official attached to the Institute, who was responsible for planning the set-up of the whole section, verified this assertion in his speech on the opening day of the section. He said, amongst others, the following:

"It is certainly not superfluous to give more common knowledge of the world religion which Islam is. The ignorance with regard to this religion is still alarmingly great today, and what people — I mean the public in general — think they know, rests, as a rule, on general misunderstandings from former ages when Islam was considered a somewhat dangerous rival of Christianity. Until today such misunderstandings are unconsciously prolonged in many history books of primary and secondary schools. Let us take as an example the person of the founder, the Prophet Mohammed. In the Christian Middle Ages, the Arab Prophet, who for the Muslims is a 'Mercy of God towards the world', was called a 'false prophet'. This passionate opposition against Mohammed can be explained less on account of his teachings than by the fear which the Western world of that period felt for its rapid expansion. It was only after the advancing Turkish armies of 1683 had been stopped at the gates of Vienna, and when they were driven back in the direction of the Bosphorus, that people were prepared for a more careful and thoughtful examination of Islam. In the light of newer conceptions, the opinion of the West as regards Mohammed became generally more reasonable, this dependent on the point of view which the critics held as regards Christianity and religion in general. He then appeared as proclaimer of the religion of Reason, as a wise Legislator or a great Statesman. The Western world could study the Quran with less prejudice, when at the end of the 17th century it was also printed in Europe." Regarding the Quran, he made the following observation:

"This Holy Book of the Muslims, containing Allah's instructions revealed by Mohammed, has always exercised a great influence upon the masses, not only in the religious sense but also in the general cultural sense. Because of education in the founding and spreading of the Quran, simultaneously during 13 centuries a battle against illiteracy occurred. Thus the study of the Quran indirectly led to the study of various sciences. Since the 10th century the Great Mosque Al-Azhar in Cairo is a centre of science. Besides religious sciences the following was also taught: history, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, chemical science, biology, geography, etc."

Correction

Vol. 1, no. 1, page 4, col. 4, last sentence. Birth control in the form of periodic abstinence or total abstinence is allowed by the Catholic Church. Prohibition against other methods of birth control is believed to be a matter of principle by the Church and not due to any political expediency. ED.