

# PROGRESSIVE ISLAM

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## THE ISLAMIC STATE

Everywhere in the world of Islam we find intense political fermentation which is gaining momentum by the day. In Morocco, Tunis and Algeria, the people of Islam are pressing for their independence. Independence, we know, is a means to attain an ideal. For the areas predominantly inhabited by Muslims, to attain independence without endeavouring to establish an Islamic state would be not only meaningless but also injurious to the welfare of Islam and the community in general, non-Muslims included. This is the reason that all the Islamic organizations in Indonesia are striving with all the might at their disposal for the establishment of an Islamic State. Whether we like it or not, a fact does not cease to become one by its mere denial. In Indonesia, Egypt, and other Arabic speaking countries, we find millions of people organizing themselves in political parties whose aim is the establishment of an Islamic State. This fact alone, leaving aside the ideals which an Islamic state shall strive for, is sufficient to warrant the attention that it deserves from the world in general. The more if the people in the other parts of the world know and understand the ideals of Islam.

Every sincere lover of humanity, not paralysed by intellectual speculation, or inhibited by impure motives, should feel grateful that here is a gigantic attempt to establish a state striving for a well-defined and humane ideal. But misunderstandings towards Islam in general, or historically conditioned reaction towards a religious state, as was the case with some of our modern intellectuals, or even the forces of vested interests, all have their share in creating a suspicious and distasteful attitude towards an Islamic state.

The Quran and our Prophet Muhammad have taught us to welcome criticism and face difficulty in a courageous way. But we do insist that when we are criticised, we are criticised on the right point. Furthermore we expect those who criticise us first to understand what we are aiming at. This, I believe would be the attitude that all reasonable men would adopt. To clarify the ideals of an Islamic state, let us concisely discuss its relations to various subjects of vital importance. But before doing this, let us learn more about the nature of the Islamic faith.

**THE ISLAMIC CONCEPTION OF RELIGION.** Religion, according to Islam, is not a purely departmental affair restricted to the individual. Religion, in the West, has always been conceived, both by its followers and its critics, as a purely personal and individual affair<sup>1</sup>. In Islam, religion is considered not only as an individual and personal affair but also a social system. Thus Islam is not only a religion in the Western sense, but also a social order. Failure to distinguish

this resulted in a lot of blunders and misconceptions, especially amongst newspaper writers. Due to this intrinsic nature of Islam, the Muslims do not believe in the separation of religion from the state.

We are not going deep into the religious and philosophical root of this belief, neither are we suggesting this to the non-Muslims in general, but for us Muslims, it is a matter of life and death to have an Islamic state. Our ills and shortcomings can best be remedied by an Islamic state.

The striving to establish an Islamic state where Muslims are predominantly the majority is not rooted in a desire for territorial aggrandizement or forceful conversion of the non-Muslim inhabitants to the Islamic faith. Rather it is because our reforms and social amelioration could best be accelerated by means of an Islamic state. Furthermore, as Professor Arnold rightly observed, the Islamic faith does not make any separation of religion from the state<sup>2</sup>. This is highly logical and natural because no state, as Professor MacIver explained, could be taken in isolation from the way of life of the society for which it existed<sup>3</sup>. To be against an Islamic state because it is a religious state is ridiculous. But if it can be proved to us that the ideals of Islam shall not be conducive towards human development, or that it contains absurd or irrational teachings, or that it cultivates an unsympathetic attitude towards the non-Muslims, then only is the distrust and criticism justified. As it is now, our desire is just the same with any other sound and humane political groups who wished to establish a democratic state for the purpose of self-development. Mr. Natsir, leader of the powerful Islamic party in Indonesia, the Masjumi, expressed the common desire of the Muslims in the following words:

The events of the past decade, and particularly of the present time in the Muslim world clearly reflect that there is a growing urge and a desire among the Muslims that the teachings of Islam and the principles of Islamic social justice should have a free play in governing their affairs, and this desire is based on the conviction that the Islamic teachings, the Islamic principles and the Shari'a<sup>4</sup> were not for a particular time, for a particular country or for a particular group of people. It is the 'Iman' of the Muslims that the Islamic teachings are for the whole humanity and are applicable everywhere and at all times. It is not only the feeling among the Muslims of the world but all religious groups are aware of the fact that the perils of the world, the growing sense of insecurity, is caused by the materialistic tendencies which have come to prove more and more irreconcilable. Not only the Muslims but all the religious people have come to the conviction that the time has come when people should go back to God and should not be solely dominated by materialistic desires. (4)

Every single idea which Mr. Natsir stated above and which we stand for in this editorial in regards to the Islamic state have their basis in the Holy Quran. Besides that, it is shared by all Islamic organizations and conscious Muslim in-

dividuals all over the world. There is hardly any Muslim religious leader or learned man, not to say the politicians, who believed in the separation of politics from religion.

Religion is not a diner jacket one puts on for certain occasions and afterwards hang it again in the wardrobe. It is a way of life and it has to control every single aspect of our lives. There is no such a thing as a double morality. If it is immoral to lie in private affairs, so it is in political relations.

If we desire vigorously the establishment of an Islamic state, it is because we have to continue striving for the good and militate against evil.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS.** Socio-economic reforms shall be first in the programme of an Islamic State. The living example for the Muslims were the reforms initiated by the Prophet and the Khulafa-al-Rashidun, during the first half of the Islamic era (6-7 century) A. D. The Islamic system lays a great emphasis on the common welfare of society as a whole. So great was the emphasis then that the Islamic social-order is now appraised by both Muslims and non-Muslim scholars as a form of socialistic social order based on the belief in the unity of God. Professor Gustav Diercks made a similar observation in his book, "The Arabs in the Middle Ages" trans. by A Majid, M. A. from the German. Syed Amir Ali expressed it in the following words: 'The tendency of the rule and principle of Islam is towards democracy with a strong tinge of socialism. All men, rich and poor, are equal in the sight of God, and the rulers are only His lieutenants to protect them from anarchy. The revenues of the State were not for the benefit or enrichment of the Caliph but for the good of the people. The poor tax was ordained from the rich for the relief of the poor, and charity was embodied into a law.'<sup>5</sup> It would be beyond the scope of this editorial to go into details concerning the economic system of Islam. But suffice it to say, whoever would undertake to understand the teachings of Islam would agree with us that it is progressive and harmonious. We promise to those who share a different opinion a space in Progressive Islam to declare their objections or criticisms. This is only a modest attempt to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad who with fortitude and magnanimity, bore the criticism of those who disbelieved in his humane mission. To deride criticism is the same as claiming for oneself the status of perfection, while religion, as Professor Toynbee rightly said, teaches man to be modest and humble.

**CULTURAL POLICY.** Our stress on the socio-economic reforms does not mean that we agree in neglecting the non-material factors of life.

Although we do believe that the highest aim in life is the attainment of spiritual values and qualities, yet the socio-economic

welfare of man is its primary condition.

The influence of socio-economic factors in the development of the human personality has been extensively described by Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun in the 14th century, and later in the 19th century vigorously emphasized by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. To-day there is not a single scientist dealing with the individual and social life of man who does not share this belief.

Not only our spirituality, but also our way of thinking is influenced by the situation in which we find ourselves<sup>6</sup>. Only in this sense do we attach importance to the material factors of human life. We do not conceive it as an absolute value or as the highest aim in life. The highest aim in life according to Islam is the cultivation of a certain type of character and the development of all our innate qualities in the mould of spiritual wisdom.

The saying of the Prophet, 'Takhalluq bi ahlak Allah' (imbue yourself with divine attributes) is conceived by Muslims as the expression of our highest aim in life. It is to this aim that the cultural policy of an Islamic state shall be directed.

**FOREIGN POLICY.** The foreign policy of an Islamic state shall be directed to attain solidarity amongst Muslims in order to achieve the ultimate aim of the unity of the human race. All mankind, as the Quran says, is but one nation. If God made them to differ with one another, it is only for the purpose of identification and encouragement to do good to one another<sup>7</sup>. This solidarity of the Muslim community in the world is not an absolute one. The restriction imposed by the Quran shows how lofty and humane is the Islamic conception of brotherhood. The Muslims are forbidden by the Quran to assist one another in aggression or in the perpetration of injustice. This prohibition against injustice is not only on behalf of the Muslims and the non-Muslims, but it also extended to birds and animals<sup>8</sup>.

**RACIALISM AND CHAUVINISM.** The Islamic state shall be a deadly enemy of both racialism and chauvinism. Professor Toynbee had recommended this Islamic spirit to Western society as a force to diminish the influence of racialism.<sup>9</sup> We might agree with Professor Snouck Hurgronje that "The ideal of a league of human races has indeed been approached by the Moslem community more nearly than by any other."<sup>10</sup>

**CONCLUSION.** It is, of course, insufficient for us to give a really adequate information concerning an Islamic state in the short space of an editorial. We refer the readers to the articles published by us for a further clarification of the Islamic state. Just as those who share a different opinion with us expect us to fulfil the requirement of logical procedures, so are we insistent on the fact that they too would stick to what they expected

# The Early Spread of Islam

by Hussein Alatas.

When Islam was first preached by the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca in 610-11 A.D., Arabia was in a very low and degraded condition. The people were poor and the country was several times visited by famines and pestilence. Oppression of the weak by the strong was common and the cruelties and lawlessness remained unchecked. The belief of the people remained shrouded in arrogance and superstition. The tribe was considered to be the highest object of devotion. Female infanticide was a regular practice since the females were regarded to be a greater burden than the males. In the year 571 A.D., the Prophet Muhammad was born. At the age of 40 he received the prophetic call and thereafter began to preach Islam. Before he received this call, or revelation, he was already known amongst his countrymen as a person attached to a very strong sense of justice and possessing a noble character. Even his enemies could not find a flaw in his character. Friends and foes alike called him "Al Amin", the trustworthy. In that period of rampant injustice he actively participated in the protection of widows and orphans. He also took the pledge with a few others, to support oppressed people. The rich inhabitants of Mecca used to hand over their jewellery to him for its safe keeping. All this occurred before he received the divine call. Thus the medium through which Islam passed to the world was a man whose personality was and still is, the embodiment of truth, justice and loftiness of character.

Around the year 632 A.D., Arabia came under the rule of Islam. By the rule of Islam, I mean Islam as a social order and not as a belief. It is important to make this distinction because the Islam that later expanded to Persia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, as a result of warfare with Persia and the Roman Empire, was not the belief as such but as a social-order. That Islam was spread by the sword is the general opinion here in the West. This is nothing but a myth invented to serve the purpose of the church. Professor T. W. Arnold, who had studied Islam all his life had disproved this general opinion in his book "The preaching of Islam." Islam, he said, was by nature and from the very beginning a peaceful religion emerging from a tolerant spirit and deep insight. The man who gave the example how Islam should be propagated was none other than the Prophet Muhammad himself. His method of preaching was through reasoning and persuasion and never by force. The Qur'an forbids using force in belief. It says: "There is no compulsion in religion for truth by its own nature separates itself from falsehood." But then the question arises if Islam is a peaceful and tolerant religion, why then did it involve itself in war? The answer to this is that in Islam, to be peaceful and tolerant does not mean to allow evil and injustice to have their own ways. To be peaceful does not mean to allow oneself to be oppressed.

The Prophet took no action against the heathen Arabs only when his peaceful manners failed and when the persecutions against him became bitter and unbearable. It was then so intense that he had to flee from Mecca, his home town, because the heathen Arabs made a plot to murder him. It was only then that he fought against them. After about 22 years of hard struggle, Arabia fell in 632 A.D. to the hands of Islam. Shortly before his death in that year, the Prophet sent messengers to the Negus of Abyssinia, the ruler of Egypt, the Roman Emperor, Heraclius, Chosroes the king of Persia, and a Chasaniid Christian prince of Basra near Damascus in Syria. The Negus accepted Islam, the king of Egypt treated the messenger kindly, Heraclius and Chosroes treated them badly, and the envoy to the Prince of Basra was murdered. Chosroes the king of Persia ordered the governor of Yemen to arrest the Prophet. The murder of the envoy in Basra brought the whole Roman Empire into hostility with Islam because Basra was then part of the Empire. Even before the birth of Islam Arabia had been the object of attack from outside. In 24 B.C. Aelius Gallus, prefect of Egypt under Roman rule, sent an unsuccessful expedition to conquer southern Arabia. In the year when the Prophet Muhammad was born, Abraham the Christian king of Abyssinia marched into Mecca to conquer the country. This also failed because his army was destroyed by storm and epidemic.

Just before his death, the Prophet sent an expedition to Syria to avenge the murder of the envoy. This brought Islam in conflict with the Roman Empire. The interference of Persia in Hira in the internal affairs of the new government, brought it in conflict with Islam. This resulted finally in the conquest of Persia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

The secret of the victory of Islam was not its message of freedom only, but even more in its message of freedom under better conditions of living. That was why the inhabitants of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, welcomed the Muslim army with both hands. When a country was conquered, the Muslim government at once performed important social reforms and introduced social justice.

When Persia was taken by Islam, the dwellings of the people were not demolished and the streets were not stained with the blood of innocent people. In that period this was something unusual, and the conduct of the Muslim army then

could still be an example to the present world. As soon as the Muslim army entered Persia, the Caliph Omar guaranteed the Persians their lives and property, and freedom to follow their own religion. The next step taken by the Islamic government was, introduction of a cadastral survey, a new system of assessment, and the release of the peasantry from the oppression of the "dekhlans" or priestly landowners. The lands of the peasants were protected by the decree of Omar by preventing the incoming Muslim army from purchasing the lands of the peasants. Furthermore the sale of land in the country was also forbidden to prevent the eviction of the peasantry. A system of irrigation was introduced and numerous canals and aqueducts were built. The domains of the Persian kings and the royal hunting forests became the property of the state. As to the non-Muslims, they were allowed the freedom of religion and to earn their livelihood in the same manner as the Muslims. The only difference was that they had to pay a special tax and that they were exempted from military service. In Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, when the Muslim army was at their gate, the inhabitants of those countries turned against the Roman government, and hailed the coming of Islam as the deliverance from God. The Christians of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, suffered from various forms of oppression. One of these was religious persecution. The Christians belonging to the Monophysite order in Syria, Palestine and Egypt, insisted that Christ had one nature instead of two. The Greeks believed that Christ had two natures, a divine and a human one. The Roman emperor Heraclius formulated a compromise and attempted to force it on the Monophysites. This led to various kinds of persecution headed by the emperor himself. Cyrus the governor of Egypt who relentlessly persecuted the Coptic Monophysites, was regarded as the anti-Christ. The forms of worship of these Christian Copts were forbidden and they were forced to accept the official Church. No wonder, when Amr ibn al As, commander of the Muslim Army, approached Egypt, the Copts were instructed by their bishop not to oppose the army of Islam. When Egypt fell into the hands of Islam, the Christians there were granted the same pledge for freedom and security by the Caliph Omar.

That Islam brought social justice into the area it conquered was further proved by events attending the conquest of Syria and Palestine. The civil and ecclesiastical authority in Syria, including the grandfather of the wellknown St John of Damascus, assisted Khalid the Muslim commander, to defeat the army of Heraclius. The people of Hims said to the Muslim conquerors: "We like your rule and justice far better than the state of oppression and tyranny under which we have been living." When the Muslim army under Abu Obeidha reached the valley of the Jordan, the Christian inhabitants of the country welcomed the Arab Muslims: "Oh, Muslims, we prefer you to the Byzantines, though they are of our own faith, because you keep better faith with us and are more merciful to us and refrain from doing injustice and your rule over us is better than theirs, for they have robbed us of our goods and our homes." The people of Emessa closed the gates of their city against the army of Heraclius and told the Muslims, that they preferred their government, and justice to the injustice and oppression of the Greek Emperor, Heraclius, the Roman Empire. All the countries that surrendered to Islam, enjoyed the treatment that was embodied in the famous covenant of Omar, drawn up, when Jerusalem submitted to the Caliph. The covenant stated: "In the name of God, the merciful, the Compassionate. This is the security which Omar, the servant of God, the commander of the faithful, grants to the people of Aelia. He grants to all, whether sick or sound, security for their lives, their possessions, their churches, and their crosses, and for all that concerns their religion. Their Churches shall not be changed into dwelling places, nor destroyed, neither shall they, nor their appurtenances be in any way diminished, nor the crosses of the inhabitants, nor aught of their possessions, nor shall any constraint be put upon them in the matter of their faith, nor shall anyone of them be harmed."

The polltax which the non-Muslims, or Dhimmies, paid to the government, was levied according to the means of the inhabitants. The rich had to pay 5 dinars, the middle-class 4 and the poor 3. In return they enjoyed the protection of the Islamic government. Gibbon, the well-known historian of the Roman Empire praised this enlightened policy of Islam at a time when the entering of a conquering nation into another country was followed by massacres, rapines, burning and lawlessness. Compare the capture of Jerusalem later on by the Crusaders and the sack of Spain followed by the Inquisition. The army of Heraclius, who retreating from Syria razed the country to the ground and carried the population away with them.

Islam, as was vividly presented by the Prophet, is identical with true humanity. To kill a person unjustly was, according to the Prophet to kill the whole of humanity. It was in this spirit that the Muslims acted in the early period of Islam.

Speaking of Omar, Prof. Arnold wrote: 'It is in harmony with the same spirit of kindly consider-

ation for his subjects of another faith, that Omar is recorded to have ordered an allowance of money and food to be made to some Christian lepers, apparently out of the public funds. Even in his last testament, in which he enjoins on his successors the duties of his high office, he remembers the dhimmies (or protected persons of other faith): "I commend to his care the dhimmies, who enjoy the protection of God and of the Prophet; let him see to it that the covenant is kept with them; and that no greater burdens than they can bear are laid upon them."

That Islam came as a blessing from God for the betterment of man was recognised even by Michael the Elder, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch who wrote in the latter half of the 12th Cent., after 5 centuries of Islamic rule. After recounting the cruel persecution of Heraclius Michael wrote: "This is why the God of vengeance, who alone is all-powerful, and changes the empire of mortals as He will, giving it to whomsoever He will, and uplifting the humble-beholding the wickedness of the Romans who throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity-brought from the region of the southern sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans."

In 1887, at the Church congress of Wolverhampton, England, Canon Taylor pointed out that the spread of Islam was a movement that swept away corruption and superstition, proclaiming anew a just social order. Speaking of Islam, the Canon said: "It proclaimed the responsibility of man, a future life, a day of judgment and stern retribution to fall upon the wicked, and enforced the duties of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and benevolence. It thrusts aside the artificial virtues, the religious frauds and follies, the perverted moral sentiments, and the verbal subtleties of theological disputants. It replaced monkishness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature."

After this spread of Islam as a social order it was that a great deal of the inhabitants in territories ruled by Islam, embraced the Moslem Faith. The main causes of this were the simple teachings of Islam and the examples set by the Muslim conquerors together with the social justice that they brought with them.

The Qur'an itself more than once asserts that peace is to be preferred above war. Only when peace became a means of oppression against innocent people, that to fight in defence is allowed. It said: "Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and Allah is well able to help them." (22: 39).

From the verses of the Qur'an and the examples

(Continuation from page 1)

from others. They too must not express claims and criticism without proper foundations. They too must disentangle themselves from influences that tend to blur their reasonings and outlooks. In other words they too must attempt to be objective and fair in their demands.

1) This does not mean that religious people in the West do not participate in social activities or that they do not think about society. But what we mean is the fact that their religion does not make it compulsory for them to follow a certain social or economic system. With Islam this is not the case.

2) T. W. Arnold, in "The Caliphate".

3) R. M. MacIver, in "The web of government".

4) In a speech delivered by Mr. Natsir to celebrate the birthday of Jinnah on the 25th December 1953, at Djakarta.

5) Syed Amir Ali, in "History of the Saracen".

6) Consult the works of Mannheim especially his "Diagnosis of our time" and "Man and society in an age of reconstruction". For a concise account of the relation of the situation and the way of thinking, consult a contribution of the Dutch philosopher, Prof. H. J. Pos, in "Democratic", art., "De crisis in het denken". (The crisis in thinking).

7) This has been several times stressed in the Qur'an.

8) The Prophet also attempted to prevent cruelties against animals. One was the practice of the pagan Arabs to tie a camel to a man's grave and let it perish in thirst and starvation under the scorching heat of the sun.

9) In his "Civilization on trial".

10) In "The Moslem world" ed. by Mott.

of the Prophet the Muslims are allowed to fight only in self-defence and not in aggression.

## References:

T. W. Arnold	The Preaching of Islam.
H. A. R. Gibb	Mohammedanism.
P. K. Hitti	History of the Arabs.
Ameer Ali	History of the Saracens.
Ameer Ali	Spirit of Islam.
Muhammed Ali	The Prophet Muhammed.

## Charles Darwin and the Theory of Evolution

by Drs. W. Helle

Mr. W. Helle (M. Sc.) is a young Dutch biologist and graduate of Amsterdam university. He is attached as a research worker to an Experimental Station in Aalsmeer. Considering the influence of Darwin in contemporary social and political thought, we deem it necessary that our Muslim readers in particular, should be more familiar with his exposition of the theory of evolution. Fascism as well as National Socialism both found support in Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence which resulted in the survival of the fittest. Darwin's belief in ethical and moral matters had also been of great influence in the thought of the 19th century, especially in England. Even now, no serious student of modern thought could afford to neglect the thoughts of Charles Darwin regarding the origin of species and the descent of man. This article is restricted to Darwin's theory of natural selection, ED.

To form an opinion of Darwin's appearance in the middle of the 19th century, and of the revolution and conflict it caused in biology, theology and philosophy, it is primarily necessary to make an investigation of the mental climate of that time.

The idea that species are related to one another existed then already. Lamarck's "Philosophie Zoologique" was published in 1809, in which he drew up a pedigree for the animal kingdom. He also gave the reason why we perceived so little of this evolution which he also explained. That his work did not achieve a great success can especially be explained by his little convincing arguments and by the authority of his opponent Cuvier who ignored his book.

In 1830, however, the English geologist Lyell came with the theory of actualism (1) in which the acceptance of catastrophes in the history of the earth was put away with and in which a modern foundation was laid for this science.

The other sciences awaited also enormous changes. About the same time people abandoned the old conception that in every egg or cell the future animal was already formed (Von Baer, 1828). Von Mohl (1831) discovered that the cell was the only element in the plant. Brown (1851), found out that in every cell always a nucleus was found. Further it appeared that all cells contained pro-

toplasm and that this substance was the same as that of protozoa. By this one came to the conviction that everything living formed a unity. A shocking event that encouraged the unavoidable rise of materialism was the preparation of ureum in the laboratory of Wöhler. The barrier between organic and inorganic matter had fallen away, so one thought. One need no more ascribe "vitality" for the origin of organic matter. Exciting discoveries followed one another. The law of preservation of energy was discovered. Helmholtz measured the hitherto believed unmeasurable speed of stimulus travelling in a nerve and gave the low amount of 30 M/sec, and by this he deprived life of its mystery to the eyes of many. In twenty years time all this had changed the spiritual atmosphere completely. The natural philosophy of 50 years ago that had indulged in heavy words and mystical speculations, was being mocked at. Materialism expanded like oil on water. Books of Büchner, Vogt and Comte were widely read in all layers of Western society and made a deep impression. One came to statements like "Thoughts were secreted by the brains in the same way as urine in our bodies". The problem of life was no more unsolved. It had become degraded to a mechanical question, of which the technical settlement was only a matter of time. It was in this sphere that Darwin's book was published. The soil had been excellently prepared. Charles Darwin was born in 1809. In his childhood we know that he had a strong inclination to make collections mainly in the field of biology. At the university he was supposed to study medicine but his hobby for zoology, botany and geology, occupied too much of his time. Then his father sent him to Edinburgh to study theology but here also he was in danger of failing. By mere chance he came into the area of natural history. In 1831, due to the fact that he already enjoyed some fame as a naturalist, he was given the opportunity to accompany the expedition of the British battleship the Beagle on their trip round the world.

The observations made in this journey became the starting-point for his future work. Before the journey started, Charles Darwin was given some

books about Lyell's actualism, with the information that he should read it thoroughly but should by no means become a supporter of the theories defended in them. Darwin, however, became deeply impressed by this work. During the journey of the Beagle, which took four years, from 1832-36, Darwin visited South America, particularly the West-coast, South-Africa and Australia. His energy during this tiring trip could not be quenched but his observations and fatiguing expeditions through the jungle of South-America gnawed his health. His observations about the biology of plants and animals even now strike us as "modern" and surprise us by its accuracy and intelligence. After his return he started to make a note-book in which he feverishly took down all taken notes in his thoughts during his travel and most important also, those facts that pleaded against the idea of evolution. In 1838 Darwin came across the book of Malthus, "On the principles of population". Through this book Darwin learned how to explain the process of evolution. The struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest by means of natural selection was believed to be the cause. The weak perished and the strongest survived. In 1842 Darwin started his treatment of the subject that later became his masterpiece.

Then a curious coincidence induced him to put a synopsis of his work into print. Alfred Russel Wallace, a young naturalist then in the Orient, sent to Darwin a sketch of a theory of which he desired Darwin's opinion. To the latter's surprise this theory proved to be non-other than the theory of natural selection, or survival of the fittest. As Wallace afterwards related he too had first got the idea from reading the work of Malthus. At first Darwin was inclined to withhold his own manuscript and allowed that of Wallace to be published. But since Wallace's idea was admittedly a sudden one, in favour of which he had collected no facts whatever, whereas Darwin had long been gathering data relevant to it, Darwin's friends protested to it, Lyell being one of them. It was finally arranged to present extracts from both Darwin's and Wallace's manuscripts simultaneously to the Linnean Society of London. His theory was developed at length in the "Origin of species" (1859). The book was written in a language intelligible to the average reader without any biological training. These facts, coupled by the support of T. H. Huxley who carried the idea of evolution to the general public in lectures and popular articles, won a quick victory for the new doctrine.

What actually are the new things Darwin brought us? We must here distinguish clearly between two things: one, the belief that the species are subject to change and development and originated from one another; two, the hypothesis concerning the driving force behind such an evolution. The first point was something new, but the manner how this hypothesis was supported together with the vast amount of argument collected by him, made it something exceptional. These arguments were based on facts he obtained from zoogeography, comparative anatomy, embryology, and paleontology. He knew how to wield this vast amount of facts into a logical system. These facts were gradually increased, and to be more thorough I shall give a few examples.

**Zoogeography:** The fauna of the Galapagos islands to the West of South America, which Darwin extensively studied, appeared to be typical of all the islands separately. Every island had its own kind of reptiles with quite some mutual conformity but at the same time always showing constant differences. These reptiles were all closely related to their kind inhabiting the continent of America. But they distinguished themselves, however, by the grey colour which matched completely the grey soil of these islands. The same Darwin found with birds and other kinds of animals. But it was striking to discover that land mammals and amphibians were not there. These animals were very frequently found on the continent. The Galapagos islands were volcanic and seemed geologically young. How could these species have originated? It would be easiest to assume that they all originated from species which somehow crossed the sea from America, possibly on floating tree trunks. In the transmission of heredity they changed into different kinds.

**Comparative anatomy:** The morphology of various organs shows that there existed primitive kinds of animals, on purely morphological grounds, besides more differentiated ones. In many cases they are connected by transitional sequences.

**Embryology:** In the embryological development of a higher animal formings are often seen to appear which reminded us to those of more primitive ones. Thus mammals show at the beginning of their embryological development a clear tendency to form characteristics belonging to a fish such as those related to the gills.

**Paleontology:** Always in geologically old layers fossils of primitive animals are found. Only in young layers however, the animals of higher organism were found.

As has been said before, the works of Malthus over the overpopulation of the world made a deep impression on Darwin. He explained evolution in that direction. Darwin explained how plant cultivators did not just take any individual plants but always those specimens which excelled in this or that respect. They believed then that the qualities of those selected specimen shall remain in their offsprings by means of a successive transmission of heredity in several generations. Through this a better quality of plants are

obtained. Darwin imagined that in nature a similar selection is being made. The offsprings of the succeeding generations would gradually differ from that of their original ancestors. By this process new species came into being. Most plants bring forth hundreds of seeds all of which because of mutual competition cannot possibly develop. Among the germinants there is always a struggle for food, light and space (struggle for life). From them nature selected which of them should remain for breeding (survival of the fittest).

The quiet way in which Darwin laid down and defended his theses convinced many opponents. Darwin did not look for conflicts but did not avoid them either. The objection raised by scientific biological circles against Darwin's statement about evolution was the question whether the differences between different individuals of one species were really hereditary, bearing in mind that at that time the theory of heredity had no foundation yet. Only after 1900, after the rediscovery of the Mendelian laws were such selections experimentally investigated and the contradictory results of 50 years before were explained. Now Darwin's theory of evolution is generally accepted though adjusted to the modern view of genetics.

The modern objections are directed particularly against Darwin's explanatory hypothesis. Darwin assumed that small individual variations were hereditary. These variations did not follow any definite direction. The choice of nature decided which favourable variations would be called forth.

The first objection concerns the heredity of individual variations. It appears that in many cases these are not hereditary. For instance, a shadowy plant growing in a sunny spot may get more hairy leaves while the offsprings show the normal

type of hairiness again. The mutation theory of Hugo de Vries appears to fill up this gap in Darwin's hypothesis.

The heredity pattern of a plant or an animal is not constant. It sometimes experienced leaping changes though in a very small percentage. The favourable changes might under the cumulative influence of natural selection result in a new type of animals or plants. It is true that mutation in the way of De Vries, formed an integrating part in evolution. Even one single mutation may produce a completely different animal or plant. So arose for instance in 1791 in America a sheep with legs like a dog. But the great problem remains unsolved. How for example can one explain the phenomenon of orthogenesis, that is, the fact that evolution is directed to certain goals. Mutations are not directed, they are fortuitous. It may now be possible that due to natural selection a certain characteristic come into existence but it seems highly improbable to explain out of this the complicated flying apparatus of birds. Also the fact that all the specialised parts of their bodies are a clear adaptation to their ways of flying.

Another objection against Darwin's natural selection is for instance that formings appeared which are absolutely damaging to the organism itself. The increase in size of the extinct reptiles is an example. Closely connected with these is the so-called biological inertia. A once chosen direction is maintained rigorously and often resulted in the extinction of the group concerned. The enormous size of antlers of deer which sometimes happened caused them to become weak and vulnerable against the forces of existence. Such an unfavourable evolutionary tendency we also find with many groups of plants and other animals. This phenomenon could not yet be clarified by modern genetics.

tions are extremely beautiful and convey the meaning of the original excellently; but one cannot judge Omar (or, indeed, Persian poetry) by them.

No, the fame of Persian poetry rests on a firmer footing. I must confine myself in these few lines to a short discussion of the most famous poets Persia has produced, and refer the reader who wants to know more to E.G. Browne's excellent work, A Literary History of Persia (4 vols.), to which I am much indebted.

The first poet then I will mention is the celebrated Hakim Abolqasem Ferdousi of Tus (app. 323-424 L.H., 935-1024 C.E.). His vast poem, called the Shah name, describes the ancient history of Persia in about 60,000 verses; this epic can only be compared with Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, and in my humble opinion it is, apart from age, superior to these in every other respect, such as poetic force and diction, beauty and melody of language, absence of offensive mythology, etc. And it is still very much alive; the language has not changed substantially, so that it is easily understood by all; nearly every Persian, even those of humble educational attainments, knows long portions of it by heart. However, what is not sufficiently known outside Persia, is that the author was a devout Muslim, though he confines himself to the pre-Islamic history of his country. A few verses of his will suffice to prove this.

"If you do not wish that your heart stays afflicted. If you do not wish to have sorrow eternal, Then seek the path to the words of your Prophet, And cleanse your heart before saying your prayers. Surely Religion and Knowledge will save you. Thus you will know how to be free from grieving; If you keep your eyes firmly fixed on Hereafter, You will win the favour of Prophet and Ali."

The late Mr. M. A. Foroughi writes in the scholarly introduction to his "Montakhabeh, Shahname" (Tehran, 1321 S.H.): —

"The greatest debt we owe Ferdousi is that he revived, and gave a definite form to our national history. Although Ferdousi has not himself collected the materials for this history, and has only given a poetic shape to an already extant work, yet this activity alone is sufficient to call him the Reviver of the Ancient History of the Persians. He himself realises this, and says in his poem: — 'I brought Persia back to life in this Persian Language.' And after the enumeration of the names of the Great, which he inscribed on the Scrolls of History, he says: — 'Like Jesus I awakened the dead of past ages. And made known their names to those that are still living.'"

Of course Ferdousi wrote other poems beside the Shahname, and some still extant poems are ascribed to him. But, according to Mr. Foroughi,

## POETS OF PERSIA

by

Fauzuddin Ahmad Overing

Mr. Overing is a teacher in mathematics at a municipal High School in the Hague. He knows Persian and is interested in Islamic literature and mysticism.

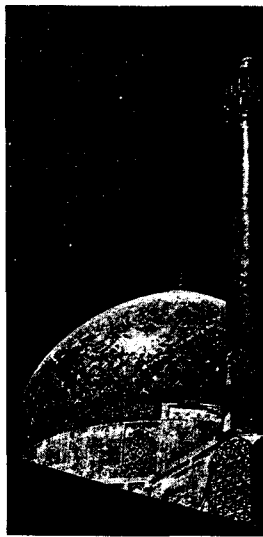
On Wednesday, 26 Shahrivar 1320 Solar Hijra — corresponding to September 17, 1941 C. E. — His Majesty Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, at his ascension to the ancient throne of Persia, took the following oath:

'God, Almighty and Most-High, being Witness, I swear on the Holy Word of God that I shall defend the independence of Persia, the frontiers of the realm and the rights of its people; that I shall reign in accordance with the Constitution and the Laws of Persia; that I shall strive for the propagation of Shi'ite Islam; that in all my acts and works I shall be mindful of God, exalted be His state; that my only aim in these will be the furthering of the happiness and the greatness of the State and the People of Persia. — I pray God, the Most-High, that He may grant me success in the service of Persia, and I invoke the help of the holy souls of the defenders of Islam'.

Generally speaking, when people talk about Persia, they only think in terms of oil production and carpets. And the great and important contribution Persia has made to civilisation — also to European civilisation — is too often forgotten. Of course I cannot, in these few lines, give an exhaustive account of Persian culture and do justice to this most interesting and important source of present day international culture. But I do want to do justice to an aspect of it which has been — perhaps deliberately — neglected by most of those of the West who ought to know better: the Islamic aspect. It is too often forgotten that Persian culture is essentially Islamic. One of the worst examples of this unscientific attitude is that of a certain Spanish orientalist who recently called the philosophy of Jalaluddin Rumi, the author of the celebrated Masnavi, "a christianised Islam"! Of course, anyone who has read the Masnavi will at once notice the fallacy of this; the gentleman simply reverses the process of history: Islam has not been christianised, but Christianity, as soon as it had to defend itself against Islamic culture and philosophy, became partly Islamised! For it could not defend itself against the rational arguments of Islam without adopting at least some Islamic principles and methods. It seems to be very difficult to have an uninhibited opinion of Islam!

To those who have not wholly succumbed to materialism at least one Persian poet is well-known: Omar Khayyam. His quatrains have become known through FitzGerald's translation. Now it is very dangerous to judge Omar by these translations. But, whether many of them are genuinely Omar's or not, whether FitzGerald inserted much that was his own and not Omar's or not, — it seems certain that Omar Khayyam was a fa-

mous philosopher and poet, although his fame chiefly rests on his accomplishments as a mathematician and astronomer. Cf. p. 71 of Nezami Aruzi's Chahar Maqale, Iranshahr edition, and p. 163 of Qefti's Akhbarol Hokama, Cairo edition, 1326 Lunar Hijra. From the latter source it is evident that his views were unorthodox, but surely not un-Islamic. And it stands to reason that a Christian (or one within the christian tradition) only admires those verses which have a flavour of unorthodoxy, or can be explained thus. Many of FitzGerald's transla-



A mosque in Iran

the romance of "Joseph and Zalikhā (Potiphar's wife)" is not by him, as supposed until recently.

Shiraz, city of the heart,  
God preserve thee!  
Pearl of capitals thou art.  
Ah! to serve thee.

Ruknabad, of thee I dream,  
Fairy river:  
Who so drinks thy running stream  
Lives for ever.

Wind that blows from Isfahan,  
Whence thy sweetness?  
Flowers ran with thee as thou ran  
With such fleetness.

Flowers from Jafarabad,  
Made of flowers;  
Thou for half-way house hast had  
Musella's bowers.

Right through Shiraz the path goes  
Of perfection;  
Anyone in Shiraz knows  
Its direction.

Such is R. Le Gallienne's charming translation of Hafez's famous ode on Shiraz, Shiraz, the City of Roses, is called the "Abode of Wisdom," because two of Persia's most famous poets, were there: Mosheddin Sa'di (died, over a hundred years of age, in 691 L.H./1292 C.E.) and Khajeh Shamsoddin Mohammad Hafez (720-791 L.H./1320-1389 C.E.). The first, the moralist, is chiefly known by his "Golestan" (the Rose Garden) and his "Bustan" (the Garden). Wherever Persian is learned, these two books serve as the introduction to Persian poetry. Here are two famous verses of his: —

"O Thou that art higher than Reasoning, Fancy, Conjecture and Phantasy can reach;  
Who art above 'It is said,' and 'We have heard,' and 'We read';  
The party is over now, and life itself draws to an end;  
Even though we praised Thee every day of our lives, we have not even begun to praise Thee."

Though Sa'di excelled in the ode, his fellow townsman Hafez surpassed him in this form of poetry. It is difficult to say which is the greatest poet Persia has produced, because poetry is, to use a mathematical expression, more-dimensional, i.e., some poets excel in epic poetry, others in odes, others again in marasi (religious poetry), &c. For instance, Ferdousi is without doubt the greatest epic poet; Jalaloddin Rumi of Balkh is greatest in mystical masnavi; Nezami of Ganjé in romance; Moltaslam of Khashan in marasi; and Hafez definitely is the greatest poet of odes, and many regard him as the greatest of all. In the West Hafez is generally misunderstood; in his odes Hafez sings of wine and earthly love, the reason why the West, not understanding the metaphors of Sufism, has called him a hedonist. It is difficult to do justice to Hafez in a few lines, of course; but his wine is the wine of poetic inspiration, the realisation of Tawhid (God's One ness), not by reasoning, but by irrational revelation; and the earthly love is the Sufi's symbol of the pure love of God. Professor A. J. Arberry, an authority on Hafez' poetry, calls his philosophy "the philosophy of unreason". Compare Hafez himself:

"You that pride yourself on your rationalism,  
Do not try to mix with those that are mad with (divine) Love;  
In your head is not the drunkenness of this Love:  
Go! for you are only drunk with the juice of the grape!"

Another reason why Hafez is not so well-known in the West as he deserves to be, is that so much is lost by translation; that is true of any poet, of course; but especially Hafez' poems will suffer because of the sweetness and conciseness of his language; one must have heard a Persian recite them to understand this to the full.

We have written about four of Persia's greatest poets: Khayyam, Ferdousi, Sa'di and Hafez. But so many more deserve to be mentioned. I hope to do so in a future article.

Poetry is the birthright of every Persian. No people on earth attaches so much value to it as the Persians. And no people on earth possesses so many first class poets. Many modern poems deal of course with non-religious subjects. But one only has to scan the pages of the "Nure Danesh", the bi-weekly paper of the "Islamic Propaganda Centre", to realise that religious poetry is still very much alive.

#### APPEAL FOR ISLAMIC LITERATURE

The Islamic Society, University of Bristol Union, Victoria Rooms, Bristol 8, appeals for free literature on Islamic topics. Dr S. M. A. Zaidi (Secr.).

#### INQUIRY FOR STUDY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Write to Mr. J. MacBride (Muslim), 10 Hatterboard Drive, Scarborough, Yorks., England, for inquiry regarding study and work in England.

## 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 and acquaint to us 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 those readers who sympathize with our aim to grant us the above requests that our efforts need not be in vain.

## Universal outlook on history introduced by religion

Mutual understanding condition of human welfare

### Summary of a talk by Prof. A. J. Toynbee and its introduction by Prof. J. Romein.

On the evening of September 28 Professor Arnold J. Toynbee delivered a talk on "World unity and world history" in the Remonstrant Church in the Hague to celebrate the jubilee of the Bookshops Association (Vereniging van boekhandelaren). This talk was preceded by that of the Dutch historian Professor Jan Romein who made a short introduction in connection with Professor Toynbee and his wellknown theory of history.

#### Introduction of Prof. Romein

Professor Romein desired to acquaint the audience with Professor Toynbee's inner personality and the meaning of his achievements for the world of learning. The objections and criticisms delivered against Professor Toynbee's theory of history were not regarded as being very important by Professor Romein. He believed them to be affected by misapprehension of Professor Toynbee's theory of history. This was due to the critics being merely specialists in their respective subjects.

Every theory of history, said Professor Romein, is not a complete one. It does not render reality in its fullness. The function of every theory of history is merely to simplify historical events and processes into intelligible forms. He believed it

difficult to prove the shortcomings of Professor Toynbee's theory of history.

Despite his defence of Professor Toynbee, Professor Romein had also some objections to make. He did not share the belief of Professor Toynbee that the Christian Renaissance would help us to pass through the crisis in Europe. The reason for this was the fact that all religious phenomena are products of society, and as such religion can not help us to solve the crisis! How could that which is a product of an entity be the solution of its crisis? Another objection he made was concerning those who believed in the scientific solution of the problem. Professor Toynbee, he said, neglected the claims of the believers in science. He reminded us that rational science is the most significant contribution of the West towards civilization. He believed the solution to lie in the further development of science despite the fact that he is aware of the danger accompanying it. Another reason why he preferred science to religion was the fact that science is capable of higher development while religion in its essence is not. Despite all these, he maintained that Professor Toynbee will remain for years to come the man who made the deepest analysis of a civilization. Professor Toynbee has a wide range of knowledge and the right spirit for this task. He mentioned that the opposition between East and West is considered by Professor Toynbee as a relative one. The present unity of the world, continued Professor Romein, was not created by religion but by the development of modern technic.

The task remains to us to raise it into an inner unity).

Professor Toynbee Professor A. J. Toynbee, commenced his talk, amongst others, by referring to Professor Romein's statements regarding religion. He mentioned that the universal view of world history was first conceived by religion such as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and later inherited by Islam and Christianity. Apart from that, the Roman Empire under Augustus and its contemporary Chinese Empire, were anticipations of present world unity. Without the Roman Empire, St. Paul would not have been able to preach Christianity. There would not be a Western civilization without the unification made by the Graeco-Roman Empire under Augustus.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ORIENTALISTS. The students of Oriental affairs started the process of viewing history as a unity by bringing into Europe knowledge concerning Oriental culture and civilizations. He mentioned Prof. Snouck Hurgronje and Prof. Duyvendak as two of those scholars from the Netherlands. Next came the anthropologists, archaeologists, and pre-historians.

#### Change in historical outlook

The universal Christian outlook on history was discarded by the West some 250 years ago. It marked a return to the pre-Christian conception of history which was narrow and parochial. Modern historians are less world minded than their religious predecessors.

RELIGION. Religion, according to Professor Toynbee, arose from encounters between different civilizations. It influenced man not to be self-centred and induced a humble view on himself.

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THEOCRACY IN AN ISLAMIC STATE

*A concise information regarding the Islamic conception of theocracy and the freedom of religion*

by MUHAMMAD NATSIR

It has been the repeated contention that Islam necessarily demands a religious government, which in the Western mind can but mean a theocratic ecclesiastical rule. In the face of historical testimony this contention can not be maintained in regards to the Muslim governments during the rise and greatness of the Muslim Empire in the Middle Age.

Of course there have been zealots in the ranks of the Muslims. Also there have been zealots among Islamic rulers, who have been severe against non-Muslim subjects. But a careful scrutiny will show that in fact the persecutions and oppression were occasioned in a majority of those cases by rebellion of those subjects.

I do not mean to condone or justify any of those facts. But it is still true that in matters of justice people should be judged according to the time and historical circumstances wherein they lived and acted. Moreover it is evident enough, that rulers or governments, — be they Muslim or Christians, Hindu or Buddhists, or for that matter whatever it may be, are never lenient in the suppression of revolt or rebellion of subversive parties of their subjects. This suppression can become especially fierce and ferocious if they find reason to suspect that there is some foreign power behind the subversive agitation or activities.

However, that may be, with regard to religious minorities, history bears out a favourable testimony for the Muslim countries. Freedom of religion relatively new in the Western world, has existed in Muslim countries from the time of the blessed Founder of the religion of the Quran, through the centuries of Muslim rule to this day. Sects of Judaism and Christianity, which did not get a chance in the Western Christian world, have survived in Muslim countries as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, etc. So have several dissenting sects of Islam, though initially they were the cause of cruel internecine wars in opposition to the Ommyayde Caliphate. At the moment, these sects are existing peacefully amongst other Muslims. — It proves that it was never really the dissemination of doctrines of faith that caused the bitter conflicts in the past. No other world religion could give a much more or better testification concerning this when they were in their ascendancy, than Islam. Most important of all, however, is the fact that this development in the histories of Muslim countries is not the outcome of a tolerance in religious matters that has been attributed by some as being the effect of the Oriental mentality. This contention is more often believed than affirmed with historical evidence. In reality, this tolerance is a result of, and in accordance with the explicit teaching of the Quran.

The Quranic precept regarding this matter is contained in many verses through the Holy Book, which is most explicit and leaves no room for doubt or misapprehension as in the following verses: "We have sent down to you the Book in

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WEST. The Western Europeans, according to Professor Toynbee, are responsible to the contemporary world. They had created a technology which have annihilated distance and dominated a large part of the world. As a result of the annihilation of distance by Western technology, war also changed in character. Before it made some sense to sacrifice in war for the sake of one's country. Now it becomes meaningless. The country for which we sacrifice shall be destroyed in the very attempt to save it. Thus to sacrifice by going to war is now meaningless.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. To minimize the existing tension, it is highly necessary that we understand one another. We must make a study of each others past and present and mutually learn from it. This study ought to be performed in a comparative manner without attempting to distinguish the value of the one or the other. So is religion, philosophy, and psychology to be studied in the same manner.

1) Science is also a product of society. In fact it was born in religion. Ed.

2) Science is also essentially permanent. For instance the belief in order, empirical investigation, and rational systematization of facts, together with its fundamental concepts as causality, limitation, substance, etc. etc., have all some permanent aspects. If we regard science in the same way as Professor Romein regarded religion, then science is also static and not capable of higher development. Ed.

3) That unity is best provided by religion. The supporters of this opinion had accumulated a wealth of evidence in favour of it. We are quite willing to enter into a discussion concerning this with our readers based on a rigorous scientific method. Ed.

truth, confirming what there is of the Book before it and as a check or test to it, therefore judge below it and, according to what God has sent down, and don't give way to their aspirations to deviate from what has come to you of the truth. To everyone of you have we ordered a way and guidance. Had God willed it, He had made you one united community, but it is that He may try you in that which was given to you, therefore compete in good works. To God is your return all of you, when He will inform you on your differences (Quran V: 48).

The meaning of this verse is still more elucidated by the fact that in the preceding verses, the people of the Tora and the people of the Gospel are several times enjoined to act according to the Books they have received.

On account of this Quranic precept the Muslim world has developed statehood and organized system of Government, adapted to the conditions of the time and the people. It has in the course of its history developed autocracies and hereditary monarchies. But it never took the form of theocracy in the sense of ecclesiastical church or priestly rule. The Muslim world has never known the institution of a ruler by grace of God as an appointed one. Every Islamic ruler or chief of state and every Islamic government finds in the Quran preordained constitution, to which they have to abide.

This of course could still be called "theocracy". In that case however, theocracy in the strictest sense of word; recognizing state and government as part of the divine world-order under His law.

But this, I repeat, does not mean "church" or "priestly rule", both non-existent in Islam and a plus forte reason, identification of church and state. Therefore also there can be no reason for the so-called "disestablishment or separation of church and state".

What it does mean is that religion must live in every individual followers of the faith and thereby pervade the life of the community and find expression in statehood, in government and in legislation, never however, the fact being lost sight of, that there are worldly concerns, on which the people must decide for themselves, in consultation, as is said in the words: "and their affairs are decided in consultation amongst them" (XLII: 38).

The development of statehood and government, the role of the prophet and his earlier successors in the affairs of state as well as the development of the schools of thought in theology, show that there is room enough left for evolution within the limits of the Quranic principles and precepts. But the one principle remains, that God has given the limits, hudud-Allah — to which we have to abide.

fate. Iqbal points out the analogy of modern philosophers like Hegel and August Comte justifying intellectual slavery by the capitalistic structure of society. Iqbal denies vehemently that the morally degrading fatalism which the European critics of Islam sum up in the word "Qismat" has any basis in the Quran. It has been thrust on the ignorant masses by distorting the Islamic teaching, and misinterpreting the Quranic verses. Apart from his lectures, in his poems also Iqbal has taken up this question repeatedly, and given us some of the most beautiful lines ever written on the subject. For instance, he tries to explain in "Javed Namah" that whatever is happening to us is not imposed upon us from outside, but is taking place according to our own nature:

"The inhabitants of the Earth lost their ego, and did not understand the secret of 'taqdir' (fate). That secret is simply this; it (fate) alters when you reform yourselves. If you become mere dust, fate scatters you in space. But if you turn into stone, it drops you on the glass. If you become dew, your life is evanescent like the drop; but if you become an ocean, you survive for ever." This shows that although God is the creator of our being as well as of our actions, still whatever happens does so according to our nature, and in this sense we are the arbiters of our destiny. The creative activity of God never ceases; whenever He wishes for something, He just utters the word "Be", and it becomes.

Iqbal utilises this incessant creative activity of the Almighty God, to show that a man's fate can be altered. "O you who say that this and that was fated to happen, and therefore it happened, you have not understood the true meaning of destiny. You have seen neither yourself nor God. A true believer has a sort of intimacy with God and says to Him: — 'We are with you, so you be with us'. The believer's determination is the instigator of God's Will; the arrow that he shoots in the battle field comes from God Himself. This last line of Iqbal is nothing but a translation of the Quranic verse: You did not throw when you threw but it was God who threw."

Iqbal has condemned in strong terms those fatalists who ascribe their miseries and sorrows to the working of the inexorable fate, and thus try to shirk their responsibility. He interprets the attitude of such a fatalist in "Javed Namah" in the following words:

"It is God's Will that some people are needy and deprived of all the good things of the world. God has made the Rulers and the Ruled. None but God has willed these things, and therefore, we cannot fight against our fate". When the wise old man on Mars hears these lamentations of the good-for-nothing fatalists, he turns round and exclaims: "Since you believe in honoring your own personality and true nature, the world of your ideas has become your prison. If what you say is true religion, then it makes a needy person more needy still. What sort of a religion is it that puts you to sleep, and keeps you in perpetual slumber? Is it a religion or an enchantment? Is it a religion or a narcotic drug?"

Then the Martian Philosopher enjoins the fatalists to demand another fate from God, if one fate does not agree with him. It is quite in order if a man demands a better fate from God, because there are an infinite number of fates in the limbo of possibilities, and the work of Creation is unending.

When the Muslim people lost their energy and vitality, and began shirking arduous tasks, they adopted the wrong interpretation of the concepts of "Qismat" and "Taqdir", and called their lethargy and inactivity by the grandiose terms of patience, contentment, and submission. Iqbal has repeatedly pointed out the fallacy in such arguments, and explained that "Tawakkul" or "Taslim" does not mean that one should lay down one's tools and stop all activity; it means that one should always continue to make one's best efforts, and then leave the result to God: "Every branch points to this subtle truth, that even the plants have the desire for the wide space. The seed does not remain content with the darkness of the soil; it yearns to shoot out and to grow. Do not suppress the functions of your nature; this is not what is meant by submission. If you have the courage to go forward, the space is unbounded, and God's country is infinite."

In one of his Urdu poems, Iqbal has given a very fine illustration of the condition of those people who plead their impotence against the workings of fate, and thus wish to escape the punishment for their evil deeds. The Devil goes before the Almighty Lord, and pleads not-guilty, because his refusal to bow down before Adam was predestined. The Lord asks the devil when he found this out, before the refusal or after. The Devil replies that he found this out afterwards. Then the Lord turns to the angels, and says: — "His evil nature has taught him this argument; he says: 'It was Thy Will, O Lord, that I should not bow down before Adam. He is trying to make out that his flame is nothing but smoke'."

As I have explained above, Iqbal has stressed this point of man's freedom of action and their responsibility for their deeds, because he saw that his people were steeped in a centuries-old fatalism which had deprived them of the power of action, and had brought them down to a very low cultural level. He had, however, not lost sight of the other aspect of this thorny question. He knew that the true path for a believer lies be-

tween determinism and freedom, and quotes the Holy Prophet (?). As a matter of fact, the Quran also expresses both these aspects of the question in quite plain words. Thus we have a thesis and an anti-thesis. The thesis is:—

"And whatever has happened to you, it is your own hand that has earned it" (25: 5).

This shows man's complete freedom of action, and his full responsibility. The anti-thesis is:—

"And God has created you and also your actions".

(There are also several Traditions and sayings of the Holy Prophet, which are in the same vein. One of them runs as follows:—

"No one can become a true believer unless he believes that the creation of good and evil is from God". But the Prophet has also enjoined that this does not mean that we should stop action. We should rather continue to act, because that which has been pre-ordained, has been made easy for us.)

On another occasion when the Holy Prophet was asked "whether the acts that we do and the medicine that we use can change, the destiny pre-ordained by God", the Holy Prophet replied that this also happens by the will of God.) There is an apparent contradiction in these two aspects, and Iqbal has stated both of them in forceful language at different places. The crux of the whole problem lies in the attempt to reconcile these two apparently contradictory statements. Iqbal has just touched on this point when he says that "The destiny of a thing, then, is not an unrelenting fate working from without, like a taskmaster; it is the inward reach of a thing, its realisable possibilities which lie within the depths of its nature, and socially actualize themselves without any feeling of external compulsion". (Lectures; pp. 67 & seq.)

But he has not given any detailed arguments or logical analysis, and has not made the point quite clear. From his powerful Lectures as well as from his beautiful poems, we get to know very well the two aspects of pre-determination and free-will. But the internal conflict is not resolved; the doubt and perplexity still remain in the mind of his reader.

The old Muslim thinkers, however, have considered this problem, and have tried to reconcile the apparent contradiction. They have explained how the freedom of man's action can be established in spite of the fact that everything has been created by the Lord. In order to make this essay logically complete, it seems desirable, and worth while to reproduce these arguments here. We believe in the existence of God and in His Omnipotence. This is our fundamental axiom on which all further arguments are based. Those who do not believe this, part company with us here at the very outset, and need not pursue the matter further. Since God knows every thing, His knowledge requires "objects" which are known. These objects are His own "ideas". As God is omniscient from eternity, and knowledge is impossible without the known objects, therefore, these objects of God's knowledge (which we have seen are His own ideas) are also eternal. Knowledge is one of God's attributes, and must always be associated with Him, otherwise it will imply His ignorance which is inconceivable. Thus we arrive at the inevitable conclusion that God is

eternal, hence His knowledge is eternal, and consequently the objects of His knowledge are also eternal.

This is the first fundamental result which we shall utilize in our arguments. Now we also believe that all God's Attributes are perfect; they cannot be variable, as their variation will imply their susceptibility to be increased or decreased some time, which in its turn would imply a sort of defect in God. But we believe that God is perfect in His Being as well as in all His Attributes. This is our second axiom. Thus God's knowledge is perfect, and therefore, the objects of His knowledge are also perfect and unchangeable. This is our second fundamental conclusion.

Since the objects of God's knowledge are eternal and unchangeable, it follows as a corollary that their characteristics and capabilities are also eternal and unchangeable, since these capabilities cannot ever be conceived of as removed from the objects themselves.

An object of God's knowledge is called "Ultimate Reality", "Eternal Category" or "Nature of Thing".

Now creation requires Will, and God's Will depends upon His Knowledge, since all His Acts are believed to have some reason. Creation, itself is nothing but the realization or expression of the eternal categories (i.e. of the objects of God's knowledge) outside Himself. That which is coming out (is being created) exists already from eternity as an object of God's knowledge. Only its expression or creation is new, and it is then called a "thing". The "things" are intrinsically eternal as known objects; externally they are God's creations, and in their individuality and personification they are separate from God.

Now consider the act of creation. Although the things are being created by God, this creation is taking place according to the characteristics, capabilities and nature of the things themselves. We have seen that the nature of a thing is eternal and unchangeable. It is not being created, because it already exists from eternity. This is the exact point which the determinists miss, and whose ignorance causes all this confusion. People usually argue like this: "So-and-so has sinned because his nature was evil; his nature was also made by God; therefore, he is not responsible for his evil deed". But the very premise is wrong; So-and-so's nature was not created, it was already there. It is useless to cry: "Why was I made like that"? You have not been made like that; you have always been like that — potentially of course. Your potentialities are your own. That is why you are considered a free agent, and made responsible for your acts. This is "Qadr" (freedom). The realization of the potentialities, i.e. the creation, is from God. This is "Jabr" (determination). The great Muslim philosopher and mystic, Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi, has expressed this lucidly in one sentence: —

"It is not possible for the eternal category (object of God's knowledge) to be realized externally (created) in its own or in its acts, but according to its nature, its characteristics and its capabilities".

The apparent contradiction is thus removed and the conflict resolved. The creation is from God, but it takes place according to the nature of the thing. The nature of the thing, being an object of God's knowledge, is eternal. Thus we get the reconciliation between these two aspects. Although everything is created by God and, to this

extent, it is determined, still its external realization (creation) and its actions are taking place according to its eternal nature. Herein lies its freedom. The Quran has stated this explicitly:

"The Lord gave you (what eternal nature asked)". At another place the Quran says:—

"We give them their full share without any loss".

Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi has explained this as follows:—

"Whatever is ordained for us, it is according to our nature; rather we are ordaining it ourselves according to our nature".

The pre-determination is thus proved to emanate from the nature and characteristics of things; creation simply follows these characteristics. That is why it is said;

"The determination is yours, and therefore, it is for you to ordain".

That is why we are responsible for our good and evil deeds, and as such, merit reward or punishment. The whole problem becomes quite clear now and we understand the meaning of such verses of Iqbal as:—

"Exalt the ego to such an extent that before each determination the Lord should ask thee: 'Say! what dost thou desire?'"

Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi had expressed this truth in the following words:—

"The Lord bestows only that upon a thing which is given to it by its nature".

Thus the truth lies between "Jabr" and "Qadr" as explained by Imam J'afar Sadiq:

"There is no 'Jabr' and no 'Qadr', but the truth lies between these two.

Our code of action should, therefore, be the following precept.

"Do no imprison thyself in the chain of fate; there is always a way under the heavens. If thou dost not believe, then arise and see, that as soon as thou startest, thou findest a whole world open before thee". (Iqbal)

1) The Quranic verses in Arabic here are omitted due to the printer's inability to provide Arabic printing characters. The same with the Persian verses quoted by the author. ED.

2) Pre-Islamic Arab attitude of thinking also crept into the Muslim community in the early period of Islam. An enlightening exposition on this subject is Dr. W. M. Watt's *Freedom and predestination in early Islam*. Dr. Watt also believes that fatalism is alien to the Quran/ED.

3) The Quranic verse in Arabic here is omitted. Freely translated, it is as follows: Verily if we desire a thing to be, we only say to it 'Be' and it will be/ED.

4) Translated from the Arabic/ED.

5) The author's quotation of Iqbal in Persian here is omitted/ED.

6) Sabr, qana'at, tawakkul.

7) The quotation in Persian is omitted/ED.

8) The quotation of the Prophet in Arabic is omitted here.

## ISLAM IN BURMA

A concise information given by Mr. Maung-Ko Gaffari, general secretary to the Burma Muslim Journalists and Writers Association, No. 11, 130th Street, Rangoon, Burma

Out of Burma's nearly 17 million population, about 1 1/4 million are Muslims. Nearly 1 million of them belong to the Burman Muslim community, who enjoy all the political rights as other Burman nationals. The Burman Muslim community include (1) Muslims who belong to one of the indigenous races of Burma, (2) Indo-Burmans and a few Sino-Burmans professing Islam and (3) Indo-Pakistan and a few Chinese Muslims who have taken Burmese nationality. A great number of the Burman Muslims are Arakanese by race and about 4 lakhs of them live in Arakan, especially in the northern-most regions.

The remaining 1/2 million are Indo-Pakistan people and a few Chinese professing Islam and living here as foreigners.

Intermarriage between various Muslim communities is a common custom in Burma. Intermarriage with non-Muslim women has served a great deal in increasing Muslim population.

Islam reached Burma nearly 1000 years

ago. History records various Burmese kings, having Muslim advisers, ministers and bodyguards. Some Arakanese kings kept Muslim names and some of their coins bear the "Kalimah" in Arabic script. All throughout History Muslims had served the country faithfully.

The Burmese Muslims were a great asset in the freedom movements launched by the masses against the British imperialism. It resulted in the achievement of independence in 1948.

Burman Muslims have always been supporting the causes of their Muslim brethren the world over.

In Rangoon, the capital, there are over 50 mosques and 3 Muslim high schools. All the important towns, Mandalay, Moulmein, Akyab, Bassein etc. have many mosques, Muslim religious schools, run by public money, are found all over the country, where especially Arabic and Urdu are taught. Most of such schools were started by the late Maulana Abdul-Gaffar Salik, Dy. Inspector for Muham-

madden Schools of Burma. Without the schools, the light of Islam would not shine so much as it is today.

The great majority of the people of Burma are devout Buddhists, and Burmese literature is coloured with Buddhism. There are very few books and tracts on Islam in Burmese, due to which many Burmese Muslims living in remote villages have turned apostates. I have been writing and distributing Tabligh-e-Islam literature in Burmese, and by the grace of Almighty Allah, have gained much success. Islamic publication centres are requested to send their literature for free distribution in Burma.

Muslim organisations and individuals may contact me for mutual help in Islamic activities. Islamic publications are requested to reproduce this article, after rendering it into their own language, so that the often-forgotten Burma Muslims become known everywhere.

1) The father of Mr. Maung-Ko Gaffari/Ed