

Marching to the Next Century

In his last intellectual contribution, written just a few days before his brutal assassination, **Ismael al-Faruqi** uses an analysis based on basic Qur'anic concepts, to chart a way ahead for the global Muslim community.



THE Muslim World is presently confronting a Western civilization which is all-pervasive, aggressive and has penetrated every corner of the world. Already, the Muslim World is divided into numerous nation-states competing with one another to the point of armed aggression; and its mass media and educational establishments are for the most part mouth-pieces of native and foreign forces alien to Islam and its civilization.

What makes the confrontation still more ominous is not the enormity of the stakes nor the terribly disadvantageous position of the Muslim World *vis-à-vis* the Western in material power and military influence. Previously, in the seventh century, the *ummah* of Islam, triumphed over the great empires of Persia and Byzantium. A century later, the same *ummah*, more numerous and militarily victorious but devoid of science, technology and the apparatus of civilization, confronted three of the world's most sophisticated civilizations — the Hellenic, the Persian and the Indian — and emerged victorious again. It absorbed and

digested all that these civilizations had to offer and, enriched by the experience, it recast human culture and civilization in terms proper to Islam. The creation was unique: a new civilization built upon *tawhid*, the affirmation of the absolute unity and transcendence of God, and incorporating the best outside of its native world. Islamic civilization thus enabled masses of Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus, as well as the widest variety of ethnic groups to enter its fold, to call it their own, and to cause it to re-order their lives in accordance with its own logic, thought — categories and values.

The difference, however, between the *ummah* of the early centuries and that of today is the absence of the great vision of Islam in the latter. More precisely, whereas the vision of Islam shone like an incandescent fire in the minds and hearts of its early adherents, its light is dim in the sight of its present followers. This single fact has contributed more than any other to the present Muslim decline. Unless a way is found to rekindle the

faith and bring its determining power to an equal measure of efficacy, the outcome of the battle of civilizations unfolding before our eyes may run counter to Muslim hopes. It is therefore all the more crucial for any student of contemporary world history to identify correctly the factors of permanence and stability in the world *ummah* of Islam as well as those of change and turbulence.

The faith of Islam — *tawhid* — is as solid and viable today as it has been in the past. It consists of the recognition (*tasdiq bil lisān* and *iqrār bil jinān*) of the metaphysical and axiological ultimacy of God. This recognition results in the perception of the following truths:

1. That reality is dual; a transcendent Creator and a historical creation separated by an unbridgeable ontological gap;
2. That the Creator is relevant to His creation in that His will constitutes the creature's ought-to-be, expressed in terms of law (*sunnat Allāh* or the patterns of God);
3. That upon human creatures falls the obligation to fulfill the higher components of these patterns: the moral values;
4. That humans are capable of moral action, given their natural endowments and the subservience of nature to them;
5. That the normativity of the oughts, the malleability of nature and the capability of humans imply judgement, and hence rewards and punishments for individual deeds as well as for the totality of life.

These truths are rational and critical. They are neither paradoxes nor dogmatic assertions which may be accepted or rejected by an "act of faith" or "unfaith." Of course, they may be, contradicted by the un instructed, those incapable of perceiving the full implications of their claims. The materialists and the spiritualists who reduce reality to one kind or another, the scientologists who recognize one epistemological avenue — the senses — and deny all others, the superficial of all varieties who mix the claims of the disciplines, making statements about the origin and end of creation as if these were empirical data, and the skeptics and nihilists who contradict themselves every hour by practising what they do not profess — of all these this century has seen many a variety. Those endowed with intellectual honesty and rectitude, however, cannot but acquiesce to the

rational evidence supporting these first truths.

This reasonableness of "the content of the Islamic faith, gives it its enormous strength by virtue of which it has withstood all the tests of the past and, one may presume, will be able to withstand those of the next century.

The critics of the Holy Qur'ān and the Hadith usually fall into one of the following categories: the wishful thinkers and the uninstructed. Their attacks on the Holy Writ of Islam are of three kinds: the first is the criticism that whereas the Bible has been subjected to objective, scientific examination, to the rigors of linguistic, syntactical, textual, historical, genealogical and developmental form, to style and contextual criticism, the Qur'ān has not experienced any of these investigations. The second is that Muslims cannot for too long withstand the pressure of modernism and that either by their action or by that of Western orientalists the Qur'ān must sooner or later come under similar scrutiny. The third step is the wishful speculation that as the Bible lost the absolute faith and loyalty it commanded on the part of Christians and Jews, so will criticism cause the Qur'ān eventually to lose its grip on the minds and hearts of Muslims.

The textual integrity of the Holy Qur'ān is beyond question. The recited text, in its smallest detail, in the exact arrangement in which we know it today, has been rehearsed by the Prophet publicly, memorized by thousands of his companions and, later, by hundreds of thousands of his followers around the world. It has been employed as the arbitrator of all disputes among Muslims, it has existed unchanged in written form — except for improvements of calligraphy.

Ever since its revelation, the Qur'ānic text has been a public text. Everybody memorized and repeatedly recited large portions of it. Its study gave rise to new disciplines — grammar, syntax, lexicography, linguistics, *halāghah* or literary analysis, and the whole gamut of textual criticism and critical theological analysis. And reading of the table of contents of Jalālud-din al Suyūti's *Al Itqān fi 'Ulūm al Qur'ān*, of al Zarkashī's *Manāhil al 'Irāf* *fi 'Ulūm al Qur'ān*, or al Zarkashī's *Al Burhān fi 'Ulūm al Qur'ān*, is sufficient to convince anyone of the tremendous variety of disciplines invented especially to clarify the situational context of every verse, the meaning and the history of meaning of every word, the parallel

usage of the word in Arabic literature, its implications for law, ethics, history, and a host of other disciplines dealing with thought and life. By comparison, Biblical criticism is a late-comer. It has nothing to teach the student of the Qur'ānic text which he cannot find already developed in his own heritage.

As for Hadith scholarship, Muslim efforts have been equally exacting and thorough. Apart from the methodologies of textual criticism learned from Qur'ānic study which Muslim scholars applied to the Hadith texts under the general title of "internal criticism," there also emerged a series of disciplines designed to verify oral transmission. The techniques of *'Ilm al Rijāl*, or *'Ilm al Jarh wal Ta'dil* were also used to establish the oral tradition in the *Hadith* sciences.

Had these disciplines been available for examining the oral tradition which became the Old Testament, or which constituted the origins of Christianity, or Hinduism or Buddhism these religions might not have become what they are today.

This does not mean that all study of Islam's Holy Writ is complete and finished, nor that scholarship has nothing more to add to the traditional legacy. In Islam, the quest for religious knowledge is eternal, precisely because the object of the quest is transcendent and hence inexhaustible, just as the application of religious knowledge to human life is infinite. Thus we may remain unflinchingly

Working towards a Shari'a that allows her personality to bloom



certain that the kind of spectacular discoveries of Biblical criticism — e.g., that the Torah was not written by Moses, or that it contained errors of chronology, geography and arithmetic; or that the *sitz-im-leben* of the early churches, not Jesus, dictated the Christian perception of God, of man, of salvation, of scripture and of the church itself — will not take place regarding the Qur'ān. On the other hand, if some hadiths in one or more of the canonical collections may turn out to be, on critical re-examination, unreliable, it will not surprise the Islamic scholar. For he already knows the varying gradations of validity within the valid or *sahih*: The hadith *Qu'dsi*, hadith *ḥukmī*, hadith *fī'lī*, hadith *mutawātir*, *āḥādī*, *musnād*, *mutasil*, *gharīb*, *mashhūr*, *hasan*, etc.

The wishful thinking critics who think that the critical attitude of the modernist is certain to corrode the Muslims' faith in and loyalty to their Holy Writ, is based on the analogy of the Bible. But the Qur'ān is not the Bible. Their contents, and hence, their appeal to the minds of men, differ radically. It is hence neither necessary nor likely that the corrosion of faith and loyalty with respect to the Bible will take place with respect to the Qur'ān.

The shari'ah is the crowning achievement of the Muslim genius and it is the prescriptive figurization of the vision of Islam and the *forte* of Muslim juristic thought. It is divine on two

counts: First, it contains ethical principles which are the content of the divine will; and second, it contains a number of already figurized prescriptions which are taken from the Qur'an. In both cases, the shari'ah may be said to be divine insofar as the will of God is all that is possible for humans to know of God. The divine will, as made knowable in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is for the Muslim obviously unalterable and constitutes the backbone of life on earth. Besides its proclamation of the religious or theological truths mentioned earlier, it includes the *muharramāt* or prohibitions (such as blood, pork, alcohol, gambling, idols, *ribā*), the *hudūd* or criminal acts (such as adultery, theft, gangsterism, rebellion, etc.), the personal status laws (such as the laws pertaining to the family, marriage, divorce, legitimacy, inheritance, etc.). The rest of the shari'ah is the work of humans, figurized and elaborated by them in satisfaction of the Qur'anic requirements of justice, equity, fairness, propriety, charity, etc., and guided by the Prophetic example and guidance. If *tawhid* constitutes the "what" of Islam and it is wholly immutable, the shari'ah constitutes its "how."

The early jurists built up the discipline of *'Ilm, Usūl al Fiqh*. As regards understanding of Holy Writ, jurisprudence established the principles of grammar and syntax, of linguistics and semantics, of exegesis and interpretation, basing them all on the categories of consciousness inherent in the Arabic language. As regards deduction of laws from the texts, jurisprudence established the rules of *Qiyās*, of logical and analogical deduction. And as regards discovery of new laws, it defined the *maqāṣid al shari'ah* (the goals of the Law) as well as the precise mechanisms of their discovery, outside the texts of Holy Writ, of their establishment and actualization in the life of the people (*istihsān, maṣāliḥ mursalah, istid'lār* or *istiḥāhal hāl*). All of these, as well as the endlessly-enthymematic deduction of *qiyās*, the only *ijtihād* permitted by the school of al Shāfi'i, jurisprudence categorized as *ijtihād*, i.e., as legitimate creative reinterpretation which it declared a source of the shari'ah second to Holy Writ.

Thus the shari'ah is a perfect, comprehensive total system of laws governing every aspect of human endeavour. It is dynamic, capable of change and development, of following the stream of life in all its courses and guiding it towards the goals of Islam —

maqāṣid al shari'ah, or the ultimate purposes of the law. Muslims have availed themselves of these mechanisms throughout history. True, following the 13th century, most Muslims have been unduly conservative, unwilling to use the sources of dynamism. However, for the last hundred years or more every Muslim worthy of consideration has called for "reopening the gates of *ijtihād*." The greatest early exemplar of such calling was the 14th century leader and scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah. More recently, Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahhāb, Shāh Waliyullah, Muhammad ibn 'Ali al Sanusi, Muhammad Ahmad al Mahdi, Jamāluddin al Afghāni, Muhammad 'Abduh, Hasan al Bannā, Abū al A'lā al Mawdūdi and the movements which they represented stood solidly behind the necessity of *ijtihād*. That modernity is challenging is an empirical fact beyond question. And so is the fact that Muslims facing modernity are recouring to the mechanisms of the shari'ah to bring about the necessary renewal. Those who stand still before the challenge are of no consequence and will be swept aside by both history and the forces of dynamic, creative Islam. With its built-in suppleness and readiness to conform with the demands of the time while remaining itself, the shari'ah will continue to be as it was ordained at the beginning, fit for all times and places.

The Muslims of the world count today over a billion souls. No amount of destruction or subversion can wipe them out off the face of the earth. Rather, the likelihood is that they will continue to increase. Birth and conversion are two factors through which the Muslims increase at a rate faster than most other communities.

It is hardly likely that the factors which caused the Western nations to seek "zero" growth will be accepted by the Muslim masses. The economic factor, or the desire to raise living standards by restricting the number of mouths one has to feed, or to maximize the enjoyment of leisure by caring for fewer children, runs diametrically counter to the basic ethico-religious perceptions of Islam. In the Qur'an God commands: "Do not do away with children, out of fear of want. It is for Us to provide for them and you" (Qur'an 17:31). Nor is the talk of demographers, that the discrepancy between the geometrical progression of population growth and the simple progression of economic growth will necessarily end in disaster, likely to frighten them. The disaster in question, they believe, and do so

rightly, will be a disaster for the ruling classes first, and for the capitalists second. As for them, poverty stricken as they are, political and socio-economic turbulence will cause them little more harm than they are already suffering. Thirdly, their faith has taught them that God's bounty in subservient nature is infinite and inexhaustible; that science and technology have no frontier to stop their march; that the usufruct of nature to which they lead is infinite. Given that the Muslims of the world grow at the rate of 100% per 30 to 40 years, it is almost certain that a hundred years from now, barring a world-catastrophe, the Muslims of the world would count 2-3 billion.

In the period of their decline (13th to 19th centuries), the Muslims' will to knowledge had been thwarted by the esotericism of *taṣawwuf*, its shaykh-authoritarianism, its shortcuts to betterment and/or salvation through theurgy with its attending magic, fetishism, numerology, astrology and superstition. This *taṣawwuf* weakened the Muslims' will to the *ummah*, to involvement in its public affairs and responsibility for its conduct. It lured him to the quiescence and individualism of the *zāwiyah*, to the denial and renunciation of this-world and history. Deprived of the ethical vigilance of the masses, the Islamic state fell prey to tyrant sultans who manipulated power to suit their advantage and glory, thus making public involvement in the *ummah's* affairs still more detestable. All this notwithstanding, in every region of the Muslim World two forces were released to work against it: the first is the force of the *Salafiyyah* (traditionalism), and the second, that of *Mu'āṣarah* or modernism.

The *Salafiyyah* is a purely Islamic spirit, born of the very faith of Islam itself. From the standpoint of faith, the Muslim perceived the aberration of history as departure from the norms of the faith. It was hence natural for the Muslim to think that the restoration of history and of the Muslims' place in it must be preceded by restoration of the faith, of its values and practices in the hearts and lives of Muslims. For this, the example of the Prophet and his companions, which Islam has always regarded as normative alongside the Qur'an, was ready to assume the role of ideal to which all Muslims should return.

As a result, a will to reform the status quo arose in almost every quarter. Everywhere, the movements called themselves *salafi*, or *salafiyyah*, in assertion of their will to remould

the present in the likeness of the glorious past. To relive, to make real and present again the concretization of the Islamic vision by the Prophet, his companions and successors, was the first determinant of their consciousness and reforming endeavour. Hence, their name; and the nature of all their reformative moves. Education was their prime arena. The curricula of the schools were refurbished to instill the new spirit. *Zāwouaj* and *madrasah* raced toward the goal of bringing up a generation of Muslims capable of actualizing the ideal as the ancestors had done.

The second force, that of modernization, though issuing from the same motive, chose to follow another path, that of imitating the West. This consisted in adopting their methods of organization, their skills and ideas, of agreeing to permit them to open schools for the education of Muslims, or sending Muslims to study in the institutions of Europe. When any Muslim country fell under European occupation, such measures were no more options which Muslims could take freely, but necessities. The European bayonet stood behind the new schools, transplanted with their textbooks, ideas and teachers directly from the West. The purpose of the new school was through and through colonialist, namely, to evangelize the Muslims or at least to sever their connection to their faith; to secularize them; to acculturate them into European culture and thus to make them amenable to cooperate with the colonialist invader; and finally, to keep them away from the sciences of nature, from the secrets of military power, so that they do not threaten the European presence in the Muslim World.

When the colonialist administrations withdrew, they left the reins of power in the hands of the products of these schools, these were the likeliest to prolong the colonialist presence in camouflaged forms. The schools were thus given a new lease on life as well as a new vigor, that of nationalism, of progress, of catching up with the former colonialists.

In both streams of education, the traditionist and the modernist, *taṣawwuf* received a setback. Both are still very very weak. The traditionist school has not yet succeeded in translating the vision of Islam into a model capable of proving itself and holding its ground before its enemies. The modernist has not succeeded in transplanting the vision of Europe which is the real source of power and creativ-

ity. Rather, it has remained a caricature devoid of life and vitality. The modernist schools of the Muslim World ape the West without understanding – let alone appropriating – its spirit. Therefore, they are doomed to produce nothing but aped mediocrity. Of this, they have already produced more than a generation.

In the last two decades, a new consciousness has rapidly spread over the Muslim World, that the modernist system has failed in its promise. The so-called "nations" of the modernist camp are just as weak and vulnerable as before, despite the fact that there is no more *taṣawwuf* on which to blame failure. This consciousness can be seen in the closing down of Iranian universities following the Revolution, in the organization of four international conferences on Muslim Education. And behind the attempt of the International Institute of Islamic Thought to bring about the "Islamization of Knowledge." This consciousness is not going to make the road for education easy in the future. The turbulence will go on increasing until the translation of the vision of Islam into a contemporary true model has been completed. The next century will witness therefore the turbulence accompanying a genuine revolution – namely, a return to the *salaf's* vision and recasting that vision into a figurization worthy of the next century.

Islam is committed to the ideal of the universal community as an integral part of its vision. The absolute unity and transcendence of God affirmed by *tawhid*, necessarily implies that all creatures are one in their relation to the One and Only God. Certainly, there can and ought to be differentiation according to their deeds and merit. That is why Islam regards racism, or any doctrine of election, chosenness, caste, tribalism or ethnocentrism as a threat to *tawhid*. On the other hand, Islam was never blind to the particular nature of human life. It recognized the family and ethnic entity. It further distinguishes between patriotism and *shu'ubiyyah* (the assignment of value to one's ethnic entity either exclusively or at the cost of the welfare of the world *ummah*).

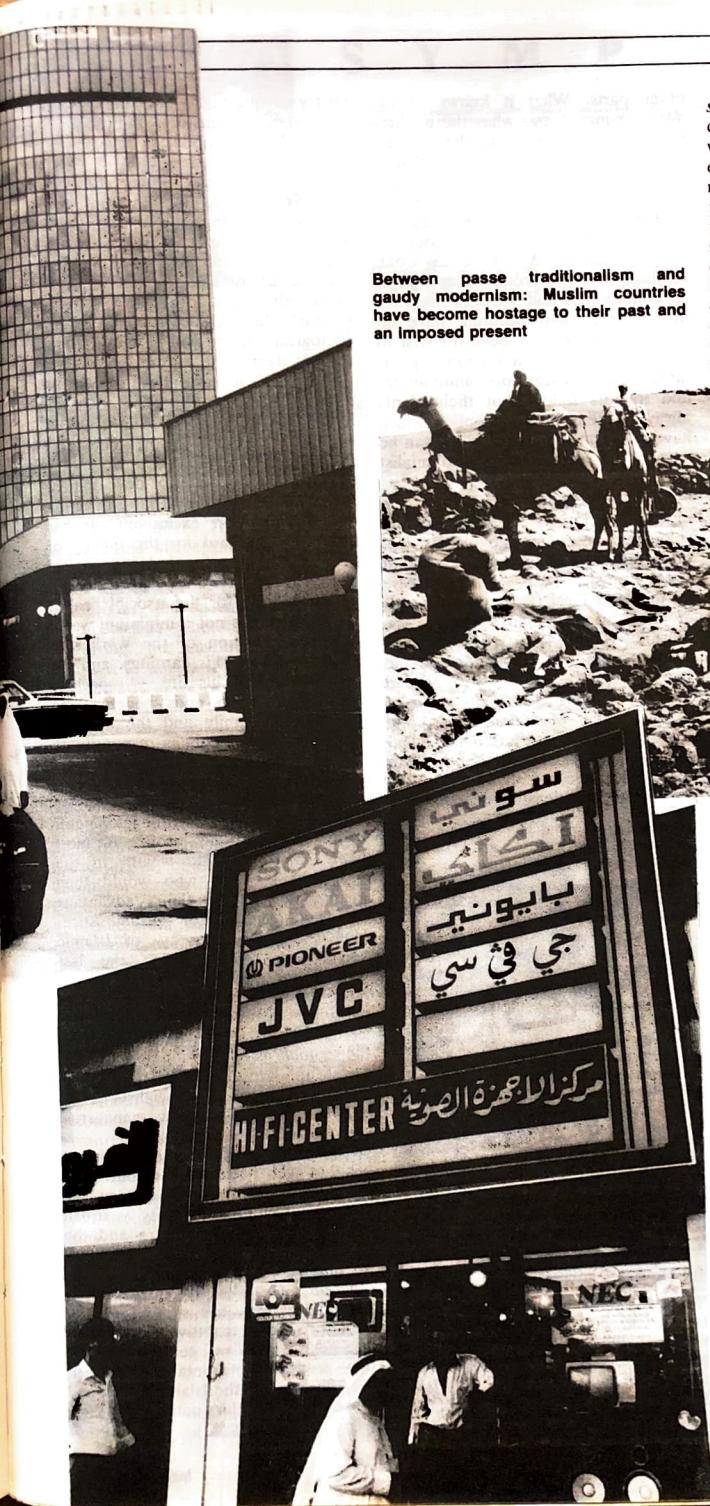
The Muslim World presents us today with such a rich diversity of sub-cultures precisely because it was not Islam's objective to destroy particularism or ethnicity, but to tame it and make it work for the good of all.

In modern times, especially under the influence of the West, nationalism spread among the various regions of the Muslim World, ushering in viru-

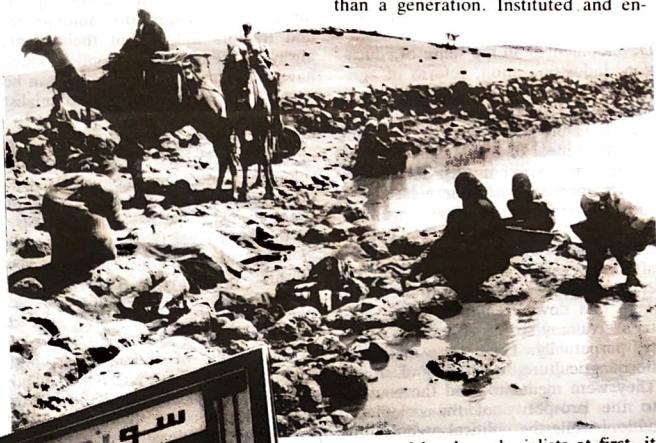
lent growth of particularist (*shu'ubi*) sentiment. The fires of this sentiment were constantly fed by the Western powers partly in pursuit of their interests through *divide et impero*, and partly, because particularism is a sentiment the colonialists themselves know and cherish. Secondly, the same fires were fed by natives anxious to fight or catch up with the West, and knowing no other means to do so except emulation of the West. Thirdly, upon withdrawal of colonialism and the setting up of autonomous states on the particularist, territorial principle, the Muslim World found itself fragmented into separate nationalist states. In the last half-century, these states not only did not cooperate with one another, but competed with one another, worked against their mutual interests, and even waged wars against one another.

Nationalism, or the new





Between passe traditionalism and gaudy modernism: Muslim countries have become hostage to their past and an imposed present



shu'ubiyyah, however, is not going to disappear. Indeed, it may be growing, winning more adherents among the educated of the Muslim World. The majority however will give their support to an Islamic leadership tomorrow far more enthusiastically than they support the nationalist leadership today. The reason why nationalism has little appeal to them is their Islamic consciousness. Nationalism, a variety of ethnocentrism, has been competing with Islamic universalism for more than a generation. Instituted and en-

couraged by the colonialists at first, it now has the support of most governments in the Muslim World. The likelihood is that nationalism will continue to grow despite this support, but it cannot win the ultimate battle.

The years 1956–1967 marked the highest peak nationalism had reached among Muslims. Jamāl 'Abd al Nāṣir and Ahmad Soekarno were its highest priests.

At the same time, Islamic unity as the goal of the Islamic movement, and integral content of the Islamic vision, acquired new teachers and new advocates. Persecution of the Islamists and placing them at the farthest possible remove from the centres of power, sent them beyond the nation's frontiers, whence they poured criticism upon the nationalist regimes and trained new recruits for the Islamic movement worldwide. Islamic universalism and the worldwide movement it has generated have become a sort of intellectual and spiritual refuge for the graduates of secular (nationalist) or foreign education, disillusioned with the failures of nationalism. These reinforced the capacity of the move to convince the others of the viability and relevance of Islamic universalism.

Today, the Islamic Movement is the strongest and most popular movement on the campuses of all the Muslim universities. The appeal of the Islamic cause, dominated by the unity ideal, is bound to increase as more and more educated advocates join the ranks of adherents to the cause, regardless of whether or not they join the movement. The recent weakness of the League of Arab States was matched by a corresponding rise in the influence of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and of the Islamic Movement in most corners of the Muslim World.

Development – in the sense of education, industrialization, reform of agriculture, improvement of trade, reconstruction of society on politically and socially viable foundations – has been a priority ideal of the Muslim peoples for the last two centuries. The model of development everywhere has been the Western one. It first began in Ottoman Turkey and Egypt, and it was followed by all Muslim countries after they achieved their independence. Under colonialism, foundations were laid down to link up the country's economy to the colonizing country perpetually. These were in education, agriculture, industry and trade. They were meant to bind the country to the prosperity of the colonialist nation, while the political organization of the Muslim country kept possible a political input from the colonialist nation where needed, in order to reduce the possibility of radical change. This model of development failed because it was devoid of efficient research institutes to discover the ills of agriculture and their cures, of industry and markets to absorb its products, and of programmes to improve the quality of life of the common man.

In sum, even if the desirability of development (agricultural and industrial) on the grounds claimed by the nationalist government and on the model of the West were granted, the development programmes of the last half century must be repudiated for their failure to achieve their own objectives. Of much more serious order is the Islamic charge that development on the Western model does not meet the test of Islam and is hence unworthy of the Muslim's dedication and effort.

The Islamic movement today is certainly anxious that development does take place and does succeed. Its main concern, however, is that development does not cultivate any part of the human person at the cost of the

other parts. What it knows of the Western model and what the application of that model in the Muslim World has amply proved, is that it seeks to develop artificial needs and/or luxury demands and the means to satisfy them. This is the most conspicuous aspect of industrial development in the Muslim World. Coca Cola, alcohol, cosmetic products, as well as air conditioners and Western dress for men, women and children, have always and everywhere been the first to develop. Radio, television, pharmaceuticals, refrigerators, automobiles and tractors follow; but their plants always depend upon supplies which have to be imported and which can be cut off at any time the colonialist directs.

More important though are the mistaken priorities assigned to development programmes and their flagrant departure from the ideals of social justice. This has been the case on the local level (between the needs of the various groups and on the Muslim World level (between the needs of the various sections of the *World-Ummah*). What is needed above everything else seems never to be the object of serious effort and concern, namely, a coordinating planning authority which takes into account the needs of the whole Muslim World, or at least an economically

Beyond Piety: What is read must also be understood



viable region of it. This presumes the removal of barriers to the movement of raw materials or finished products among the countries in question. But neither the nationalist regime, nor the local vested interest, nor the neo-colonialist country patronizing the in-

dustry in question would permit such coordination or customs unification.

The Western model of development is built upon maximization of profit, and hence of production and consumption. This in turn necessitates a measure of cheating through excessive advertisement, as well as of obsolescence of the product in question. But the usufruct of nature which God has made subservient to humans must not go unchecked. Otherwise, the world's ecological balance will be upset. Islam regards damage to nature, and to the usufruct of it, an advance on the greater punishment to come. For behind it stands a case of plain irresponsibility, economic short-sightedness and moral turpitude.

The Western model of development is concerned with industrial production and consumption exclusively. It has little or no regard for the quality of life of the people. Industry invites people to migrate from village to city without caring for their social health. What matters is not a minimum wage, but the education of the worker in how best to use his earnings, and the management of his life – especially his leisure – to ends beneficial to himself, his family and the *ummah*. Unless industry assumes responsibility for the social, cultural and spiritual health of the worker, it cannot meet the Islamic test.

The Western model of development, being interested in profit, is most likely to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few who would then manipulate it to their advantage against the norms of social justice. Hence the agonizing cry of Islamic voices everywhere during the last century for social justice. It was in response to these cries that the nationalist regimes enacted the socialist legislations, and justified them to the *ummah* as applications of "Islamic socialism." Unfortunately, they were neither Islamic nor socialist. They merely substituted a new managerial class for the old capitalists.

An Islamic model for development has not yet been worked out. The relevance of Islam to the factory, the trading corporation, the city as urban organization, to the theatre and the mass media, to leisure and recreation, to financial institutions and all the other organs of society and its corporate endeavours, has so far received immature and tentative expression. The next century will certainly witness this growing confrontation between the adherents of the Islamic vision and those of the secular, nationalist, Westernizing ideology. ■