

granted. Differences existed only in such questions as pietistic attitudes, emphasis upon secondary forms of worship, such as pilgrimage to local shrines or certain supererogatory prayers, theological speculations, expressions of sacred art, etc., which often demonstrated as much local variation as differences between various Islamic communities and ethnic groups and which at the same time reflected the positive elements of the ethnic genius of the people in question, elements which Islam did not destroy but allowed to flower within the context of the Islamic universe.

In modern times, however, forces such as Western-style nationalism, tribalism, and linguistic affinities, as well as the different ways in which various parts of the Islamic world have experienced the modern world and such forces as colonialism, secular nationalism, racialism and Western lay humanism have caused a significant variation in the manner and degree of attachment of many Muslims to Islam. There are Muslims who never miss their daily prayers and live as much as they can by the *Shari'ah*, who consider their manner of following Islam to be the only manner. But in contrast to the days of old, there are also others who do not follow all the injunctions of the *Shari'ah* and do not even pray regularly, yet consider themselves as being definitely Muslim. And there are even others who do not do anything specifically Islamic except follow a kind of 'humanistic' ethics which is vaguely Islamic and who yet call themselves Muslims and would protest if called anything else. And again there is another group which performs the Islamic rites meticulously and yet breaks many of the moral injunctions of the *Shari'ah*, including, for example, honesty in business, while claiming to be devout.

From another point of view, there is the majority for whom Islam is essentially an all-embracing ethical and social code: a way of life embodied in the *Shari'ah* and for those who wish to follow the spiritual life in the *Tariqah*, and there are those for whom it is felt more than anything else as a culture and now, as a result of Western influence and reaction against it, an ideology and political force with which to combat other ideologies. There are authentic as well as antitraditional and modernistic interpretations, and there are, as a result, many kinds of degrees of attachment to Islam, especially in those parts of the Islamic world which have been long exposed to various types of modernistic influences. Those who speak of a 'monolithic' Islam or a uniform wave of 'fundamentalism' sweeping

over the Islamic world, or who try to scare the West by depicting Islam as a violent enemy unified to oppose the rest of the world - these are all too unaware of the differences and nuances which exist in the perception of Islam and attachment to it by contemporary Muslims. If Islamic history has taught anything in this domain, it is that, even in traditional times, no part of *dār al-islām* could speak for the whole and that the reaction of the whole of the Islamic world to such major events and forces as the introduction of Graeco-Hellenistic learning into the Islamic world, the Crusades or the Mongol invasion was never uniform. How much more is this true today when the degree of exposure of a college student in any cosmopolitan center of the Middle East to non-Islamic elements is totally different from the exposure of a villager from the same country to these elements, not to speak of radical differences in the degree and manner of modernization and secularization in, let us say, the Yemen and Turkey.

Another point of central importance in the study of Islam in the Islamic world today is the all-embracing nature of Islam itself. This still holds good despite the recent process of secularization which has influenced the degree and manner of attachment of many Muslims to Islam, especially in the big cities, which are centers of decision-making. For most Muslims, all of their other relations and concerns are intertwined with their understanding of their religion as a reality inseparable from these other relationships. For example, a traditional Muslim has bonds to his family, city, nation, business, friends, etc., which he does not juxtapose to religion but sees in the context of that totality which for him is, in one way or another, Islam. He does not see Islam only as an ideal, although it is of course an ideal, especially as far as the ethical norms exemplified by the Blessed Prophet and the great figures of the religion are concerned. But for the ordinary Muslim it is, more than anything else, a reality with which he lives day and night. Therefore, in many cases he makes use of religious sentiments to solve family problems or further his economic or social goals or for the exercise of power, if he feels that such sentiments will aid in reaching his aims. There are, of course, many Muslims who practice their religion only out of the fear and love of God. But it would be a dangerous idealization of Islamic society and forgetful of human frailty to think that every person who is ostentatious in his attachment to Islam has nothing but the satisfaction of God in mind and that he would continue such

ostentatious acts were the rest of his life, work, family, etc., disrupted or destroyed. For many people, all of these forces, bonds and relationships are intertwined in a manner that can cause unexpected social and political upheavals in the name of religion but, at the same time, rapid changes of direction and aim without the religious elements appearing to be sacrificed or compromised.

Precisely because Islam is still a powerful force pervading the lives of its believers, the misuse of it to further various personal and group interests is always a possibility. It has, in fact, been and is being made use of, not only by some Muslims themselves, but also by many forces originating outside the Islamic world. Obviously this kind of recourse to religious sentiments and practice is very different from the following of religion for the sake of God alone, a difference which can have devastating effects upon the whole world if there is a manipulation of Islam for non-Islamic ends.

With these general traits of the Islamic world in mind, it is now necessary to turn to the more particular types of reactions which have arisen within that world as a result of its encounter with the modern West: reactions which must be elucidated and fully understood if we are to grasp the nature of Islam in the Islamic world today. During the first twelve centuries of its historic existence, Islam lived with full awareness of the truth and realization of God's promise to Muslims that they would be victorious if they followed His religion. Such verses as 'There is no victor but God' (*Lā ghāliba illa' Llāh*), which adorns the walls of the Alhambra, also adorned the soul and mind of Muslims. They were victorious in the world, the Crusades and the short conquest of the Islamic world by the Mongols notwithstanding, since the Crusaders were defeated and the grandson of Hulagū, Uljaytū, became a Muslim and in fact a patron of Islamic learning and the arts. The authenticity of the Quranic message was born out by the experience of history.

Then came the conquest of various parts of the Islamic world by the British, the French, the Dutch and the Russians, not to speak of the more peripheral conquests of the Portuguese and the Spanish. Although Muslims were at first somewhat indifferent to the long-range significance of these events, the conquest of Egypt by Napoleon caused a shock which made Muslim leaders aware of the dimension and meaning of the Western conquest of Islam. In the early 19th century, the Muslim intelligentsia realized that clearly something had gone wrong which, as mentioned by W.C. Smith

among other Western scholars of Islam, was of the dimension of a cosmic crisis.² How was it that the Islamic world was being defeated by non-Islamic forces everywhere and in such an irreversible fashion? Logically one of three attitudes could be taken:

1. Something had gone wrong with the world, as God Himself had mentioned in His Book concerning the end of the world and the Blessed Prophet had described in his traditions. In such a case, the eclipse of Islam was itself a proof of the validity of the Islamic message which, however, also foretold the imminent appearance of the Mahdi and the final eschatological events leading to the end of the world.

2. Muslims had ceased to follow Islam properly and should return to the practice of their religion in its pure form and with full vigor so as to defeat the non-Islamic forces and escape the punishment they were receiving from the hands of God for their negligence of their religion. Such a reaction resulted mostly in the Wahhābī and neo-Wahhābī movements associated with the Deoband school in India, the followers of Muḥammad 'Abduh and the Salafiyyah in Egypt and Syria, the Muḥammadiyyah movement in Indonesia, etc., but was also connected with the much less studied inner revivals within Sufi orders or the establishment of new ones, such as the Dar-qāwīyyah and Tijāniyyah in Morocco and West Africa, the Sanūsīyyah in Libya, the Yashrutiyyah in the Arab Near East, the Ni'matallāhiyyah in Persia, the Chishtiyyah and Qādiriyyah in India and many others.

3. The Islamic message had to be changed, modified, adapted or reformed to suit modern conditions and to be able so to adapt itself to the modern world as to be able to overcome Western domination. Out of this attitude grew all the different types of modernism influenced by the French Revolution and the rationalism of such men as Descartes and Voltaire, in some quarters, Locke and Hume and later Spencer and Bergson, in others. So-called Arab liberalism, as well as modernistic movements in Turkey, Persia and the Indian subcontinent, were also results of this third possible reaction to the subjugation of the Islamic world by the West.

In some cases these elements mixed with each other, Mahdism, puritanical or 'fundamentalist' tendencies and modern reformist elements combining together in the thoughts and teachings of a single figure or school. Sometimes even Sufi figures had a Mahdist aspect, as the study of the life of such figures as 'Abd al-Qādir in

Algeria, Usman dan Fadio in Nigeria and al-Hajj 'Umar of Futa Toro in East Africa reveals. In such cases, Sufism itself undertook the task of reviving the Islamic community as a whole, a task which has not received nearly as much attention from Western scholarship as the fruit of the efforts of the neo-Wahhābi and modernistic reformers.³

These reactions continued to animate certain segments of Islamic society for the next century down to the Second World War, although the wave of Mahdism gradually died down after giving birth to such diverse phenomena as the Ahmadiyyah movement in India and Pakistan, the Bābī-Bahā'ī movement in Persia and the Mahdīist state in the Sudan.

After the Second World War, certain events took place which revived or altered the movements which had grown out of the original reaction of Islam to its domination by the West. First of all, nearly the whole of the Islamic world became politically 'independent', but as national states along the model of European states. This apparent freedom brought with it the expectation of greater cultural and social independence, especially as the less Westernized elements of Islamic society began to gain political and economic power. Secondly, the vast array of wealth pouring into much of the Islamic world brought with it the acceleration of the processes of industrialization and modernization, and at the same time heightened the tensions already present between Islam and the ethos of modern western civilization – tensions which had not been solved either intellectually or socially and which had been mostly glossed over by well-known earlier figures, usually known as 'reformers', as well as by the '*ulamā*', or religious scholars, who had hardly concerned themselves with them.

These events within the Islamic world were complemented by transformations within the Western world itself which were also to have profound consequences for movements within the Islamic world. From the moment the West conquered the Islamic world until the Second World War, the Islamic world saw in the West another model or philosophy for human existence which, although rejected by many in that world, was accepted wholeheartedly by many leaders within these movements.

Few, however, doubted the success of this model, at least from the point of view of man's life on earth, whatever the consequences might have been for man's immortal soul. Before the Second World

War, few Muslims were seriously affected by Spengler's *Decline of the West*, which in fact had been translated into Arabic and Persian, and fewer still had read the gloomy descriptions of Western civilization given by such literary figures as T.S. Eliot (although this poet has exercised a great influence on certain Arab poets during the past few decades). And practically no-one, save a small circle in Cairo and Karachi, had read the 'prophetic' works of R. Guénon, such as *The Crisis of the Modern World* and *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, predicting the collapse of the modern world, although Guénon had moved permanently to Cairo in 1931.⁴ It was only after the Second World War that the Islamic intelligentsia in general became aware that within the Western world itself there were profound criticisms of that civilization and that the Western model which so many Muslims had tried to emulate was itself breaking down.

This movement in the West was combined with an attempt on the part of many to seek their roots once again, to rediscover tradition and to regain access to the sacred. So, while much of what remained of the Western tradition was floundering and giving place to despair and nihilism, there was also a reassertion of traditional teachings, a rediscovery of myth and symbols, a positive appreciation of non-Western religions and even a reappraisal of the medieval Western heritage, which ceased to appear as dark as its purblind Renaissance and 18th-century critics had made it out to be.⁵ All these developments were bound to, and in fact did, affect the few but influential intellectual and religious leaders, critics, writers, scholars, and other leaders within the Islamic world.

Finally, a change began to appear in the attitude of non-Islamic powers, both Western and communist, toward the forces within the Islamic world. After the Second World War, for some time Islam as a religion was belittled as a force to be reckoned with by the outside world, but various nationalistic forces, which in most cases were in fact combined with religious elements in one way or another, were manipulated in every conceivable way to aid the causes and aims of the powers in question to the largest extent possible. The history of the various forms of Arab nationalism during the past decades is a good example of the way these forces were at work. Then, as the situation changed, the same policy of manipulation began to be pursued in the case of religious forces themselves through indirect aid or by hindrance of a particular religious school or organization

or the sudden aggrandisement of a particular force or movement and the belittling of others which might not be of immediate political or economic benefit to the interested powers. This external manipulation, although relying on existing movements, tendencies, forces and personalities in the Islamic world, has played and continues to play an important role in the manner in which these forces and processes develop and change and also the way the personalities in question are able or not able to exercise influence and leadership. This manipulation is not the only factor but is certainly one to be reckoned with if one wishes to understand the present state of Islam and specifically Islamic forces at work within the Islamic world.

With the earlier reactions of the Islamic world to the West in mind and with full consideration of the new forces and changes brought upon the scene since the Second World War, it is now possible to describe the present state of forces, movements and tendencies within Islam as they affect and mold the contemporary Islamic world.

There are, first of all, a number of forces, differing in many basic features among themselves, which are more or less heir to or related to the type of the earlier Wahhābī reactions against the Western world, and others which are of a counter-traditional nature. Yet, both are usually termed 'fundamentalist', although this term has particular Christian and, in fact, Protestant connotations, which do not apply exactly to the Islamic situation. Despite the basic difference between these two types of forces, however, they share in common a disdain for the West, a distrust of foreign elements, a strong activist tendency and usually opposition or indifference to all the inward aspects of Islam and the civilization and culture which it created, aspects such as Sufism, Islamic philosophy, Islamic art,⁶ etc. They are all outwardly oriented in the sense that they wish to reconstruct Islamic society through the re-establishment of external legal and social norms rather than by means of the revival of Islam through inner purification or by removing the philosophical and intellectual impediments which have been obstacles on the path of many contemporary Muslims. These movements, therefore, have rarely dealt in detail with the intellectual challenges posed by Western science and philosophy, although this trait is not by any means the same among all of them, some being of a more intellectual nature than others.

Politically also there has not been a uniformity of program among them. Some have sought to revive the caliphate; others have supported other traditional forms of government, such as the sultanate or amirate; and yet others have opted for a Western type of democracy in an Islamic context. The counter-traditional movements, however, possess a violent and revolutionary political nature and in some of these the most fanatical and volcanic elements of Western republicanism and Marxist revolutionary theory and practice have been set in what the followers of these groups consider to be an Islamic context. There is only one political aim in which these so-called 'fundamentalist' forces are united, and that is the unification of the Islamic world, or what is called Panislamism. In this sense, they are all heirs to the campaign of Jamāl al-Dīn Astarābādī, known as al-Afghānī, who in the 19th century called for the reunification of the Islamic world. But although Panislamism has continued as an ideal espoused by nearly all Islamic leaders and intellectual figures during the past century and remains encrusted in the traditional Islamic vision of the perfect state to be established by the Mahdī before the end of time, the manner of its execution as part of a practical political program has hardly been agreed upon by the diverse groups who speak of it. Some preach the re-establishment of a single caliphate or central political authority, as during the time of the four 'rightly-guided caliphs' (*khulafā' rāshidūn*). Others speak of a commonwealth of Muslim nations and yet others, while using Panislamism as a slogan to arouse the religious sentiments of the people, remain deliberately vague as to how it would be carried out in practice. The manipulation of these so-called 'fundamentalist' Islamic forces by external powers, to achieve ends as diverse as creating a wall of defense against communism and ensuring that what is commonly termed economic development does not go beyond a certain stage, is particularly dangerous because of the ambivalent and vague aspect of the political dimension of these forces. The effect that such manipulations are having and will have upon the Islamic community is bound to be very different from what so-called experts who provide the programs for such manipulation have envisaged.

Of the 'fundamentalist' forces, the oldest are without doubt those which inherited the earlier Wāhhābī movement and have carried that movement into our own day. These forces are centered mostly

in Saudi Arabia, which follows officially the Wahhābi interpretation of Islam, and from the beginning they were associated with a group of Islamic scholars in the Hejaz and especially Madinah. They also include neo-Wahhābis in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and other countries of the Arab Near East, many of whom were influenced by the Salafiyyah movement, whose base was in Egypt and Syria until the Second World War and which withdrew later into the Hejaz. Its influence is felt directly in many Muslim seats of learning such as al-Azhar, but it is less of a distinct political force of an activist nature than it was in the 19th century.

In the subcontinent of India, this type of 'fundamentalist' movement has had many expressions, of which perhaps the most significant today is the Jamā'at-i islāmī (literally, 'Society of Islam') of Pakistan, founded by Mawlānā Abu'l-'Alā' Mawdūdī. This organization is closely knit and of a semi-secret nature, its purpose being the revival of the Islamic way of life. It has direct political and social goals and is of an activist nature, although it is milder than the violent revolutionary movements and is more interested in promoting the consideration of the more intellectual dimensions of the confrontation between Islam and modernism. There are organizations of a similar nature among Muslims of India itself as well as in Indonesia, which have close links to the Pakistani 'society'.

An organization with a somewhat longer history but of more limited political power at the present moment is the famous Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn), founded in Egypt before the Second World War but later extended to other Muslim countries, especially those in the Persian Gulf region, where many of its members settled after the execution in Egypt of its leader, Sayyid Qutb, during the rule of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir. This organization, which has also been involved in political plots of various kinds and even accused of political assassinations, has also produced a religious literature which has had some influence among sections of the young in the Arab world and even elsewhere. Adherents to its cause are also found in the Arab countries of North Africa, although in much smaller numbers, and an organization called the Fadā'iyyān-i islām (literally, 'those who sacrifice themselves for Islam') was founded in Iran in the 1940s on the model of the Ikhwān and claiming to follow the same programs, including the elimination of certain political figures.

In Turkey, the appearance of a remarkable politico-religious

figure, Sayyid Sa'îd Nûrsî, during the time of Atatürk and the outward secularization of Turkey, made possible the founding of a secret organization whose aim was the protection of Islam from secularism. The members of this organization grew rapidly in number and represent today a very significant voice in Turkey. They are usually given more to Islamic education and the rejuvenation of the Islamic faith based on the Quranic commentary of their founder than to political activism or direct violence, although they do have their own specific programs for the founding of an Islamic state. There are, however, Islamic movements in Turkey which have used violence, especially when faced with Marxists, and who espouse the cause of the re-establishment of the caliphate abolished by Atatürk.

The nature of 'fundamentalism' in Iran is more complicated, both because of the presence of certain elements which are the veritable parody of traditional Islam and also because Iran is mostly Shi'ite and traditionally Shi'ism always disdained political power. Until just a short time ago, the majority of Shi'ite scholars followed the traditional interpretation of Shi'ism, leaving it to the Mahdi to actually take the reins of power into his own hands. Moreover, protest over modernism as a threat to Islamic values, the intrusion of the so-called 'Islamic Marxism' into the arena of Islamic action, the direct participation of non-Islamic powers, both communist and Western-oriented, in the guise of Islam in events which have been carried out in the name of Islam, together with many other complications, have created a remarkably complex mixture in which genuine Islamic sentiments have become combined with all kinds of extraneous forces. Only the passage of time will allow the sifting of these elements and a correct judgement upon the nature of all the forces at play to be made.

The types of 'fundamentalism' thus far described, can also be found in other Muslim countries, such as Sudan and Nigeria, or among the Afghans before and even after the Soviet invasion. The only part of the Islamic world where such forces have made no headway at all, in contrast to the hope and expectations of certain elements in the West who have sought to manipulate these forces, is among the Muslims of the Soviet Union and China. As far as the former are concerned, the cause for the continued presence of Islam and its vitality is in fact to be sought, not at all in some kind of externalized, 'fundamentalist' revival, but in the Sufi orders which

have kept the flame of faith burning within the hearts of men despite adverse external circumstances.

'Fundamentalist' movements have also been related in many ways to the several international Islamic conferences, leagues and the like which have their centers in such places as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and even in Europe, and whose goal is the unity of the Islamic world. Although the political perspectives of these organizations are not the same, they share the goal of achieving some form of unity and bringing the Islamic peoples closer together. These therefore often attract people who are also attracted to one form or another of the neo-Wahhābi, puritanical or 'fundamentalist' movements, although there is no necessary link between the two and one can in fact remain a completely traditional Muslim and yet strive for the unity of the Islamic peoples, as is in fact the case in many instances. But there is also no doubt that many of the leaders and administrators of these international Islamic organizations are also the leaders of various kinds of 'fundamentalist' movements. This nexus seems in fact to be found most often in the Indo-Pakistani world and in Southeast Asia.

The second reaction referred to earlier in this chapter, namely the espousal of one form or another of modernism, has also led to the creation of powerful forces within the Islamic world today, forces whose nature and degree of Islamicity has, however, been open to debate. Since the Second World War, the very advent of political independence to many Islamic countries once again brought to the fore the question of the relationship between nationalism and Islam. From this debate have grown several forms of what might be called 'Islamic nationalism': that is, a way of thinking which, accepting both Islam and a particular nationhood, seeks to wed the two together. Pakistan offers the most outstanding example of such a wedding between the idea of a nation or state in the modern sense and Islam. Because Pakistan was created for the sake of Islam, obviously its nationalism could not be anti-Islamic, as had been the case with certain earlier forms of strong nationalism, like that of Turkey. In fact, many Pakistanis, in giving a positive connotation to their wedding of Islam and nationalistic sentiments, consider this type of coupling of sentiments as positive both from an Islamic point of view and from that of the geo-political realities of their century. The same attitude can be found among most Bengladeshis, Malays, Senegalese, etc. In fact, in many Islamic

countries, such as Persia, where a sense of nationhood, or at least separate existence as a distinct entity, preceded the intrusion of the modern European concept of nationalism, Islamic and national sentiments developed a *modus vivendi* which allowed Islam to flourish in its authentic, traditional form within the state without being abused for ends beyond itself.

As for Arab nationalism, since it is already based, not on an actual political entity such as Egypt, Syria or Iraq, but upon the unification of various present-day states into a larger unit, it is of a unique nature and has created a phenomenon which is different from other types of nationalism within the Islamic world. But what is interesting from the point of view of this study is that earlier Arab nationalism was essentially a secular movement led often by Christian rather than Muslim Arabs. It has left behind at least one important political expression, which is the Ba'th party. Later Arab nationalism, whether in the form of Nasserism or Qadhafi's version or any other brand, has become more and more mixed with Islamic elements. For most Arabs today, it is impossible to separate their 'Arabism' (*'urūbah*) from Islam, and in fact among the masses, when they use *'urūbah*, the connotation in their minds is almost completely Islamic. Arab nationalism has in a sense nationalized Islam, with all the dangers that such an act implies for the universal teachings of Islam, which are opposed to all forms of parochialism, especially the fanatical and narrow form of nationalism that grew out of the French Revolution, in contrast to the natural love of a man for his nation and country to which the Prophet of Islam was referring when he said, 'The love of one's nation comes from faith [in religion].' Nevertheless, this process has caused most Arab nationalistic sentiments and forces to possess also strong Islamic elements, although the secular type of Arab nationalism is of course still also very much present, especially in the eastern Arab countries.

Another type of movement that has grown out of the modernizing quarters within the Islamic world and which has been in vogue among many young Muslims during the past two decades is so-called 'Islamic Socialism' and lately 'Islamic Marxism'. Many of those who follow these movements have been influenced of course by the Soviet and socialist worlds in their apparent espousal of pro-Arabic and pro-Islamic causes in such matters as the Arab-Israeli question, while overlooking their disregard for the plight of

Muslims within the socialist world itself, not to speak of those in Afghanistan. Many people who accept the slogan of 'Islamic Socialism' understood by 'socialism', 'social justice', and in their desire to promulgate justice in their own societies adopt an 'Islamic Socialist' stance. In certain states, this ideological position is directly supported by the state and is made use of by existing political forces more or less sympathetic to the Soviet world. Although the theoretical constructs upon which this movement is based have come mostly out of leftist circles in France and the movement itself is strongest among Islamic countries which were culturally French originally, such as Algeria and more recently Iran (as far as a circle educated in France is concerned), it can also be found in the Arab Near East, where 'Islamic Socialism' has come to replace the Arab Socialism of two decades ago (which still survives in Syria and Iraq). There are also defendants of this amalgamation of Islam and socialism in Pakistan, India and Southeast Asia.

As for 'Islamic Marxism', this thesis is of a much more recent origin, associated with certain extremist groups in the Middle East which consider themselves as Muslims but which use an almost completely Marxist political ideology and also Marxist means of achieving their goals. In fact, the so-called 'Islamic Marxists' interpret Islam itself as a political revolutionary force in the sense that revolution has been understood in the context of the Marxist and post-Marxist schools in European thought. This movement has naturally received much attention as well as support from the so-called intellectually Marxist circles in France and other European countries and the figures whose works have been used by the 'Islamic Socialist' and 'Marxist' groups have been in close contact with leftist circles in the West. Today, this type of modernism within the Islamic world is an important force to contend with, not because of the number of its adherents or the degree of its popularity among the mass of the people, but because of its being used as a means of allowing totally un-Islamic, and in fact anti-Islamic, forces to gain access to power within certain of the Islamic countries.

The cataclysmic events of recent years have also brought back to life the movement of Mahdism, which had been dormant for over a century since the wave caused by the first encounter between Islam and the modern world. The fact that much of the Islamic world is under the cultural and economic domination of non-Islamic forces, that the very attempt to free oneself from this domination through

industrialization and related processes brings with it a greater destruction of Islamic values, that the world as a whole seems to be confronted with so many apparently insoluble problems, such as the ecological crisis, and that forces of destruction have become such that all peoples are threatened with extinction at all times, have helped to bring back a sense of the imminent appearance of the Mahdi: the one who will destroy inequity and re-establish the rule of God on earth. The fact that the Blessed Prophet had promised that at the beginning of every century a renewer (*mujaddid*) would come to revive Islam from within has only strengthened this feeling of expectation for the Mahdi. Already in the fall of 1979, the holiest site in Islam, namely the House of God in Makkah, was captured in the name of the Mahdi, although the forces at work were far from being those of simply pious Muslims helping to bring about the parousia. During the Iranian Revolution also, many simple people believed that the coming of the Mahdi was imminent. Without doubt, as the forces of destruction in the world increase, as the natural system strains ever more under the burden of a technology which is alien to the natural rhythms of the life of the cosmos, and as movements which speak in the name of Islam itself fail to create the ideal Islamic order which they always promise, this sense of expectation of the Mahdi and movements associated with it will increase among traditional and devout Muslims. This force is certainly a reality among present-day Muslims and is bound to continue as a powerful one in the future.

Finally, there is a fourth kind of force or presence in contemporary Islam which must be mentioned, especially since it has received practically no attention so far in Western analyses of the Islamic world. This force is the revival of the Islamic tradition from within by those who have encountered the modern world fully and who, with complete awareness of the nature of that world and all the problems of a philosophical, scientific and social nature which it poses, have returned to the heart of the Islamic tradition to find answers and to revive the Islamic world as a spiritual reality amidst the chaos and turmoil created throughout the world by what is called modernism. The number of this group has of necessity been small. Their theater of action has been not mass meetings or political gatherings, but the hearts and minds of individuals gathered in small circles. For this group, Islam is traditional Islam with its roots

sunk in heaven and its branches spread through a vast world stretching in space from the Atlantic to the Pacific and encompassing a time-span of some fourteen centuries. They reject nothing of the Islamic tradition, whether it be its art or its science or its philosophy, not to speak of Sufism, which they consider as the heart of the whole body of Islam, whose limbs, governed by the *Shari'ah*, are animated by the blood flowing from this heart. To this group, it is Islamic metaphysics which provides answers to problems posed by such modern ideologies and 'isms' as rationalism, humanism, materialism, evolutionism, psychologism and the like. For them the revival of the Islamic world must come with a revival within the Muslims themselves. Their idea of reform is not the modern one which always begins with the outward: which wishes always to reform the world but never man himself. They emphasize inner reform of Islamic society as a whole. Their attitude to the world, including the modern world, is not that of passive acceptance. They criticize the modern world in the light of immutable principles and view it as a canvas, alluring from afar but shown to be of an illusory nature when examined from close quarters. They stand at the center of Islamic orthodoxy and consider all violent movements which incorporate the worst elements of Western civilization in order to combat that civilization to be a disservice to Islam and below the dignity of God's last revelation.

This group believes in inner revival (*tajdid*), which is a traditional Islamic concept, and not external reform (*islāh*), which is a modern idea grafted upon the body of Islam. The model for this group is an al-Ghazzālī, an 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī or a Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, and not some 19th-century or 20th-century leftist revolutionary who would simply be given a Muslim name. This group acts without acting, in the sense that its function is more that of knowledge and presence than of action. But it is from this group that there has flowed and continues to flow some of the most profound and religiously significant Islamic responses to the modern world. And it is this group that in the long run will leave the deepest effect upon the Islamic community, as has ever been the case in the past.⁷

The four types of groups or movements within the Islamic world today, namely the 'fundamentalist', 'modernist', 'Mahdist' and 'traditionalist', are not of course always exclusive of each other, although certain positions, such as that of the traditionalist, exclude others, such as that of the modernist. For example, in the various

groups usually gathered together under the category of 'fundamentalist', there are some who are attached to Sufism and close to the traditionalist perspective, others who share certain affinities with the modernists and yet others who are strongly attracted by the Madhiist type of sentiment. And of course there are the counter-traditional elements which talk of Islam but in fact represent the very antithesis of traditional Islam. Finally, there are Mahdists, who really belong to the traditional world, while others have allied themselves with the 'fundamentalists' of the counter-traditional type. If all the diverse forces present in the contemporary Islamic world have been divided into these four categories, it has been to facilitate discussion and also to point to four fundamental types or attitudes which are discernible in the Islamic world today. Moreover, these four categories are in reality not at all opposed to the division between traditional, anti-traditional and counter-traditional made earlier and can be analyzed just as well in those terms. Of course it is essential to remember that, in many parts of the Islamic world, the majority of Muslims continue their lives in the traditional manner and are not involved in any of the theological, religious or political reactions to the modern world already mentioned. The vast number of Muslims, whose belonging to the Islamic tradition is still defined in terms of the traditional Islamic categories rather than of reactions to modern ideologies and thought patterns, must always be kept in mind.

Islam is still very much alive in the Islamic world today; but there are also so-called 'Islamic forces' within that world which are often manipulated and altered in such a manner that, although they remain forces, it is doubtful whether they are still Islamic. Not everything that happens to occur in the Islamic world is Islamic, nor does every birth in that part of the world herald an Islamic renaissance. After all, according to authentic Islamic traditions, the anti-Christ is also to be born in the Islamic world. Close attention must be paid to the Islamic character of all that is chosen to be called Islamic in a world in which the use and misuse of practically anything can take place as long as it serves the aims of the powers that be. In any full discussion of Islam today, one must ask in every instance what is meant by 'Islamic'. Islam is not a vague idea. It is a religion with its Sacred Book, the traditions of its Blessed Prophet, sacred law, theology, philosophy, mystical paths and a specific manner of looking at the world of nature and of creating art. There

are certainly such things as Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy, and therefore their opposites exist as well. There are traditional, anti-traditional and counter-traditional forces, and such basic differences cannot be glossed over by the simple use of the term 'Islamic'.

Today we are witness to a vast religious community which is still alive and whose teachings on all levels, from the most esoteric to those concerned with daily laws, are kept intact. But we are also witness to the destruction of certain elements of this religious world, not only through modernistic forces alien to its genius but also through modernistic forces which, in order not to appear alien, put on the guise of Islamicity so as to enter within the citadel of Islam. It will serve neither the interests of the Islamic world, nor of Christianity, nor even of the secularized West to remain oblivious of fundamental differences between the forces at play here. Mass media dominated by a new version of triumphalism in the Islamic world itself and opportunism combined with ignorance in the West should not be allowed to blind people to the difference between Islamic forces seeking genuine political and social expression and totally anti-Islamic or at best non-Islamic political forces using the guise of Islam to further their own ends. Nor is it wise to neglect the more hidden forms of inner revival and rejuvenation which have always been and will always be at the heart of every authentic religious regeneration.

It is the hope of every Muslim concerned with the future of Islam that the energy and vitality of Islam will react in a constructive manner along with other religions similarly faced with the withering effects of modern secularism and that this vitality will not be channelled into volcanic eruptions and violent reactions that will, in the long run, leave both the Islamic world and the world at large impoverished spiritually, whatever they might do in the short term to serve the immediate aims of present-day powers. Let us hope that Islamic movements and groups will channel and guide their activities in a manner which is worthy before the sight of God and not according to what might appear politically or economically opportune. Islamic history stands as witness to the fact that only those acts that have been performed in the light of eternity and according to the Will of the One, the surrender to whose Will is the *raison d'être* of Islam itself, have had an enduring effect upon the heart and soul of Muslims and upon the Islamic world at large.

Notes

1. We have also dealt with certain aspects of this subject in our *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, chapter 7.
2. See W.C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton, 1957.
3. Some attention has been paid to the Sanūsīyyah in Western languages but much more needs to be done in this field in general. On the Sanūsīyyah see N. Ziadeh, *Sanusiya: a Study of a Revivalist Movement in Islam*, London 1958. As for a general treatment of various movements within the Islamic world, there exists a vast literature which, until a few years ago, possessed a general over-emphasis upon the modernists but more recently upon the 'fundamentalists'. For a recent general survey covering the whole of the Islamic world rather than just the Middle East see J. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, Boulder (Colorado), 1982.
4. Again there were notable exceptions. For example, 'Abd al-Halim Mahmūd, who was later to become rector of al-Azhar University, was aware of the works of Guénon and other Western critics of the West.
5. See our *Knowledge and the Sacred*, chapter 3.
6. See the Prologue to this book.
7. This group represents on the highest intellectual level the vast number of Muslims who remain traditional and who are neither modernist nor 'fundamentalist'. This circle is the voice of traditional Islam and those traditional Muslims who remain more or less intellectually silent but who live the traditional life of faith and share with this intellectual élite (*khawāṣṣ*), in the time-honored meaning of the term, the same traditional world-view.



Chapter Six

Reflections on Islam and Modern Thought

Few subjects arouse more passion and debate among Muslims today than the encounter between Islam and modern thought. The subject is of course vast and embraces fields ranging from politics to sacred art, subjects whose debate often causes volcanic eruptions of emotions and passions and vituperation, which are hardly conducive to an objective analysis of causes and a clear vision of the problems involved. The whole discussion is also paralysed by a psychological sense of inferiority and a feeling of enfeeblement before the modern world, a feeling which prevents most modernized Muslims from making a critical appraisal of the situation and of stating the truth irrespective of whether it is fashionable and acceptable to current opinion or not. Let us then begin by defining what we mean by 'modern thought'.

It is amazing how many hues of meaning have been given to the

term 'modern', ranging from 'contemporary' to simply 'innovative', 'creative', or in tune with the march of time. The question of principles, and in fact the truth itself, is hardly ever taken into consideration when modernism is discussed. One hardly ever asks whether this or that idea, form or institution conforms to some aspect of the truth. The only question is whether it is modern or not. The lack of clarity, precision and sharpness of both mental and artistic contours, which characterizes the modern world itself, seems to plague the contemporary Muslim's understanding of modernism, whether he wishes to adopt its tenets or even to react against it. The influence of modernism seems in fact to have dimmed that lucidity and blurred that crystalline transparency which distinguish traditional Islam in both its intellectual and artistic manifestations.¹

When we use the term 'modern', we mean neither 'contemporary' nor 'up-to-date'; nor does it signify for us something that is successful in the conquest and domination of the natural world. Rather, for us 'modern' means that which is cut off from the Transcendent, from the immutable principles which in reality govern all things and which are made known to man through revelation in its most universal sense. Modernism is thus contrasted with tradition (*al-dīn*); the former, as already mentioned, implies all that is merely human and now ever more increasingly subhuman, and all that is divorced and cut off from the Divine source.² Obviously, tradition has always accompanied and in fact characterized human existence, whereas modernism is a very recent phenomenon. As long as man has lived on earth, he has buried his dead and believed in the afterlife and the world of the Spirit. During the 'hundreds of thousands' of years of human life on earth, he has been traditional in outlook and has not 'evolved' as far as his relation with God and nature, seen as the creation and theophany of God, are concerned.³ Compared to this long history, during which man has continuously celebrated the Divine and performed his function as God's vice-gerent (*khalīfah*) on earth, the period of the domination of modernism stretching from the Renaissance in Western Europe in the 15th century to the present day appears as no more than the blinking of an eye.⁴ Yet, it is during this fleeting moment that we live; hence the apparent dominance of the power of modernism before which so many Muslims retreat in helplessness, or which they join with that superficial sense of happiness that often accompanies the seductions of the world.

A word must also be said about the term 'thought', as it appears in the expression 'modern thought'. The term 'thought' as used in this context is itself modern rather than traditional. The Arabic term *fikr*, or the Persian *andishah*, which are used as its equivalents, hardly appear with the same meaning in traditional texts. In fact, what would correspond to the traditional understanding of the term would be more the French *pensée* as used by a Pascal: a term which would be rendered better as 'meditation' rather than 'thought'. Both *fikr* and *andishah* are related to meditation and contemplation rather than to the purely human, and therefore non-divine, mental activity which the term 'thought' usually evokes.⁵ If then we nevertheless use the term 'thought', it is because we are addressing an audience nurtured on all that this term implies and are using a medium and language in which it is not possible, without being somewhat contrite, to employ another term with the same range of meaning, embracing many forms of mental activity but devoid of the limitation, in the vertical sense, that the term 'thought' possesses in contemporary parlance.

All these forms of mental activity, which together comprise modern thought and which range from science to philosophy, psychology and even certain aspects of religion itself, possess certain common characteristics and traits which must be recognized and studied before the Islamic answer to modern thought can be provided. Perhaps the first basic trait of modern thought to be noted is its anthropomorphic nature. How can a form of thought which negates any principle higher than man be anything but anthropomorphic? It might, of course, be objected that modern science is certainly not anthropomorphic, but rather that it is the pre-modern sciences which must be considered as man-centred. Despite appearances, however, this assertion is mere illusion if one examines closely the epistemological factor involved. It is true that modern science depicts a universe in which man as spirit, mind and even psyche has no place and the Universe thus appears as 'in-human' and not related to the human state. But it must not be forgotten that, although modern man has created a science which excludes the reality of man from the general picture of the Universe⁶, the criteria and instruments of knowledge which determine this science are merely and purely human. It is human reason and the human senses which determine modern science. The knowledge of even the farthest galaxies is held in the human mind. This

scientific world from which man has been abstracted is, therefore, nevertheless based on anthropomorphic foundations as far as the subjective pole of knowledge, the subject who knows and determines what science is, is concerned.

By contrast, the traditional sciences are profoundly non-anthropomorphic in the sense that, for them, the locus and container of knowledge is not the human mind but ultimately the Divine Intellect. True science is not based on purely human reason but on the Intellect which belongs to the supra-human level of reality yet illuminates the human mind.⁷ If medieval cosmologies placed man at the centre of things, it is not because they were humanistic in the Renaissance sense of the term, according to which terrestrial and fallen man was the measure of all things, but it was in order to enable man to gain a vision of the cosmos as a hierarchy of states, the lowest of which was occupied by man and was a crypt through which he must travel and which he must transcend. Certainly one cannot begin a journey from anywhere except where one is located.⁸

If the characteristic of anthropomorphism is thus to be found in modern science, it is to be seen in an even more obvious fashion in other forms and aspects of modern thought, whether it be psychology, anthropology or philosophy. Modern thought, of which philosophy is in a sense the father and progenitor, became profoundly anthropomorphic the moment man was made the criterion of reality. When Descartes uttered, 'I think, therefore I am' (*cogito ergo sum*), he placed his individual awareness of his own limited self as the criterion of existence, for certainly the 'I' in Descartes' assertion was not the Divine 'I' who, through Hallāj, exclaimed, 'I am the Truth' (*ana'l-Haqq*): the Divine 'I' which alone, according to traditional doctrines, has the right to say 'I'.⁹ Until Descartes, it was Pure Being, the Being of God, which determined human existence and the various levels of reality. But with Cartesian rationalism, individual human existence became the criterion of reality and also the truth. In the mainstream of Western thought, and excluding certain peripheral developments, ontology gave way to epistemology, epistemology to logic and finally, by way of reaction, logic became confronted with those antirational 'philosophies' so prevalent today.¹⁰

What happened in the post-medieval period in the West was that higher levels of reality became eliminated in both the subjective and

the objective domains. There was nothing higher in man than his reason and nothing higher in the objective world than what that reason could comprehend with the help of the normal human senses. This was of course bound to happen if one remembers the well-known principle of adequation (the *adequatio* of St. Thomas Aquinas) according to which to know anything there must be an instrument of knowledge adequate and conforming to the nature of that which is to be known. And since modern man refused to accept a principle higher than himself, obviously all that issued from his mind and thought could not but be anthropomorphic.

A second trait of modernism closely related to anthropomorphism is the lack of principles which characterizes the modern world. Human nature is too unstable, changing and turbulent to be able to serve as the principle for something. That is why a mode of thinking which is not able to transcend the human level and which remains anthropomorphic cannot but be devoid of principles. In the realm of the active life, namely the domain of morality (although morality cannot be reduced simply to the realm of action) and, from another point of view, politics and economics, everyone senses this lack of principles. But one might object as far as the sciences are concerned. Here again, however, it must be asserted that, neither empiricism, nor the validation through induction, nor reliance upon the data of the senses as confirmed by reason, can serve as principles in the metaphysical sense. They are all valid on their own level, as is the science created by them. But they are divorced from immutable principles, as is modern science, which has discovered many things on a certain level of reality but, because of this divorce from higher principles, has brought about disequilibrium through its very discoveries and inventions. Only mathematics among the modern sciences may be said to possess certain principles in the metaphysical sense; the reason is that mathematics remains, despite everything, a Platonic science and its laws, discovered by the human mind, continue to reflect metaphysical principles, as reason itself cannot but display the fact that it is a reflection of the Intellect. The discoveries of the other sciences, to the extent that they conform to some aspect of the nature of reality, of course possess a symbolic and metaphysical significance; but that does not mean that these sciences are attached to metaphysical principles and integrated into a higher form of knowledge. Such an integration could take place but, as a matter of fact, it has not. Modern science, therefore, and

its generalizations, like the other fruits of that way of thinking and acting which we have associated with modernism, suffer from the lack of principles which characterize the modern world, a lack which is felt to an even greater degree as the history of the modern world unfolds.

It might be asked what other means of knowledge were available to other civilizations before the modern period. The answer is quite clear, at least for those Muslims who know the intellectual life of Islam: revelation and intellectual intuition or vision (*dhawq*, *kashf* or *shuhūd*).¹¹ The Muslim intellectual saw revelation as the primary source of knowledge, not only as the means to learn the laws of morality concerned with the active life. He was also aware of the possibility of man purifying himself until the 'eye of the heart' (*‘ayn al-qalb*), residing at the centre of his being, would open and enable him to gain direct vision of the supernal realities. Finally, he accepted the power of reason to know, but this reason was always attached to and derived sustenance from revelation on the one hand, and intellectual intuition on the other. The few in the Islamic world who would cut this cord of reliance and declare the independence of reason from both revelation and intuition were never accepted into the mainstream of Islamic thought. They remained marginal figures while, in a reverse fashion in the post-medieval West, those who sought to sustain and uphold the reliance of reason upon revelation and the Intellect remained on the margin, while the mainstream of modern Western thought rejected both revelation and intellectual intuition as means of knowledge. In modern times even philosophers of religion and theologians rarely defend the Bible as a source of sapiential knowledge which could determine and integrate *scientia* in the manner espoused by a St. Bonaventure. The few who look upon the Bible for intellectual guidance are usually limited by such shallow literal interpretations of the Holy Book that, in their feuds with the modern sciences, the devotees of the rationalistic camp almost inevitably come out the victors.¹²

When one ponders over these and other salient features of modernism, one comes to the conclusion that, in order to understand modernism and its manifestations, it is essential to comprehend the conception of man which underlines it. One must seek to discover how modern man conceives of himself and his destiny, how he views the *anthropos vis-à-vis* God and the world. Moreover, it is essential to understand what constitutes the souls and minds of men and

women whose thoughts and ideas have molded and continue to mold the modern world. For surely, if such men as Ghazzālī and Rūmī, or for that matter an Erigena or Eckhart, were the occupants of chairs of philosophy in leading universities in the West, another kind of philosophy would issue forth in that world. A man thinks according to what he is; or as Aristotle said, knowledge depends upon the mode of the knower. A study of the modern concept of man as being 'free' of Heaven, complete master of his own destiny, earth-bound but also master of the earth, oblivious to all eschatological realities which he has replaced with some future state of perfection in profane historical time, indifferent if not totally opposed to the world of the Spirit and its demands, and lacking a sense of the sacred, will reveal how futile have been and are the efforts of those modernistic Muslim 'reformers' who have sought to harmonize Islam and modernism in the sense that we have defined it. If we turn even a cursory glance at the Islamic conception of man, at *homo islamicus*, we shall discover the impossibility of harmonizing this conception with the modern concept of man.¹³

Homo islamicus is at once the slave of God (*al-'abd*) and His vice-gerent on earth (*khalīfatallāh fi'l-ard*).¹⁴ He is not an animal which happens to speak and think but a being who possesses a soul and spirit created by God. *Homo islamicus* contains within himself the plant and animal natures, as he is the crown of creation (*ashraf al-makhlūqāt*); but he has not evolved from the lower forms of life. Man has always been man. The Islamic conception of man envisages that man is a being who lives on earth and has earthly needs; but he is not earthly and his needs are not limited to the terrestrial. He rules over the earth, but not in his own right; rather he is God's vice-gerent before all creatures. He therefore also bears responsibility for the created order before God and is the channel of grace for God's creatures. *Homo islamicus* possesses the power of reason, of *ratio* which divides and analyses, but his mental faculties are not limited to reason. He possesses the possibility of inward knowledge: the knowledge of his own inner being, which is in fact the key to the knowledge of God according to the famous prophetic *ḥadīth*, 'He who knows himself knoweth his Lord' (*man 'arafa nafsah faqad 'arafa rabbah*). He is aware of the fact that his consciousness does not have an external, material cause but that it comes from God and is too profound to be affected by the accident of death.¹⁵ *Homo islamicus* thus remains aware of the eschatological

realities, of the fact that, although he lives on this earth, he is here as a traveller far away from his original abode. He is aware that his guide for this journey is the message which issues from his home of origin, from *the Origin*, and this message is none other than the revelation to which he remains bound, not only in its aspect of law as embodied in the *Shari'ah*, but also in its aspect of truth and knowledge (*Haqiqah*). He is also aware that man's faculties are not bound and limited to the senses and reason but that, to the extent that he is able to regain the fullness of his being and bring to actuality all the possibilities that God has placed within him, man's mind and reason can become illuminated by the light of the spiritual world and he is able to gain direct knowledge of that spiritual and intelligible world to which the Noble Quran refers as the Invisible (*'alam-al-ghayb*).¹⁶

Obviously such a conception of man differs profoundly from that of modern man, who sees himself as a purely earthly creature, master of nature, but responsible to no one but himself; and no amount of wishy-washy apologies can harmonize the two. The Islamic conception of man removes the possibility of a Promethean revolt against Heaven and brings God into the minutest aspect of human life.¹⁷ Its effect is therefore the creation of a civilization, an art, a philosophy or a whole manner of thinking and seeing things which are completely theocentric and which stand opposed to the anthropomorphism that is such a salient feature of modernism. Nothing can be more shocking to authentic Muslim sensibilities than the Titanic and Promethean 'religious' art of the late Renaissance and the Baroque, which stand directly opposed to the completely nonanthropomorphic art of Islam. In Islam man thinks and makes in his function of *homo sapiens* and *homo faber* as the 'abd of God, and not as a creature who has rebelled against Him. His function remains, not the glorification of himself, but of his Lord, and his greatest aim is to become 'nothing', to undergo the experience of *fanā'* which would enable him to become the mirror in which God contemplates the reflections of His own Names and Qualities and the channel through which the theophanies of His Names and Qualities are reflected in the world.

Of course, what characterizes the Islamic conception of man has profound similarities with the conception of man in other traditions, including Christianity, and we would be the last to deny this point. But modernism is *not* Christianity or any other tradition and

it is the confrontation of Islam with modern thought that we have in mind here, not its comparison with Christianity. Otherwise what could be closer to the Islamic teaching that man is created to seek perfection and final spiritual beatitude through intellectual and spiritual growth, that man is man only when he seeks perfection (*tālib al-kamāl*) and attempts to go beyond himself, than the scholastic saying *Homo non proprie humanus sed superhumanus est*, which means that to be properly human man must be more than human.

The characteristics of modern thought discussed earlier, namely its anthropomorphic and, by extension, secular nature, the lack of principles in its various branches and the reductionism which is related to it and which is more evident in the realm of the sciences, are obviously in total opposition to the tenets of traditional Islamic thought, just as the modern conception of man from which these thought patterns issue is opposed to the traditional Islamic conception of man. This opposition is clear enough not to need further elucidation here.¹⁸ There is one characteristic of modern thought, however, which needs to be discussed in greater detail as a result of its pervasive nature in the modern world and its lethal effect upon the religious thought and life of those Muslims who have been affected by it, namely, the theory of evolution.¹⁹

In the West, no modern theory or idea has been as detrimental to religion as the theory of evolution, which instead of being considered as a hypothesis in biology, zoology, or paleontology, is paraded around as if it were a proven scientific fact. Furthermore, it has become a fashion of modern thought, embracing fields as far apart as astrophysics and the history of art. Nor has the effect of this manner of thinking been any less negative on Muslims influenced by it than it has been on Christians. Usually modernized Muslims have tried to come to terms with evolution through all kinds of unbelievable interpretations of the Noble Quran, forgetting that there is no possible way to harmonize the conception of man (*Ādam*) as he to whom God taught all the 'names' and whom He placed on earth as His *khalīfah*, and the evolutionist conception which sees man as having 'ascended' from the ape. It is strange that except for a number of traditionalist and also 'fundamentalist' Muslim thinkers who have rejected the theory of evolution mostly on purely religious grounds without providing intellectual and rational arguments for their rejection of the theory, few Muslims have bothered

to see its logical absurdity and to consider all the scientific evidence brought against it by such men as L. Bounoure and D. Dewar²⁰, despite the ecstatic claims of its general acceptance by various standard dictionaries and encyclopedias. In fact, as has been stated so justly by E.F. Schumacher, 'evolutionism is not science; it is science fiction, even a kind of hoax'.²¹ Some Western critics of evolution have gone so far as to claim that its proponents suffer from psychological disequilibrium²², while recently a whole array of arguments drawn from information theory have been brought against it.²³

It is not our aim in this study to analyse and refute in detail the theory of evolution, although such a refutation by Muslim thinkers is essential from the scientific as well as the metaphysical, philosophical, logical and religious points of view, as has already been carried out in the Occident. What is important to note here is that the evolutionary point of view, which refuses to see permanence anywhere, for which the greater somehow 'evolves' from the 'lesser' and which is totally blind to the higher states of being and the archetypal realities which determine the forms of this world, is but a result of that loss of principles alluded to above. Evolutionism is but a desperate attempt to fill the vacuum created by modern man's 'cutting off' of the Hands of God from His creation and negating any principle above the merely human, which then falls of necessity to the level of the subhuman. Once the Transcendent Principle is forgotten, the world becomes a circle without a centre and this experience of the loss of the centre remains an existential reality for anyone who accepts the theses of modernism, whether he be a Christian or a Muslim.

Closely allied to the idea of evolution is that of progress and utopianism, which have both philosophically and politically shaken the Western world to its roots during the past two centuries and are now affecting the Islamic world profoundly. The ideal of unilateral progress has fortunately ceased to be taken seriously by many noted thinkers in the West today and is gradually being rejected in the Islamic world as an 'idol of the mind' before which the earlier generation of modernized Muslims prostrated without any hesitation.²⁴ But the utopianism which is closely related to the idea of progress bears further scrutiny and study as a result of the devastating effect it has had and continues to have on a large segment of the modernized Muslim 'intelligentsia'.

'Utopianism' is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'Impossible ideal schemes for the amelioration or perfection of social conditions'. Although the origin of this term goes back to the well-known treatise of Sir Thomas More, entitled *Utopia* and written in 1516 in Latin, the term 'utopianism' as employed today has certain implications antedating the 16th century, although the term itself derives from More's famous work. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation, combined with a sense of idealism which characterizes Christianity, were of course present before modern times. Utopianism grafted itself upon the caricature of these characteristics and, whether in the form of the humanitarian socialism of such figures as St. Simon, Charles Fourier or Robert Owen, or the political socialism of Marx and Engels, led to a conception of history that is a real parody of the Augustinian *City of God*. The utopianism of the last centuries, which is one of the important features of modernism, combined with various forms of Messianism, led and still leads to deep social and political upheavals whose goals and methods cannot but remain completely alien to the ethos and aims of traditional Islam.²⁵ Utopianism seeks to establish a perfect social order through purely human means. It disregards the presence of evil in the world in the theological sense and aims at doing good without God, as if it were possible to create an order based on goodness but removed from the source of all goodness.

Islam has also had its descriptions of the perfect state of society in works such as those of Fārābī describing the 'virtuous society' or *al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, or the texts of Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, which refer to the land of perfection called in Persian *nā kūjā-ābād*, literally 'the land of nowhere': *u-topia*. But then it was always remembered that this land of perfection is *nowhere*; that is, beyond the earthly abode and therefore identified with the eighth clime above the seven geographic ones of this world. The realism present in the Islamic perspective, combined with the strong emphasis of the Noble Quran upon the gradual loss of perfection of the Islamic community as it moves away from the origin of revelation, until quite recently prevented the kind of utopianism present in modern European philosophy from growing upon the soil of Islamic thought. Moreover, the Muslim remained always aware that, if there were to be a perfect state, it could only come into being through Divine help. Hence, although the idea of the cyclic renewal of Islam through a 'renewer' (*mujaddid*) has

always been alive, as has the wave of Mahdism which sees in the Mahdi the force sent by God to return Islam to its perfection. Islam has never faced within itself that type of secular utopianism which underlies so many of the socio-political aspects of modern thought. It is therefore essential to be aware of the profound distinction between modern utopianism and Islamic teachings concerning the *mujaddid*, or renewer of Islamic society, or even the Mahdi himself. It is also basic to distinguish between the traditional figure of the *mujaddid* and the modern reformer, who usually, as a result of his feeble reaction to modern thought, can hardly be said to have brought about the renewal of Islam. One must also be aware of the real nature of that revivalism, based on utopianism but using Islamic images, that one finds in certain types of Islamic 'fundamentalism'.

There is, finally, one more characteristic of modern thought which it is essential to mention and which is related to all that has been stated above. This characteristic is the loss of the sense of the sacred. Modern man can practically be defined as that type of man who has lost this sense, and his thought is conspicuous in its lack of awareness of the sacred. Nor could it be otherwise, seeing that modern humanism is inseparable from secularism. But nothing could be further from the Islamic perspective, in which there does not even exist such a concept as the profane or secular²⁶; for in Islam, as already mentioned, the One penetrates into the very depths of the world of multiplicity and excludes no domain from the tradition. This is to be seen not only in the intellectual aspects of Islam²⁷, but also in an arresting fashion in Islamic art. The Islamic tradition can never accept a thought pattern which is devoid of the perfume of the sacred and which replaces the Divine Order by one of purely human origin and inspiration. The confrontation of Islam with modern thought cannot take place on a serious level if the primacy of the sacred in the perspective of Islam and its lack in modern thought is not taken into consideration. Islam cannot even carry out a dialogue with the secular by placing it in a position of legitimacy. It can only take the secular for what it is, namely the negation and denial of the sacred, which may ultimately be said to be that which alone *is*, while the profane or secular only *appears* to be.

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention that the reductionism which is one of the characteristics of modern thought has itself

affected Islam in its confrontation with modernism. One of the effects of modernism upon Islam has been to reduce Islam in the minds of many to only one of its dimensions, namely the *Shari'ah*, and to divest it of those intellectual weapons which alone can ward off the assaults of modern thought upon its citadel. The *Shari'ah* is of course basic to the Islamic tradition. But the intellectual challenges posed by modernism in the form of evolutionism, rationalism, existentialism, agnosticism and the like can only be answered intellectually and not juridically. Nor can they be answered by ignoring or disregarding those issues and expecting some kind of magical wedding between the *Shari'ah* and modern science and technology to take place. The successful encounter of Islam with modern thought will not take place simply through the expression of anger and the display of self-righteousness. It can only come about when modern thought is fully understood in both its roots and ramifications, and the whole of the Islamic tradition brought to bear upon the solution of the enormous problems which modernism poses for Islam. At the center of this undertaking lies the revival of that wisdom, that *hikmah* or *haqiqah*, which lies at the heart of the Islamic revelation and which will remain valid as long as men remain men and bear witness to Him according to their theomorphic nature and in the state of servitude before the Lord (*'ubūdiyyah*), the state which is the *raison d'être* of human existence.

Notes

1. Islam is based on intelligence, and intelligence is light as expressed in the *ḥadīth*, *inna'l-'aql nūr* ("Verily intelligence is light"). The characteristic expression of Islam is the courtyard of an Alhambra, whose forms are so many crystallizations of light and whose spaces are defined by the rays of that light which in this world symbolizes the Divine Intellect.
2. If we are forced to re-define such terms as 'tradition' and 'modernism' in this and other works, it is because, despite the considerable amount

of writing devoted to the subject by the outstanding traditional writers such as Guénon, Schuon, A.K. Coomaraswamy, T. Burckhardt, M. Lings and others, there are still many readers, especially Muslim ones, for whom the distinction between tradition and modernism is not clear. They still identify tradition with customs and modernism with all that is contemporary.

Many Western students of Islam also identify 'modern' with 'advanced', 'developed' and the like, as if the march of time itself guarantees betterment. For example, C. Leiden, a political scientist and student of contemporary Islam, writes, 'Equally important is how the term *modernisation* can itself provide insight into these questions. This is not the first time in history that societies have undergone confrontation with other "advanced" societies and have learned to accommodate to them. Every such confrontation was, in a sense, a clash or contact with modernisation.' J.A. Bill and C. Leiden, *The Middle East - Politics and Power*, Boston, 1974, pp. 48-49. The author goes on to cite as examples the confrontation of the Romans with the Greeks and the Arabs with the Byzantines and Persians. However, despite the decadent nature of late Greek culture, neither the Greeks nor certainly the theocratic Byzantines and Persians were modern in our definition of the word, according to which this is in fact the first time that traditional societies confront modernism.

3. Despite the totally anti-traditional character of the perspective which dominates modern anthropology, even certain anthropologists have come to the conclusion that, from a metaphysical and spiritual point of view, man has not evolved one *iota* since the Stone Age. If in the early decades of this century this view was championed by a few scholars, such as A. Jeremias and W. Schmidt, in recent years it has received more powerful support based on extensive evidence reflected in the studies of such men as J. Servier and, from the point of view of religious anthropology, M. Eliade.
4. It must be remembered that even during this relatively short period of five centuries, the Muslim world has remained for the most part traditional and did not feel the full impact of modernism until a century ago. See S.H. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*.
5. In the famous Persian poem -
 Invoke until thy invocation gives rise to mediation (*fikr*)
 And gives birth to a hundred thousand virgin 'thoughts'
 (*andlshah*)
 - the relation of mental activity in a traditional context to spiritual practice and contemplation is clearly stated.
6. There have been recent attempts to escape from the reductionism of classical physics and to introduce both life and even the psyche as independent elements in the Universe. But the general view of modern science remains the reductionist one which would reduce spirit to mind, mind to the external aspects of the psyche, the external aspects of the psyche to organic behaviour and organisms to molecular structures. The man who knows and who has the certitude of his own

consciousness is thus reduced to chemical and physical elements which in reality are concepts of his own mind imposed upon the natural domain. See A. Koestler and J.R. Smythies (eds.), *Beyond Reductionism*, London 1959, especially the article of V.E. Frankl, 'Reductionism and Nihilism' where he writes, 'the present danger does not really lie in the loss of universality on the part of the scientist, but rather in his pretence and claim of totality . . . The true nihilism of today is reductionism . . . Contemporary nihilism no longer brandishes the word "nothingness"; today nihilism is camouflaged as *nothing-but-ness*. Human phenomena are thus turned into mere epiphenomena.' See also the remarkable work of E.F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, New York, 1977, especially chapter 1, where this question is discussed.

7. See F. Brunner, *Science et réalité*, Paris, 1956, where the author displays clearly the non-anthropomorphic nature of the traditional sciences based on their reliance upon the Divine Intellect rather than upon mere reason.
8. Concerning the study of the cosmos as a crypt as far as Islam is concerned see S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, London, 1978, chapter 15.
9. See S.H. Nasr, 'Self-awareness and Ultimate Selfhood', *Religious Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, Sept. 1977, pp. 319-325.
10. The classical study of E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, is still valuable in tracing this development in Western thought.
11. It was especially Sadr al-Din Shīrāzī who elucidated, perhaps more than any other Muslim philosopher, the relation between the three paths of reason, intuition and revelation open to man in his quest for the attainment of knowledge. See S.H. Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy*, London, 1978.
12. We have dealt with this issue extensively in our *Knowledge and the Sacred*, chapter 4.
13. There are of course many men and women living in the modern World who would not accept this description of modern man as far as it concerns themselves. But such people, whose number in fact grows every day in the West, are really contemporary rather than modern. The characteristics which we have mentioned pertain to modernism as such and not to a particular contemporary individual who may in fact stand opposed to them.
14. On the Islamic conception of man see S.H. Nasr, 'Who is Man? The perennial answer of Islam', in J. Needleman (ed.), *The Sword of Gnosis*, Penguin Books Inc. 1974, pp. 203-17, and *Knowledge and the Sacred*, chapter 5.
15. Consciousness has no origin in time. No matter how we try to go back in the examination of our consciousness, we cannot obviously reach a temporal beginning. At the heart of this consciousness in fact resides the Infinite Consciousness of God, who is at once the absolutely transcendent Reality and the infinite Self residing at the center of our being. In general, Sufism has emphasized more the objective and

Hinduism the subjective pole of the One Reality, which is at once pure Object and pure Subject, but the conception of the Divinity as pure Subject has also been always present in Islam, as the reference in the Noble Quran to God as the Inward (*al-bârin*), the prophetic *ḥadīth* already cited and such classical Sufi treatises as the *Conference of the Birds* (*Manṭiq al-ṭayr*) reveal. See F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, trans. D.M. Matheson, London, 1953, pp. 95ff.

16. It is of interest to note that one of the outstanding treatises of Islamic philosophy dealing with metaphysics and eschatology is a work by Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī entitled *Mafāhish al-ghayb*, literally *Keys to the Invisible World*.
17. 'In Islam, as we have seen, the Divine ray pierces directly through all degrees of existence, like an axis or central pivot, which links them harmoniously and bestows upon each degree what is suited to it; and we have also seen how the straight ray curves on its return and becomes a circle that brings everything back to its point of departure . . . ' L. Schaya, 'Contemplation and Action in Judaism and Islam', in Y. Ibish and I. Marculescu (eds.), *Contemplation and Action in World Religions*, Seattle and London, 1978, p. 173.
18. Of course, the ramification of this opposition and the details as they pertain to each field are such that they could be discussed indefinitely. But here we have the principles rather than their applications in mind. We have discussed some of these issues in detail in our *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*.
19. ' . . . in the modern world more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution as their immediate cause than to anything else . . . for the more logically minded, there is no option but to choose between the two, that is, between the doctrine of the fall of man and the 'doctrine' of the rise of man, and to reject altogether the one not chosen . . . ' M. Lings, review of D. Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion*; in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1970, p. 59.
One might also explain the rapid spread of the theory of evolution as a pseudo-religion in the West by saying that, to some extent at least, it came to fill a vacuum already created by a weakening of faith. But as far as Islam is concerned, its effect has been to corrode and weaken an already existing faith, as it was for those Christians who still possessed strong religious faith when the theory of evolution spread in the late 19th century, as it continues to do in fact up to the present day.
20. See L. Bounoure, *Déterminisme et finalité, double loi de la vie*, Paris, 1957; *ibid.*, *Recherche d'une doctrine de la vie. Vrai savants et faux prophètes*, Paris, 1964; and D. Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion*, Newfreesboro (Tenn.), 1957. We have also dealt with this question in our *Man and Nature*, London, 1977.
21. Schumacher, *Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 114: 'It is far better to believe that the earth is a disc supported by a tortoise and flanked by four elephants than to believe, in the name of "evolutionism", in the coming of some "superhuman" monster.'

F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, p. 112: 'A literal

interpretation of cosmological symbols is, if not positively useful, at any rate harmless, whereas the scientific error – such as evolutionism – is neither literally nor symbolically true; the repercussions of its falsity are beyond calculation.'

22. 'If we present, for the sake of argument, the theory of evolution in a most scientific formulation, we have to say something like this: "At a certain moment of time the temperature of the Earth was such that it became more favourable for the aggregation of carbon atoms and oxygen with the nitrogen-hydrogen combination, and that from random occurrences of large clusters molecules occurred which were most favorably structured for the coming about of life, and from that point it went on through vast stretches of time, until through processes of natural selection a being finally occurred which is capable of choosing love over hate and justice over injustice, of writing poetry like that of Dante, composing music like that of Mozart, and making drawings like those of Leonardo." Of course, such a view of cosmogenesis is crazy. And I do not at all mean crazy in the sense of slangy invective but rather in the technical meaning of psychotic. Indeed such a view has much in common with certain aspects of schizophrenic thinking.' K. Stern, *The Flight from Woman*, New York, 1965, p. 290. The author is a well-known psychiatrist who has reached this conclusion not from traditional foundations but from the premises of various contemporary schools of thought.
23. See especially the works of A.E. Wilder Smith, such as *Man's Origin, Man's Destiny*, Wheaton (Ill.), 1968, and his *Herkunft und Zukunft des Menschen*, Basel, 1966. We have assembled many references to anti-evolutionary Western literature in *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp. 249–50.
24. We have discussed the idea of progress and its refutation in our *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, and in our 'Progress and Evolution: A Reappraisal from the Traditional Perspective', *Parabola*, vol. VI, no. 2, Spring 1981, pp. 44–51. See also M. Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism*, Lahore, 1968. For an eloquent refutation of the notion of progress see M. Lings, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, London, 1967; also Lord Northbourne, *Looking Back on Progress*, London, 1968.
25. On the deeper roots of utopianism in the West see J. Servier, *Histoire de l'utopie*, Paris, 1967.
26. This is proven by the lack of such a term in classical Arabic or Persian.
27. We have dealt with the sacred quality of all aspects of Islamic learning, even science, in our *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge (U.S.A.), 1968; also *Islamic Science – An Illustrated Study*, London, 1976.