

ISLAM & THE WEST

By

KHURSHID AHMAD



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WITH A FOREWORD
BY
SYED ABUL A'LA MAUDUDI



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PREFACE

THERE is great hue and cry that the East is revolting against the West ; that the white man's debt is being repaid. Although the hubble and bubble is more imaginary than real, but it cannot be denied that there is some grain of truth in the statement. And the need of a candid and careful study of the problem is undeniable. I have tried to respond to that need and make a study of the problem in its proper perspective.

I am extremely thankful to Maulana Abul A'la Maududi, one of the greatest living thinkers of the Muslim World, for his kindness to go through the manuscript and contribute his Foreword.

My thanks are also due to Chaudhry Ghulam Muhammad on whose suggestion I undertook the study. I must also thank M/s. Misbahul Islam Farooqi, Hasan Qasim Murad and Shahzad Muhammad for helping me in the preparation and the publication of this brochure.

Karachi.

KHURSHID AHMAD

26th December, 1957.

FOREWORD

THE present booklet from the pen of Mr. Khurshid Ahmad fulfils a pressing need of the day. The call of our times is that, with a view to achieving world peace and international amity, mutual relationship among different nations be reconstructed on a sound footing. Among the many things required to be done in this behalf, the need for the establishment of relationship of the people of Europe and America with the Islamic fraternity, on new foundations of goodwill and good-cheer, stands out as of paramount significance. It is welcome indeed that, both in the West as well as in the Muslim East, a number of individuals are sincerely alive to this need of the hour and it is this realisation that is blossoming forth into valuable attempts towards its achievement. *Islam and the West* is a commendable attempt in this direction. Mutual goodwill cannot be achieved unless real deterrents that impede the way are removed. In this pamphlet, an attempt has been made to point out these deterrents and to awaken a realisation of the pressing need to remove them. I hope Western intellectuals and scholars will take the essay in this very spirit and will give a cool consideration to its contents.

It is noteworthy that Muslims extended their hand of friendship towards Christians and Jews in the very

beginning and the hand remained stretched over all these centuries. Muslims believe in Moses, Aaron, and all the prophets of *Israel* and Christ and John (May God's blessings be upon them) as true messengers of God, and they deem this belief to be as essential for them as belief in the Holy Prophet Muhammad (May God's blessings be upon him). They regard *Torah*, *Zabur* and *Injeel* as Books of God ; and it is an article of faith with them to believe, along with the Quran, in all other Divinely revealed books. They respect Mary (God's blessings be upon her) and regard her as pious, virtuous and respectable as their very *Ummahatul Mo'mineen*, i.e., the wives of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (May God's blessings be upon him). There is no question of even the slightest disrespect on their part towards those whom Christians and Jews hold in reverence, for they are revered ones for the Muslims as well. But the attitude of Christians and Jews in this behalf has been just the opposite. They not only do not accept the Holy Prophet and his wives and companions as among those venerable for them but even do not hesitate to cast aspersions on their truthfulness and veracity, character and personality, and morals and integrity. They have been playing with the sentiments of Muslims for long and these assaults have become an unending row. **Therefore, in fact, this is one-sided war and only the aggressor can put an end to it.** And it needs not very deep knowledge of psychology to

appreciate that so long as this one-sided war continues it is impossible even to think of any prospects for the development of real goodwill and amity.

This, however, is not the only cause of grievance for Muslims. They are deeply pained to see that the overall attitude of Western people towards Muslim history, religion and culture is not only unsympathetic but positively hostile. They often outstep the limits of academic criticism and in an attempt to paint the Muslims black, resort to assertions, which it would be only too mild to call 'intolerant'. They have even intentionally been misrepresenting us and have not hesitated to attribute to us things that are **totally false and fabricated**. Innumerable examples could be cited to substantiate this contention ; some are to be found in the present booklet too. Whenever there is scope for two interpretations of any thing in our religion and culture or in the lives of our heroes and religious leaders the usual course for Western writers is to try their level best to give the worst meaning to it and to adopt the darkest possible view, however farfetched and unwarranted. Obviously enough, this attitude of unending and un-mitigated hostility cannot but breed a bitter reaction.

Another manifestation of this hostility, which the learned author has rightly pointed out, is that **every attempt at the revival and renaissance of Islam is taken in the West with a strange feeling of alarm and as**

a danger signal, while any news of desertion of, or even revolt against, Islamic teachings and values in any Muslim country, is, for them, a most welcome news. To them, the most respectable and deserving of highest praise and encouragement are those Muslims who adopt western culture, cherish western values of life and imitate western way of life, howsoever Muslims may dislike and hate such renegades, while those working for the reconstruction of life and society in any Muslim country on the real values of Islam deserve unequivocal condemnation. This again is a clear manifestation of their hatred towards Islam and it is unfortunate that, in this respect, most of the Westerners go to the extent of even disregarding their own standard of values. If, for instance, in a Muslim country, a secularist despot tries to crush a renaissance movement of Islam and tramples underfoot all the values of democracy, tolerance, fairplay, and justice, *the West would only come forward to shower its blessing and applause upon him, just for the reason that all this was done to arrest the revival of Islam.* And, in this respect, they do not even hesitate to prefer a dictatorial regime and become a party in crushing the values of democracy and thus, in implanting despotism.

We would only like our Western friends to reconsider as to how far this attitude of theirs is justifiable and what good results they expect it to produce ?

Labore :

ABUL A'LA MAUDUDI

Chapter One

Need of the Hour

NEVER in the long range of human history the need of developing better understanding between the people of different regions, races and cultures was as great as it is today. Never the call was so pressing as it has become now.

Our century has witnessed a paramount technological revolution. The world today finds itself one single unit. Science and technology have overcome the barriers of space and time. Distance has been amazingly shortened and the world is more and more shrinking into a city. Economic, social and political phenomena are increasingly imposing upon us the obligation to consider this world as one unit. Different currencies have been linked together ; commerce and trade have become international, economic development has become a corporate venture, and political fortunes have become inter-dependent. No country can afford to live all alone. All this has happened. But despite this technological unity, a real understanding of the minds and souls of different peoples, of the aims and objectives of different ideo-

logies, of the tone and temper of various cultures, has not yet fully developed: rather this aspect has mostly been neglected. There exists an unfortunate disharmony between the growth of techniques on the one hand and of the human consciousness of world fraternity on the other. Political and economic alignments are multiplying everyday. But they are not being supplemented by a correct understanding and proper appreciation of one system of thought by another. True human-relationship is still far off.

Such a disharmony is out of tune with the needs and spirit of our age and must be brought to an end if humanity is to grow and prosper and attain the highest pinnacles of peace and glory. The need of closer contact between different peoples of the world, with a view to sympathetically understand each is perhaps the greatest and most pressing need of our time. It is quite obvious that the importance of studying different cultures was never insignificant, but in our age it has assumed greater importance. It has become an imperative necessity—particularly in the case of the Islamic culture.

Muslims constitute one-fifth of the entire human race. The Muslim world straddles over vast regions of the continents of Asia and Africa. This region has been the cradle of a large number of higher civilizations. Economically its potential is great. Politically it is "the great third of the world." And above all it is the upholder of a great ideology—Islam.

For long Islam has been misunderstood and misinterpreted in the West. It is one of the most queer facts of history that despite the annihilation of space and time, despite West's stupendous strides in quest of knowledge and learning, despite the centuries of contact between the world of Islam and the West, Islam is perhaps the least known and the most misunderstood religion in the West.

Now there are some very welcome stirrings in the West. The realisation of this urgent need is dawning upon the leaders of thought and action. There are moves to develop correct understanding between Islam and the West. This is a very pleasant mission ; but, the objective cannot be achieved without a proper understanding of the causes of conflict and distrust which have separated the two. Hasty generalisations, superficial exchanges of courtesies and artificial merry-makings can yield no good. A sincere attempt to find out the causes of the discontent must be made to open up the new vistas of co-operation and concord. And we propose to discuss some aspects of this problem in these pages.

Thoughts on Present Discontent

PROF. A. J. ARBERRY, in a fit of disguised fury, writes :

"The events of 25 January 1952, Cairo's 'Black Saturday', brought home to many, who were hitherto content to minimise the conflict between Islam and the West, that a situation existed fraught with the most serious danger. It is strange that the portents should have been so comfortably disregarded. The warning signals have been flying for a long time. When Iqbal wrote, 'Believe me Europe today is the greatest hinderance in the way of man's ethical advancement,' he was not saying anything that he had not said before, and he was not seeking merely to provoke and shock ; neither was he a solitary voice crying in the wilderness. The present threats to the peace and a security of the world are certainly not few : among those threats there are not many greater than the revival lately of that

spirit of irreconcilable hostility which found its most dramatic and bloody expression in the Crusades."¹

Ignoring the wrath and fury that is seething between the lines, we would agree that the problem of the relationship of Islam and the modern West is a complex one and we must avoid "oversimplification", which is according to the learned Professor, "perhaps the besetting in of the twentieth century." For this, we shall have to go a little deeper into the issue and peep beneath the turbulent surface.

The contact between Islam and the West, during the last five centuries, has not occurred in a pleasant atmosphere. On the whole, Muslims were in a disadvantageous position and the treatment which they have received at the hands of the surging forces of the West has left a bitter tale behind. It is this peculiar background which animates the atmosphere and unless the fog and mist that fill the air are dissipated, it is a hope against hope to think that the relationship can be *really* bettered. A cursory glance over some of the factors which have made the situation what it is, would be instructive.

(i) Imperialism

The pioneers of the West came to the world of Islam on a "civilizing mission". In the first wave of

1. *The Mysteries of Selflessness*—Preface, John Murray, Albemarle Street, London (1953), p. xiii.

the contact they came as merchants and missionaries. And in the final surge, they wielded the arms and conquered these lands as the "ambassadors of a higher civilization." Muslim countries were chained down to slavery and Western imperialism firmly established itself in these lands. Muslims were the worst sufferers under this political hegemony of the West. Arnold Toynbee rightly says :

"In the encounter between the world and the West that has been going on by now for four or five hundred years, the world, not the West, is the party that, up to now, has had the significant experience. It has not been the West that has been hit by the world ; it is the world that has been hit—and hit hardly by the West. The West (the world will say) has been the arch-aggressor of modern times. And certainly the world's judgment on the West does seem to be justified over a period of about four and a half centuries ending in 1950."²

And Professor Phillip K. Hitti, about the very recent past, observes :

"Unfortunately during the last decade or two, in particular, the impact of the West has not been all for the good. There is a striking contrast between the humanitarian

2. Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West* (Reith Lectures), pp. 1-4.

ideas professed by Western missionaries, teachers, and preachers, and the disregard of human values by European and American politicians and warriors ; a disparity between word and deed ; an over-emphasis on economic and nationalistic values. The behaviour of the so-called advanced nations during the last two wars waged on a scale unknown in history ; the ability of Western man to let loose these diabolic forces which are the product of his science and his machine and which now threaten the world with destruction ; and, with particular relation to the Near East, the handling of the Palestine problem by America, England, France and other nations—all these have worked together to disillusion the man of the Near East who has been trying to establish an intellectual rapprochement with the West. It is these actions of the West which alienate him and shake his belief in the character of the Western man and his morality on both the private and the public levels."³

(ii) Economic Exploitation

The economic exploitation of the Muslim world by the West is another factor responsible for the pre-

3. *Current Trends in Islam* by Phillip K. Hitti in *Islam in the Modern World*. The Middle East Institute, Washington, pp. 7-8.

sent discontentment. Generally the East was exploited and squeezed white, but Muslims were, in particular, the target of attack and the butt of exploitation. As the political power in most of the Eastern countries was taken from the Muslims, every attempt was made to reduce them to the hectic status of the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. About India this is what Sir W. W. Hunter admits :

"It was not that Musalmans were inferior to Hindus. It was British rule that had descended upon them as blight."⁴

"In fact, there is now scarcely a Government office in Calcutta in which a Muhammedan can hope for any post above the rank of a porter, messenger, 'filler of ink-pots' and 'mender of pens'."

"A hundred and seventy years ago, it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich."⁵

The same is, more or less, true of the entire Muslim world and this naked exploitation of the Muslim lands has sowed the seeds of hatred and distrust over the Western man. All students of sociology know that when this dissatisfaction is

4. *The Indian Musalmans* by Sir W. W. Hunter, p. 162.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

engendered it does not remain in very reasonable confines—it generates emotional and psychological forces which vitiate the entire atmosphere.

(iii) Western Education

These rulers of the Muslim world, gave top priority to the introduction of their system of education in this country and made the new generations imbibe their ideas and their culture. Lord Macaulay introduced the new system of education in India and declared its objective in the following words :

“We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect.”

This system was introduced and it brought about an intellectual and cultural assassination of the Muslims. Again we would like to refer to Sir W. W. Hunter, who has studied the results of this innovation. He says :

“The truth is that our system of public instruction is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirements, and hateful of the religion, of the Musalmans...It is therefore any wonder (to repeat the words of Indian Statesman’ who has studied the subject most deeply) that the Musalmans have held aloof from a system which has made no

concession to their prejudices, made no provision for what they esteemed their necessities ; which was in its nature unavoidably antagonistic to their interests and at variance with all their social traditions."

This kind of education was introduced throughout the Muslim world and although Muslims willy-nilly sought education in these institutions, they had a deep realisation that this education was but a conspiracy against their faith, religion and culture. This further deepened their discontent with the West and at last the discontent burst into the revolt of the intelligentsia against the West.

(iv) Cultural Dominance

Every endeavour was made by the dominant power to cut the people from their cultural moorings and make them adopt the modern Western culture. Muslims have an ideology of their own. They have their own history and culture. The attempt to thrust the Western culture down the throats of the Muslim people gave birth to a schism in the Muslim society. This schism was fanned into a wide-spread conflict by the ruling powers. Those who revolted against their traditions were called "modern" and "progressive" and those who refused to submit to the cultural onslaughts of the West, they were called the 'vehicles of conservatism and retrogression.' Through this tactic the dominant powers succeeded in creating a small satellite of Western culture in

the Muslim society but it also gave birth to tremendous forces of anti-Westernism, which did not always remain within reasonable limits. Every action has an equal reaction. And this reaction filled the Muslim masses with a feeling of wrath and anger.

(v) Imposition of Christianity

Alongwith these factors of ill-will came the pronouncements of conquering the East for Christianity. The Chairman of the Directors of the East India Company, Mr. Mangles, declared in the House of Commons :

"Providence has entrusted the extensive Empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength that there may be no dilatoriness on any account in continuing in the country the grand work of making all India Christian."⁶

And Prime Minister Lord Palmerstone boldly announced that :

"Perhaps it might be our lot to confer on the countless millions of India a higher and nobler gift (Christianity) than any mere human knowledge."⁷

These declarations were followed by contingent after contingent of missionaries, who "at once saw

6. Quoted by Savarker in *War of Independence*, p. 55.

7. *Ibid.*

their opportunities" and embarked upon the project what C. H. Phillips called, "The cure of darkness is light !" Rev. Kennedy wrote :

"Whatever misfortune come on us as long as our Empire in India continues, so long let us not forget that our chief work is the propagation of Christianity in the land. Until Hindustan from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, embrace the religion of Christ, and until it condemns the Hindu and the Muslim religions, our efforts must continue persistently. For this work we must make all the efforts we can and use all the power and all the authority in our hands; and continuous and unceasing efforts must be kept on until India becomes a magnificent nation, the bulwark of Christianity in the East !"⁸

And although they could not succeed in converting the mass of the people to their religion, they did achieve the success of driving a large number of educated Muslims away from Islamic culture and into the lap of imperialism. And it is most unfortunate that the Missions delighted in doing at least this 'service' to their holy cause. Mr. Chatalier wrote in a special missionary supplement of his French magazine '*Le Monde Mussalman*' :

"No doubt our missionaries have failed so far indirectly undermining the faith of

8. Quoted by Savarker in *War of Independence*, p. 56.

the Muslims. This end can be achieved only by the propagation of ideas through the medium of languages. Through the spread of these languages the world of Islam could be brought in contact with European Press and paths would be paved for the material progress of the Muslims. Thus, the missionary organisations would realize their goal of destroying Islamic religious concepts which so far have preserved their identity and strength in isolation and separatism."

The writer added :

"The political break-up of the world of Islam will open the way to Europe's civilizing mission. It is inevitable that the Muslims will degenerate politically, and before long the world of Islam will become like a city surrounded by European barbed-wire entanglements."

He also added :

"It is not to be expected that the Muslims in general would be able to bring forth new positive attitudes and new social qualities once they have given up their present attitudes and qualities. With the weakening of their belief in Islam, decay and disintegration are bound to set in : and when this decay and this disintegration spreads

throughout the world of Islam, the religious spirit of the Muslims will be entirely uprooted and will never be able to re-emerge in a new form."⁹

(vi) Attack on Islam

The above mentioned movements were supplemented by an attack on Islam. And the attack came in its worst form. Those who had established high standard of scholarship and intellectual objectivity became most subjective and virulent in their attack on Islam. Calumnies and fabrications were hurled upon Islam—and Muslims. Fictitious stories were given currency. For a long period of time this kind of literature filled the arena. This was, and is, to say the truth, adding insult to the injury. As this thing came, not from the politicians or the propagandists, but from the scholars, it had very far-reaching effects upon the attitudes of the Muslim world. And despite the decline of the forces of imperialism, the literary onslaughts on Islam, which at times even becomes literary cannibalism, continue. Some sober orientalisks, have in the recent past tried to adopt a sympathetic approach, but on the whole the situation is such that it deserves very close study and careful attention. For in the midst of a venomous atmosphere and a wide cleavage in basic approaches,

9. Quoted by Saeed Ramadhan in an article published in *The Al-Muslimoon*, Damascus; and *The Voice of Islam*, Karachi, (Oct. 1957).

the relationship between Islam and the West cannot be cemented. An honourable understanding can occur only when the causes of the discontent are reasonably eliminated. And in the next section we propose to present a few glimpses from the literature which is adding fuel to the fires of distrust, dissatisfaction and discontent.

Chapter Three

Western Scholars on Islam

THERE can be no two opinions about the need and importance of better understanding between the peoples of the East and the West. It is right that east is east and west is west, but the twain must meet and understand each other. The catastrophe which stares us in the face is the result of the folly that made the wit of the one,¹⁰ the wisdom of the many.

It is a fact that Islam, the religion of 500 million people, is the most misunderstood religion in the West. Western authors, who otherwise strain their every nerve in ascertaining the facts in other realms of learning accept even those things about Islam which do not enjoy slightest authenticity. Regarding Islam their standards of judgement become, lax and their spirit of scientific investigation evaporates into the air. This situation is very baffling indeed.

A critical study of the western literature on Islam shows that *ignorance* and *prejudice* both have

10. Rudyard Kipling: 'East is east and West is west
And never the twain shall meet.'

corrupted an otherwise very wholesome effort to study this religion. It seems that the bitter legacy of the Crusades is still hunting the intellectuals. The writers of the post-Crusade era threw a lot of filth and rubbish on Islam and sowed the seeds of enmity and hatred. With the passage of time the seeds have grown into mighty trees and even today the students of world religions are garnering its bitter fruits. True, that during the last years, a change of attitude has occurred in some quarters. Dr. T. W. Arnold, Professor A. J. Arberry, Professor A. R. H. Gibb, Dr. W. Montgomery Watt have adopted a somewhat impartial and sympathetic attitude towards Islam. We heartily welcome this change, but despite it, the general atmosphere still abounds with ignorance and prejudice and the background is manifesting itself even in the writings of some very sober writers. Real teachings of Islam are still foreign to the West. Informations about past and the present are faulty and coloured. And the general attitude is anything but sympathetic and realistic.¹¹

It must be realised by all the saner elements that co-operation can be developed only through

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11. James A. Michner, writing in the *Readers Digest* refers to an incident about a distinguished Muslim who recently visited United States. He was shown a mosaic in New York Church and was told: "See I we appreciate your prophet too." But in the mosaic, Jesus, Moses and Buddha were shown seeking men's souls with reason and light while Muhammad was shown with a sword, offering conversion or death. The guest was shown a film about the crusades in which Muslims were depicted as 'illiterate brutes.'

unprejudiced appreciation of one another's viewpoint. If the West persists in its bigoted approach, and then hopes that better results could be achieved, then the attempt is foredoomed to failure.

Surveying the situation from this viewpoint we find that it is not pleasant. To substantiate our point we present extracts from the writings of some leading western scholars and present them without any comments. We are only arranging them under proper heads so that the reader may easily understand the weaknesses of the western approach to Islam.

(i) Undervaluation of Islam's Debt

For a long time the Western scholars refused to acknowledge the real contribution of Islam to science and culture. This thing is now admitted by most of the leading scholars and orientalists. William Drapper writes :

"I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mohammedans. Surely they cannot be much longer hidden. Injustice founded on religious rancour and national conceit cannot be perpetuated for ever."

Professor A. J. Arberry says :

"Europe for centuries was unfair to Islam, in the sense that the positive achievements of Muslim civilization were over-

looked, scholarship being the handmaid of religious partisanship."¹²

These scholars are of the opinion that now that partisan attitude has perished. But that is not the fact. J. B. Trend writes in *The Legacy of Islam* :

"The modern Spanish school of scientific historians is not favourably disposed towards the legacy of Islam. A hundred years ago the importance of 'the Moors in Spain' was unduly exaggerated; today the subject is out of fashion among serious workers and apt to be despised by intelligent readers. This attitude may be regrettable, but there are reasons for it, and not all of them are bad reasons."¹³

Even the leading scientist, Sir James Jeans, holds the view that the Arabs were mere "curators of the scientific knowledge". "They excelled", he writes, "as translators, commentators and writers of treatises, and their aim was not so much to increase knowledge as to sweep all existing knowledge into their empire."¹⁴ Their original contribution is outright denied by this savant of science. And Professor Phillip K. Hitti tries to minimise the appeal, role and culture of Islam by saying that :

12. *Mysteries of Selflessness*, p. xiv.

13. *The Legacy of Islam* edited by T. W. Arnold and Alfred Guillaume. Chapter I.

14. *The Growth of Physical Science* by Sir James Jeans. Cambridge University Press (1951), p. 105.

"The Islam which conquered the northern region was not the Islamic religion but the Islamic State. The Arabian burst forth upon an unsuspecting world as members of a national theocracy. It was Arabianism and not Mohammedanism that triumphed first. Not until the second and third centuries of the Muslim era did the bulk of the people in Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia profess the religion of Mohammad. And when they were converted the people turned primarily because of self interest—to escape tribute and seek identification with the ruling class. As for Islam as a culture, it developed slowly after the military conquest on a substratum composed of the core and heritage of the Syro-Aramaean, Persian and Hellenistic civilization which had preceded. With Islam the Near Orient not only recaptured the whole of its former political domain but regained in the realm of culture its ancient intellectual pre-eminence,"¹⁵

(ii) Hatred, Enmity and Bias

From the very beginning the West has nurtured an unexplicable hatred and enmity towards Islam, Dozy says that Christians :

15. *History of the Arabs* by Phillip K. Hitti. Macmillan and Co., London, fifth edition 1951, pp. 145-146.

"Developed an instructive hatred for the Mussalmans, and entertained thoroughly false ideas about Mohammed and the doctrines he preached. Living in the midst of the Arabs, nothing was more easy than to instruct themselves on the subject: but they refused obstinately to go to the sources which could be found at their doors, and were satisfied with believing and repeating all the absurd fables which they retailed about the Prophet of Mecca."¹⁶ And Sir Denison Ross admits:

"For many centuries the acquaintance which the majority of Europeans possessed of Muhammadanism was based almost entirely on distorted reports of fanatical Christians, which led to the dissemination of a multitude of gross calumnies: What was good in Muhammadanism was entirely ignored, and what was not good in the eyes of Europe was exaggerated or misinterpreted."

Muslims were called by the western writers, "Infidels", "Miscreants", "Paynims", "Pagans", "Heathens", "Heathen bounds", "Enemies of God", "Antichrist", "Gentiles", "Vandals" and what not. H. M. K. Shairani writes¹⁷:

16. Quoted by Amir Ali in *A Short History of Saracens*, p. 487.

17. H. M. K. Shairani in his appendix to Dr. Henry Stubbe's *Rise and Progress of Mahometanism*, pp. 225-227.

"There are several phases through which the history of Mohammed has passed in Europe. The first idea that Christians formed of the Prophet was, that he was the God of the Saracens, to whom divine honours were accorded. In the labyrinth of popular fancy, while the title of True God was applied to Jesus Christ, Mohammed received the appellation of the False God. It was commonly believed that he was worshipped in the form of an idol. *The History of Charles the Great*, by Bishop Turpin, the source of so many songs and romances, can be cited as a very early work which gives us a description of this idol. The author tells us that the idol Mohammed, which the Saracens worshipped, was made by Mahomet himself, in his lifetime; and that, by the help of a legion of devils, it was by magic art endued with such irresistible strength that it could not be broken. A singular antipathy towards the Christians possessed this idol, and through this they were exposed to imminent danger if they ventured to approach it. Even the birds of the air, it is said, were struck dead if they happened to alight upon it."

Then Shairani proceeds:

"The method with which the worship

of Mahound is conducted so closely resembles contemporary Catholic services, that we need not detail it here. Two or three observations may suffice. It is pretty certain that the Saracens prayed in Latin; they also allowed music in their services and sang hymns. At the close of the service, the priest gave his benison, and exhorted the congregation to stand fast in the 'Grace of Mahound'; then he showed them the sacred relics of Mahound, a neck bone, an eye-lid, and so on.

"The attributes and the office of Mahound next demand our attention. In the first place he is a God, a great God, Almighty God. He is also described as 'St. Mahoun,' 'Lord Mathoun,' 'Sir Mahoun.' He is a 'Glorious Ghost,' helps the heathens, witches and rules over them, and receives their souls when they die. It appears that the mode of Christian worship grieves him; he is jealous of Christ's Godhead; hence the heathens fight with the Christians. They carry his image or pictures on their crest. The Christians, on their part, look upon him as 'Sorry Mahound,' 'Mad Mahound,' and last of all, 'False Mahound.'

"The fact is not recorded, but belief is current that Mahound also suffered crucifix-

ion. 'By the blood of Mahound,' 'By the blood that Mahound bled,' or 'By the precious blood of Mahound,' is the common cry of all Paynims, whether Herod, the Sowdone or Babylon, the Amyral, or Saladin. The adjuration 'by Mahound' is so frequent that, in several romances, it is exclusively appropriated for this purpose. The following verses, however, contained curious variations :

'By Mahound's bones! had the wretches
tarried,
Their necks without heads they should have
carried!
Yea, by Mahound's nose! might I have
patted them,
In twenty gobbets I should have squatted
them.'

"For a long time, it appears, Mahound alone fulfilled the duties of Godhead, and had no partner or associate. All early writings confirm this opinion, but the fourteenth century romance literature introduced new changes in this belief. The term Saracen, which was sometimes applied to the heathens of the West, perhaps gave rise to a confusion in the mind of the romancers, which led to the coupling of Mahound with Apollo or Termagant.

'And there-for, swete fader myn,
 Forsake Mahoun and Appolyn !
 And Termagant, my God so bright.'

"A further development was due to trinitarian views, the persons of the Saracenic trinity being Mahound, Appolyn, and Termagant, See *Song of Roland*, ed. J. Crossland, pp. 130, 131, 154, and 164, London, 1907. Besides these three chief Gods, a number of other gods are mentioned :

'With sterne strokes and with grete,
 On Jovyn and Plotoun ;
 On Astrot and sire Jovin,
 On Tirmagaunt and Appolin,
 He brak hem scolle and croun ;
 On Tirmagaunt, that was heore brother,
 He lasts to lyme hole with other,
 He on his lord seynt Mahoum.'

"Although Charles the Great did not destroy the idol Mahomet, possibly owing to the fear of a legion of devils, there are other Christian knights who have been more fortunate in this iconoclastic exploit ; Roland and his peers have achieved this fame, and Sir Bevis of Hampton is another famous knight who has been equally successful. The name of Rinaldo of Montalban can never be forgotten ; his daring Robbery of the golden idol of Mahomet has even been immortalised

in Don Quixote. In the romance of Ortnit we find that Alberich, a dwarf flung down the Moorish idols. Mahomet and Apollo, two enormous figures carved in stone.

"The historian, Matthew Paris commenting on a mournful letter received from the Holy Land, observes that the Christians, at time of the 'Fall of the Image of Mahomet at Mecca,' rejoiced greatly. They exulted in 'the fall of the image,' and to this exultation he attributes the fury of the 'Chrosmins,' and the misfortunes that befell the Christians in consequence.

"Bayle quotes from the *History of the Holy Wars*, by Father Mabilion, that Tancred found the Statue of Mahomet in the Mosque of Omar, seated on a high throne. Six strong men could lift it, and when he was informed that it was Mahomet, he made a very pathetic harangue to the idol, and cried out: 'It is this wicked Mahomet, who was the first Antichrist. If the Antichrist that is to come were now here with this, truly I would quickly have crushed him under my feet.'"

Similarly the leading poet-philosopher *Dante* places the Prophet of Islam as a heresiarch, in the inferno, and depicts a most despicable scene. The demons of hell tear the flesh off his body; devour it, and as soon as the wounds heal, renew the same

action. The Italian painter Orcagne includes him in the trio of the great despisers of all religions and paints him in the hell of the Campo Santo at Pisa.

Such filthy calumnies were hurled upon Islam and the Prophet of Islam. Although now the tone is not so bitter and the "facts" not so scandalising, the spirit persists unchecked. A few instances are given below.

W. G. Palgrave writes :

"No superiority, no distinction, no pre-eminence can be lawfully claimed in Islam by one creature over another in the utter equalisation of their unexceptional servitude and abasement. All are alike tools of one solitary Force, which employs them to crush or to benefit, to truth or error, to honour or shame, to happiness or misery, quite independently of their individual fitness, deserts or advantage and simply because He wills it and as He wills it."¹⁸

Professor Margoliouth in his *Life of the Prophet* portrays him as the "bandit mystic of Arabia". The two features that come up in his biography are his mysticism and brigandage, the latter of course being the primary one! He writes that one mode of acquiring a living is open to the very poorest, where there is impurity; and that is robbery," and adds that when persecuted by the Meccans he migrated

18. "Narrative of a Year's Journey Through Central and Eastern Arabia." Vol. I. p. 367.

to Medina "even then he expected to have to fall back on plundering their caravans." According to him at Medina the Prophet "was at the head of a robber community". There is no end to this kind of rubbish. Joseph¹⁹ Gaer in his well-read book : *How the Great Religions Began*, writes :

"In order to establish his power he organised an army.

"But to keep up an army it is necessary to have food and clothes and money. Where was he to get it ?

"Muhammad went out to the edge of the desert, wrapped himself up in a number of blankets against the chill of the evening, and meditated. As he sat there thinking of ways to support his army, he heard again the voice of the Angel Gabriel, calling :

"O thou who art wrapping, rise up and warn !"

"And Muhammad returned to his followers and told them that the Angel of God had come to him instructed him to go out and waylay the caravans carrying goods from Mecca to foreign lands. Muhammad and his followers went out plundering caravans. And whatever they plundered was

19. *How the Great Religions Began* by Joseph Gaer. A signet Key Book (1954), p. 205. The book has been highly applauded by Dr. W. Smith of McGill University, Canada.

divided equally among them. The success of their attacks on the caravans, Muhammad explained to his followers, proved that Allah was with him."

A. C. Bouquet, in his book *Comparative Religion* tells us that Christians and Jews regarded the Holy Prophet as "a nationalistic charlatan".²⁰ About the revelation and the way it was conveyed to the Prophet he says :

'If this story is not fiction, we may conjecture that occurrence of some neurotic obsessional seizure, of a type which is soothed and dissipated by normal sex experience."²¹

(iii) About the Quran

Because of this prejudice most of the Western writers refuse to call the Quran as the word of God, instead they use all force at their command to 'prove' that its author was Muhammad (peace be on him). Professor Margoliouth writes :

"The secret of the power exercised by the book, of course, lay in the mind which produced it. It was in fact, at first not a book, but a strong living voice, a kind of wild authoritative proclamation, a series of admonitions, promises, threats, and instructions addressed to turbulent and largely

20. *Comparative Religion* by Dr. A. C. Bouquet, Penguin Books. Fourth Revised Edition (1953), p. 267.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

hostile assemblies of untutored Arabs. As a book it was published after the Prophet's death. In Muhammad's lifetime there were only disjointed notes, speeches and the retentive memories of those who listened to them. To speak of the Koran is, therefore, practically the same as speaking of Muhammad."²²

He further says :

"The method followed by Muhammad in the promulgation of the Koran also requires to be treated with discrimination. From the first flash of prophetic inspiration which is clearly discernible in the earlier portions of the book, he, later on, frequently descended to deliberate inventions and artful rhetoric. He, in fact, accommodated his moral sense to the circumstances in which the *role* he had to play involved him."

Even a research scholar and a sympathetic writer²³ like Professor H. A. R. Gibb is led away on this point.²⁴ He writes :

"In the earliest period of his preaching Muhammad's utterances were delivered in a sinewy oracular style cast into short rhymed phrases, often obscure and sometimes pre-

22. For ready reference see A. J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran*, p. 15.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

24. H. A. R. Gibb in *Mohammedanism*. A Mentor Book (1955), pp. 36-37.

ceded by one or more oaths. This style is admittedly that of the ancient *kahins* or Arabian oracle-mongers, and it is not surprising that Muhammad's opponents should have charged him with being just another such *kahin*. For this and other reasons his style gradually loosened out into a simpler but still rhetorical prose; and as social denunciations and eschatological visions passed into historical narrative and that in turn at Medina into legislation and topical addresses, little was left of its original stylistic features but a loose rhyme or assonance marking the end of each verse now anything from ten to sixty words long.

"Carlyle's dictum on the Koran: 'It is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook, a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite. Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran' puts succinctly what must indeed be the first impression of any reader. But years of close study confirm his further judgement that in it 'there is a merit quite other than the literary one. If a book comes from the heart, it will contrive to reach other hearts; all art and authorcraft are of small account to that.' Though, to be sure, the question of literary merit is one not to be judged on a

priori grounds but in relation to the genius of the Arabic language ; and no man in fifteen hundred years has ever played on that deep-toned instrument with such power, such boldness, and such range of emotional effect as Muhammad did.

"In trying to trace the sources and development of the religious ideas expounded in the Koran (a question, be it remembered, not only meaningless but blasphemous in Muslim eyes), we are still confronted with many unsolved problems.' Earlier scholars postulated a Jewish source with some Christian additions. More recent research has conclusively proved that the main external influences (including the Old Testament materials) can be traced back to Syriac Christianity."

Arthur Jaffery in *The Quran as a Scripture* also offers the view that "The Quran is Muhammad's book" and tries to show that "Muhammad took over from his contemporaries a particular theory of the nature of Scriptures, and one particular form of the doctrine of a prophetic order with which scripture revelation was associated."

Most of the English translators of Quran approach the book with this preconceived bias. George Sale writes in his preliminary remarks to the translation :

"I imagine it almost needless either to make an apology, or to go about to prove it a Work of use as well as curiosity. They must have a mean opinion of the Christian Religion, or be but ill-grounded therein, *who can apprehend any change from so manifest a forgery . . .* But whatever use an impartial version of the Koran may be, in other respects it is absolutely necessary to undeceive those who, from the ignorant or unfair translations which have appeared, have entertained *too favourable* an opinion of the original, and also to enable us effectually to expose the imposture."

Rodwell and E. H. Palmer's approaches are not a bit different.

And this bias has even spurred the historian to shower sarcasm. Professor Hitti writes:

"Muhammad fearlessly continued to preach and by persuasion convert men from the worship of the many and false gods to that of one and true God, Allah. The revelations did not cease to "descend". He who had marvelled at the Jews and Christians having a "scripture" was determined that his people, too, should have one."²⁵

And worst of all, when some unbiased scholar tries to speak the other side, other learned orientalist

25. *History of the Arabs*, p. 114.

rush to his throat and appeal to him in the name of objectivity, higher criticism, and historiography, to echo their bias. Just one extract from a review²⁶ written by the leading orientalist. Dr. Alfred Guillaume, over Dr. W. Montgomery Watt's book *Muhammad at Mecca* would suffice to illustrate this point :

"It is when one comes to Dr. Watt's words on Muhammad's prophetic consciousness that one feels misgivings. He writes : 'We cannot with any plausibility imagine him *inserting verses of his own composition* (the italics are his) among those which came to him from his (supernatural) source independent of his consciousness (as he believed).' Now Dr. Watt claims to be writing as a historian ; consequently the reader has the right to expect that when a statement of this kind is made all the relevant historical evidence should be set forth. For instance one of Muhammad's wives is reported to have said that the revelations he received were remarkably in accord with his own wishes. Again the reader has the right to be told more of the philological evidence of the foreign informant's influence of which the Quraysh complained.* One can sympathize

26. *The Muslim World* (Quarterly) Hartford Seminary Foundation. January 1954, pp. 49-50.

*Cf. BSOAS., 1934. p. 599 f.

with the writer's desire to spare the feelings of Muslims but wou'd it not have been better to set out the evidence without any discussion of Muhammad's sincerity? The fact that the chapter Joseph is practically identical with a Jewish midrash was established beyond question by Geiger more than a century ago: it is also a historical fact that the Khawarij refused to admit that it was a divine revelation. Again, one is entitled to ask why, if the verses of the Qur'an were not Muhammad's own composition, did he drop the use of *saj'*, the style of the *kahins* and *sha'irs* as soon as he was accused of being one of them? Is it credible that the change was made apart from his own volition? Of course it is plain that the Qur'an contains much that is of the essence of divine truth and there is good ground for believing that Muhammad did from time to time have psychic experiences which he afterwards put into the haunting cadences of the Qur'an.

These are a few examples of the smouldering bias and enmity towards Islam. The examples can be multiplied beyond number. But for fear of loss of brevity we stop at these few examples.

(iv) Distortion, Misrepresentation and Wrong Information

Another painful fact that strikes us is the dis-

tortions, misrepresentations of facts, and wrong informations which are so often paraded by the Western writers and which on the one hand give rise to misapprehensions in the minds of the uninformed people and on the other breed, quite justifiably, dissatisfaction, anger and fury in the Muslim world. A few examples are given below :

"In Islam the relation of Allah to the world is such that not only all free will but all freedom in the exercise of the intellect is preposterous. God is so great and the character of His greatness is so pantheistically absolute that there is no room for the human. Hope perishes under the weight of His iron bondage and pessimism becomes the popular philosophy."²⁷

Professor Clark says :

"Islam saw God but not man ; saw the claims of Deity, but not the rights of humanity ; saw authority but failed to see freedom, therefore hardened into despotism, stiffened into formalism, sank into death."²⁸

Islamic history is the worst victim of this treatment. Dr. Joseph Schacht, despite all his learning and scholarship writes :

"The chieftains considered themselves bound only to Muhammad and after his death

27. *See Message of Mohammed*, by A. S. N. Wadia Dent and Sons Ltd., London, p. 44.

28. *Ibid.*

both the state and the religion were threatened with dissolution. Thereupon certain influential associates of the prophet succeeded in effecting the maintenance of the monarchical principle and under it one of them was chosen the first caliph; that is the successor to Muhammad in all the latter's functions except the specifically, prophetic. The political leaders succeeded in focussing the lust of the various tribes for booty upon a common goal, the holy war for the spread of Islam. The extensive development of the doctrine of jihad at an early period indicates that the spirit of battle was fostered at the expense of everything else."²⁹

Mr. Edward A. Ferman, in his *History and Conquest of the Saracens*, writes :

"To the pagan Arab, he was, the Apostle of God, the preacher of righteousness; to the Christian of the most corrupt church who still acknowledged Christ as his God and Saviour, he was of a truth the very Anti-Christ and his followers are justly branded by the new as infidels. The other point in which I said that Mahomet was blame-worthy was in endeavouring to establish a system beyond the limits of his own

29. Articles on Islam in *The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. VIII, p. 338.

country. We may feel certain that Mahomet began his career merely as the Prophet of Arabia and gradually persuaded himself that he was the Prophet of the whole world. . . . The result has been that a religious system adapted only for one age and country has been pressed upon the necks of all ages and the countries in which its votaries have been dominant, *Mahometanism is a national system which attempts to be universal and which most grievously fails in its attempt. The creed of Islam showed in far greater points who ill-suited it was to be transplanted beyond the limits of its native soil.*"³⁰

Even the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee commits a grievous folly and says something which is nothing short of gross misrepresentation. Toynbee writes :

"Islam, as an institution, has suffered throughout its history from the note of secularity which has been characteristic of it hitherto. In so far as this note of secularity has been a social blemish in the history of Islam, it must also be regarded as having been a personal misfortune in the career of Muhammad. The movement of Muhammad's lifework might have been something more

30. *History and the Conquest of Saracens* by Edward A. Freeman, pp. 151-152.

ethereal than Islam, as Islam has been and is, if only the Prophet's career had not taken this decisively political turn in its last chapter³¹ The historic development of Islam is a consequence of the fact that Muhammad's career in Muhammad's actual circumstances, developed quite differently. Instead of sealing his prophetic message with his blood by becoming Caesar's victim, it was Muhammad's ironic destiny to compromise and debase his prophetic message by becoming an Arabian Caesar himself³²

.....
 No doubt Muhammad reasoned with his conscience thus: and no doubt he was deceiving himself in yielding to his arguments; for, in the event, the temporal power with which the Arabian Prophet endowed—or encumbered—his Islam at this crucial point in his career has proved to be not a vehicle but a prison-house, which has cribbed and cabined and confined the spirit of Islam ever since."³³

The learned historian has failed to understand the real message of Islam and is looking upon the

31. *A study of History* by Arnold Toynbee, Oxford University Press (1951), Vol. III, p. 468.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 470.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 471.

problem from bigoted Christian view and the result is the strange phenomenon which he has produced :

Professor A. J. Arberry's views on *Sunnah* do not correctly present the position of Islam. He writes:

“To revert now to Muslim religious thought, we should expect to find these same qualities of imagination and literalism displayed in the development of the theological system and its social applications. We do, in fact, see it very clearly in the interpretation of the Koran; but a simpler example will be found in the treatment of the person, acts, and sayings of Muhammad. Under the impulse of veneration for the Prophet and for his office, the religious imagination begins to elaborate its conception of what a Prophet should be—sinless, for example, and endowed with miraculous powers; and it progressively raises its standards, literalism obediently toils up behind it, producing out of the stores of tradition and by interpretation of Koranic verses the evidences and proofs required to consolidate the concept as a theological dogma. The religious imagination, not content with accepting the inspiration of the Koran, insists that the inspiration of the Prophet cannot end there; this would be to allow too much liability to err. In all that he said

and did he must be : at least tacitly, inspired, and every action must be capable of serving as the model for human action in the same sphere. The scholars, intent on expanding the doctrinal and legal systems based on the Koran and needing for these purposes the additional materials supplied by the tradition, formally incorporate it in the theological structure as a second infallible source. Then they build up a vast and intricate science by which spurious traditions can be detected and rejected and the accepted traditions can be classified in categories of "good", "less good," and "weak".³⁴

Dr. Wilfred C. Smith out-does all others when he offers the following definitions of 'Muslim' and 'Islam' which are given after the moving sermon : "A scientific study of religion waits upon many things, of which one is a clear definition of its terms."

"Muslim : any person who calls himself a Muslim."

"Islam : the religion of the Muslims."

He further elucidates :

"The definition of 'Islam' is more revolutionary than it sounds. For instance, it does not prejudice the question whether Islam is always identical. In fact, especially

34. *Modern Trends in Islam* by H. A. R. Gibb, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, (1945) pp. 8-9.

in an individualist society, one man's religion is hardly likely to be the replica of another man's. More broadly, as one group faces another set, differing perhaps radically in time, place, and social status, it is not unnatural and surprising that one 'Islam,' the religion of the Muslims in the one case, should be different from another 'Islam,' the religion of the other Muslims in the other case."³⁵

A leading German orientalist, Professor Brockelmann, who has died only very recently, writes in his *History of the Muslim Peoples* that "Arabs are selfish and self-centered. This is admitted in the *Ahadith* and the Holy Prophet permitted them to pray in the following way :³⁶

"O Lord ! Shower thy mercy upon me and upon Prophet Muhammad and bestow it not to anyone else."

This is a sheer distortion which has totally changed the meaning of the *hadith*.³⁷

35. *Modern Islam in India*, by Wilfred C. Smith, Victor Gollanar Ltd., London (1946), pp. 304-305.

36. *Vide* an article published in the *Chiragh-e-Rah*, Karachi, (Dec. 1958).

37. Now this is a sheer distortion, for the event is about a beduin and not the Arab in general and then in the *Hadith*, it is narrated that a beduin was praying in this way. When the Holy Prophet listened to it he asked him not to say the words (i.e., bestow it not to anyone else) and instructed the man not to limit and narrow down something that was very wide (لقد تبجرت واسعاً).

The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* also presents queer interpretations and distortions.

In the article on *Hazrat Aisha*³⁸ it says :

"Almost every intrigue was inspired by her . . . and she doubtless had a hand in the insurrection against that caliph (Uthman). But when Uthman was besieged in his palace Aisha was not at Medina but *had prudently gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca.*" The article calls Ali "*her mortal enemy.*"

About Caliph Omer³⁹ the *Encyclopaedia* says :

"The ingenious theory put forward by Lammens about the 'triumvirate Abu Bakr, Omer, Abu Obaida . . . Al-Djarrah', these three individuals united by a bond of intimate friendship are said to have dominated and so to speak monopolised the authority of the Prophet, controlling him either by direct action or through his wives (Aisha bin Abu Bakr and Hafsa bin Omer) *may be to some extent correct* but should not be pushed too far."

It is further said :

" and it is also to him that a series of ordinances goes back, religious as well as civil and penal—the era of Hidjra, the *punishment of drunkenness and stoning as*

38. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, p. 217.

39. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 248-251.

punishment for adultery, in connection with the last it looks as if he did not hesitate to interpolate a verse in the text of the Kuran."

The Encyclopaedia speaks of the Quran in this vein :

"It is the weakest part of the Kuran in which Muhammad's imagination apparently became exhausted, and he was content with tiresome repetitions of his earlier tales and especially with the tale of the prophets."

In the article on 'Maawiah' it is said :

"Here he gained insight into the workings of the new regime and learned to know the men with whom he was later to work or struggle : the autocratic Omer, presumptuous Ali, a whole crowd of ambitious people like Talha, Zubair and Aisha."

About *Musah bin Al-Zubair* it is written :

"Handsome, chivalrous, generous to the most foolish prodigy, he resembled his elder brother Abd Allah and the family of the Zubairids only in his tyranny and in his fits of severity in exacting punishment which bordered on barbarity."

In the article on *Imam Hussain* it is said that the events :

"Were to prove the existence in the son of the same indecision and the same lack of intelligence that had been the ruin

of his father."

This is the tone and temper of some of the writings of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

Professor Hitti's *History of Arabs* also abounds in such mistakes and distortions. To refer only to a few :

He begins the chapter on Islam by this insinuation—

"It (Islam) has such close affinities with both (Judaism and Christianity), however, that in the conception of many medieval European and oriental Christians it stood as a heretic Christian sect rather than a distinct religion. In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante consigns Muhammad to one of the lower hells with all those 'sowers of scandals and schism'. *Gradually Islam developed into an independent and distinct system of belief. The Kabah and Quraiysh were the determining factors in this new orientation.*"⁴⁰

About the right-guided caliphs he writes :

"The first party triumphed. The aged and pious Abu-Bakr, a father-in-law of the Prophet, and one of the first three or four to believe in him, received the oath of allegiance from the assembled chiefs, *probably in accordance with a previously arranged scheme between himself, 'Umer ibn-al Khattab*

40. *History of the Arabs*, p. 128.

and abu-'Ubaydah ibn-al-Jarrah—the triumvirate who presided over the destinies of infant Islam.”⁴¹

The author alleges that the famous companion al-Zubair had a dispute on Caliphate with 'Ali.⁴² In the case of Ibn-al-Muqaffa⁴³ he writes :

“a Zoroastrian convert to Islam whose suspect orthodoxy brought about his death by fire.”

This insinuation has been made despite the fact known to all students of Islamic history that Ibne-Muqaffa was put to death for betraying the caliph by leaking out the contents of a treaty which was written by him. And our author does not even hesitate to say, while discussing the prevalence of the use of drinks and intoxicants that the Prophet himself used *Nabidh*.⁴⁴ Now what relation has the *nabidh* which the Holy Prophet used to the intoxicants which were taken by the latter wealthy and corrupt people—only a leading orientalist can explain. Our learned historian also tells us that :

“Prohibition, one of the distinctive features of Muslim religion, did no more prohibit them than did the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution of the

41. *History of the Arabs*, p. 140.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 337.

United States."⁴⁵

This is how he depicts the holy cities of the Muslims :

"With this increased flow of wealth the two Holy Cities became less holy. They developed into a centre of worldly pleasure and gaiety and a home of secular Arab music and song. In Makkah was established a clubhouse patronised by the guests To al-Madinah Persian and Byzantine slave songstresses flocked in increasing numbers Houses of ill-repute flourished in al-Madinah and were patronised by no less a poet than al-Farazdaq of national fame. As these female slaves sang and played soft melodies for the entertainment of their wealthy masters and guests, the latter, attired in colourful robes, reclined on square mattresses or cushions while they inhaled the perfume of burning spices and sipped from silver goblets the ruddy wines of Syria."⁴⁶

And all this on what authority ? On the authority of *Kitab-ul-Aghani* which is not a book of history nor a record of that what happened but a collection of folk-lore, stories, tell-tales and the like and about which even the author himself admits that :

45. *History of the Arabs*, p. 337.

46. *Ibid.*, 237.

"Most of our information about the lighter side of the Caliph's lives comes from *Aghani*, primarily a literary work, and similar books, which should not be taken too literally. *Aghani*, Vol. I, p. 3 gives this criterion for the choice of date: 'elegance that pleases the onlookers and entertains the hearers.'⁴⁷

Throughout the book—and not of this book alone, but most of the history books written by Western authors—this kind of rubbish is presented without the least qualm of conscience. We wonder why the Western scholars, who have established in different fields very high standards of criticism and authenticity, when they come to Islam, do not remain adhered to those standards. As a result of this they sometimes say things that are ridiculous and this pains those serious students who hold a good opinion about the labours and contributions of the leading orientalists. Look for instance to Professor Alfred Guillaume, leading and respectable orientalist, whose devotion and sincere efforts in the field of learning is beyond any shadow of doubt and whose services in the cause of promoting better understanding about Islam must be gratefully acknowledged. But it is most unfortunate that he too has not been very careful in checking the contents of his book *Islam* published in the Pelican Series. He writes:

47. *History of the Arabs*, p. 227.

"A woman in Islam cannot sue for divorce on any grounds."⁴⁸

Can anything be more farther from truth? His observations in the chapter "Islam Today" are most unfortunate and quite baseless. He is of the view that modernist movement in Islam has gained momentum in the last century. In the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent the movement for Islamic revival has produced four great leaders of thought. First of them was Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan. "He was followed by Syed Amir Ali, a Shiaite, whose book, *The Spirit of Islam*, is one of the most widely read books in many Muslim countries." One paragraph has been devoted to Sir Sayyed while one and a half page has been given to Syed Amir Ali. "The next outstanding figure in Islam is Sir Muhammad Iqbal." Dr. Iqbal gets three pages. "And now", writes the learned author, "let us turn to the immediate present."⁴⁹ And he starts discussing the mind and thoughts of Shaykh Muhammad Ashraf and devotes more than nine pages to the thought and role of 'Shaykh Muhammad Ashraf' in the making of the current Islamic awakening. This is really funny and amusing. Who is this Shaykh Muhammad Ashraf? Need we tell that no other than a printer and publisher of Lahore, who is not the author of even one book.

48. *Islam* by Alfred Guillaume, Penguin Books (1954), p. 71.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

(v) The New Line of Attack :

J. M. Rodwell in his translation of the Quran suggested a new line of attack upon him. He wrote :

"A line of argument to be adopted by a Christian missionary in dealing with a Muhammedan should be, not to attack Islam as a mass of error, but to show that it contains fragments of disjointed truth—that it is based upon Christianity and Judaism partially understood—especially upon the latter, without any appreciation of its typical character pointing to Christianity as a final dispensation."⁵⁰

This line of argumentation has become very popular with our Western scholars,

Professor A. S. Tritton writes :

"The religion which Muhammad preached was eclectic but that does not hinder it from being a real religion. His debt to the Bible is obvious to anyone who has eyes to see ; it may be that his religious life was started by suggestions received from outside the Arab circle of ideas. He took stories from both Testaments to illustrate and enforce his ideas about God. Providence and the Last Judgement. Man being what he is no one can invent a new religion entirely unlike those which have gone before.

50. In Preface, p. xxii.

The Koran often mentions prayers at night ; they cannot be separated from the nocturnal services of the monasteries. One cannot escape the impression that Muhammad purposely made observances of his religion different. The five daily prayers were in antithesis to the hours of the church. The fast was as first copied from the Jews but was later changed to something more like the Christian practice, again with a difference. Christians used the *naqus* to announce the time of public worship and the Jews used the ram's horn on the day of atonement and the new year ; the Muslims employed the human voice. Muhammad chose Friday as the day for public worship—again the difference—but he did not make it a day of rest, perhaps borrowing the idea from Zoroastrianism from which was taken also the bridge across hell along which all must pass. The pilgrimage came from pagan Arabia. It was maintained as part of the policy by which the inhabitants of Mecca were reconciled to Islam. After the conquest the new converts there received many gifts from Muhammad to the disgust of the people of Medina, both Helpers and Emigrants, who felt themselves slighted and wronged. Muhammad had to defend

himself and did so on the ground that he was binding the hearts of the new Muslims more tightly to Islam. It is hard to resist the conclusion that the retention of the pilgrimage was to preserve the profits of it to Mecca and make it worth the citizens' while to be Muslims. At the same time it was adapted to the religion of Abraham. He and Ishmael had built the Ka'ba, the course between Safa and Marwa was in memory of the Hagra's frantic search for water for her son, and the well Zemzem was the source which was given to her by a miracle.^{'51}

Dr. Joseph Gaer writes :

"As a camel driver, Muhammad had learned much of the teachings of Judaism and Christianity from the many Jews and Christians he had met and talked . . . When the New Testament was read to Muhammad the story of Jesus convinced him that what his country needed was an inspired prophet . . . The teachings of the Testaments, New and Old, were now always in Muhammad's mind."⁵²

Joseph Schacht tries to prove that "the Muslim

51. *Islam* by A. S. Tritton. Hutchinson's University Library, pp. 20-21.

52. *How the Great Religions Began* by Joseph Gaer, pp. 199-200.

law does not have a Muslim (and still less a Koranic) basis. It is Roman, Byzantine, Persian, etc., law assimilated—never perfectly—to a 'revealed' system of moral requirements."⁵³

And Professor Hitti goes to the extent of discovering Zoroastrian influences in the famous Quranic verse :

"Allah is the light of heavens and the earth."

He writes :

"The verses in this surah dealing with light betray Zoroastrian influence."⁵⁴

(vi) **Liberalism vs. Modernism :**

Another painful fact is that the Western scholars, following the line of European's powers, try to encourage all those elements who wants to discard Islam or distort it and call them liberal and modern and progressive ; and condemn and ridicule those who are working for the revival of Islam.

Dr. Wilfred C. Smith writes :

"The first reactionary movement does not fall within scope of our study. It began in the early nineteenth century, flourished only among the lower classes, and was a

53. Prof. Schacht in his paper on *The Law* published in *Unity and Diversity in the Muslim Civilisation* edited by Gustave E. von Grunebaum, pp. 65 to 86. The quotation given above is the summary of Professor Schacht's views in the words of Jacques Duchesue-Guillamin. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

54. *History of the Arabs*, p. 124.

protest, vehement and well-organised but without a constructive programme, against the exceedingly low level to which society had been reduced. The movement is often called 'Wahabi'.⁵⁵

"Once the crisis has been reached, the religious men split into two groups. The progressive religious and righteous in fact, go on their way regardless of whether their acts and attitudes are superficially Muslim—or Christian or whatever. They join the anonymous ranks of the creatively goodmen, and become lost to the institution of religion. The others, who chose to maintain religion in idea, to be nominally and recognizably Muslim, etc., become the reactionaries. As the crisis recedes into the past, the progressive become less and less nominally religious, and the conservatives become less and less really good."⁵⁶

Dr. Smith looks upon Dr. Muhammad Iqbal from a strange angle. He divides his thought into two: Iqbal, the progressive and Iqbal, the reactionary, and tells us in a pathetic tone that :

"This is the religious crisis. And thus was the noblest of visionaries of tomorrow's just and worldwide brotherhood, turned by

55, *Modern Islam in India*, p. 10.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

it into the champion of the most retrograde and hate-disseminating sectionalsists."⁵⁷

This is how the author expresses his wrath on Iqbal, perhaps for not entertaining that particular concept of the emancipation of women which our author cherishes :

"There remains yet one damning aspect of Iqbal. Even at his most poetic, his most progressive, his most inclusively utopian, he never wished that the new values should apply to more than half of human race."⁵⁸

Iqbal's concern for religion infuriates our learned author, who says :

"In the word, rather than changing a rotten society, replacing it by one that is co-operative and has a unity, that is real, Iqbal is now advising man to leave society as it is, and through religion to overcome in spirit the unpleasant material facts. He is reinstating religion in its time-honoured role of an idealistic escape mechanism."⁵⁹

And these paragraphs are also worth reading :

"Finally we come to the most ominous representative of this trend back to religious conservatism : Sayyid Abul A'la Maudoodi".⁶⁰

57. *Modern Islam in India*, p. 138.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

"This divine wants to erect intact the ideal social system of an old Islam. That he has no conception of the nature of modern problems merely makes him the more bitter."⁶¹

"Sayyid Abul A'la Maudoodi then, has been approaching the student of today with the offer of, or rather the insistence upon, an ancient system; presented in slightly modernised terms, but without love, without creativity, and without any contribution to solving the problems which a student ought to be facing. Clearly he is a normal member of the old school of ignorant intolerant, repressive religionists. Yet to him the religiously inclined among the present generation of educated youth have been confessing allegiance."⁶²

"Maudoodi represents the extreme wing of the tactics which the retrograde movement, often much more subtly, has been using: namely, to present Islam and the new possibilities opened up by modernity as alternative, Intelligent Indian Islam passed its social crisis, and that section of it that has since been religious in the old and recognisable sense, quickly became a reac-

61. *Modern Islam in India*, p. 150.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

tionary force of very formidable proportions."⁶³

The author deems himself justified in showering all these vituperations without even studying any significant part of the literature of the movement of Jamaat-e-Islami which is being led by Maulana Maudoodi. References are found of only two pamphlets of Maulana Maudoodi and on the basis of them (which too have been misunderstood by the author) he pronounces his valuable *fatwas* !

His note on Aligarh University is also very significant :

"Until recently, the university at Aligarh was thoroughly liberal and predominantly secular. But about 1937 it came under the dominance of Muslim League, and was infused with an almost hysterical religious enthusiasm, intolerant and anti-rational."⁶⁴

"The result of these and similar measures was a pure fanaticism. Intellectual liberalism became almost as suppressed as in a modern German university ; and as there, professors were somehow found to proclaim the new irrationalism. The atmosphere became one of aggressive mystic frenzy. The young students began to put their idealistic

63. *Modern Islam in India*, p. 152.

64. *Ibid.*

zeal into the emotionalism of 'Pakistan', and to dismiss rational argument with the contentment of religious authoritarianism, and its scorn. Meanwhile the seclusion of women being reintroduced. Aligarh once led the movement for the emancipation of woman; in 1940 the few out of purdah girls who attended a students meeting for Mr. Jinnah, were hissed."⁶⁵

This is the approach which orientalist have adopted about Islamic revival.

Mr. Manfred Helpert, in an article in the *Muslim World* remarks :

"The neo-Islamic movements project into modern political life a more archaic approach to problems, deriving most of their emotional and conceptional characteristics from an age which long preceded the evolution of modern nationalism."⁶⁶

"The Muslim countries are now engaged in a struggle that will determine whether the rigid authoritarianism of Islam can be adapted to modern life—and adapted without the bloodshed of revolution—or make the attempt, favoured by some leaders, to return to its glorious but now vanished past. Islam has never experienced

65. *Modern Islam in India*, p. 153.

66. *The Muslim World*, Jan. 1953, p. 38.

a process of intellectual change comparable to the Reformation in Europe. It must go through such a reformation in our time if it is not to be rejected by the younger elements of Arab countries who want modernisation On the contrary, the inherent authoritarianism of Islam may make it far more susceptible to the authoritarian idea of Communism."⁶⁷

This is how the Western scholars are looking upon the world of Islam.

67. *The Nature of Non-Western World* by Vera Michales Deen. A Mentor Book, (1957), pp. 50-51.

Chapter Four

The Last Word

WE have delineated above the major factors that are responsible for the distrust which the *people* of the Muslim world harbour in their hearts about the West. Co-operation and better relationship must be developed and developed without delay. But it should be a meeting of the friends of the equal partners. If the only practical ground of co-operation is the assimilation of the Western culture and rejection of Islam as we understand it, then there is no ground for any meeting. But if the co-operation is to be achieved on equal footing, then it is most welcome. And that can be achieved by eliminating the causes that impede progress.

Let it be clearly known that our complaint is not that the Western scholars have adopted a critical approach—this they have every right to adopt. Our complaint is that their approach has mostly been prejudiced, partial, coloured, and unscientific; their informations, wrong, inaccurate and exaggerated, sometimes even imaginary and fabricated; their attitude, dogmatic, unsympathetic and even hostile. Certainly,

they have every right to criticise Islam—but in a decent, sober way. Let them first correctly state what Muslims themselves think and believe, and then criticise it, if they so wish. They should not try to mis-state our position. Thus our plea is that the issue must move from the emotional plane where it rests today, to a rational plane where it should be; that the western scholars should earnestly and sincerely try to understand our viewpoint and our real approach to problems; and this alone can open the doors of co-operation and friendship.
