

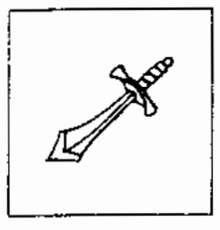

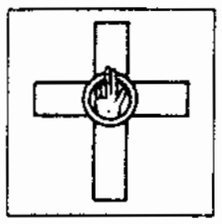

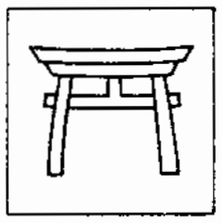

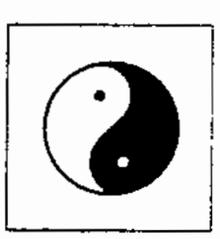

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John B. Noss

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in Islam itself. He further hoped that the dynamism that marked the spirit of Islam would break through the rigid patterns to which Muslims traditionally clung. Iqbāl also published poetry in Urdu and Persian to express his lyrical views of the freedom of the self and its duty of selflessness toward society.

We should not exaggerate the influence of such intellectuals as these, for we need to be reminded of the words of H. A. R. Gibb, that "the illiterate Muslim, the villager, is in no danger yet of losing his faith, and, even if he were, the educated town-bred modernist would have no word to meet his needs. His spiritual life is cared for by the Ṣūfī brotherhoods, regular or irregular, by the imām of the local mosque, or by the itinerant revivalist preacher."[M]

Regional Nationalism and Pan-Islamic Unity

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, to whom we have already referred as having, whether intentionally or not, encouraged the rise of Muslim modernism, was more directly interested in two political aims that often seemed contradictory: (1) Muslim unity (or Pan-Islamism) and (2) regional reform of governments so as to insure the carrying out of the popular will to have autonomy in Muslim dominated areas. The former aim was universalistic, the latter nationalistic, both being held in an uneasy tension, a tension, however, that corresponded to political realities.

The Muslim historian Fazlur Rahman has put the political realities thus:

> A Turkish, an Egyptian or a Pakistani peasant is a "nationalist" [in the sense of having "a sentiment for a certain community of mores, including language," that gives a sense of regional cohesiveness] and has always been so. But a Turkish, an Egyptian and a Pakistani peasant are also bound by a strong Islamic sentiment. [Their "nationalism"] is not averse to a wider loyalty and, in face of a non-Muslim aggressor (as we have often witnessed during this and the preceding century) the two sentiments make an extraordinarily powerful liaison.[N]

In India, Muḥammad Iqbāl, while decrying regionalism as divisive, nevertheless concluded that, in view of the impracticability of a caliphate that could draw the Muslim world into one, the best chance of preserving unity lay in establishing national states that would subcribe to the principle of multinational unity. Hence he proposed a regional Muslim state for northwest India, provided that this would not mean "a displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity," for that would be "unthinkable." This opinion had a great deal to do with the founding of Pakistan as an independent state. In 1947 a Muslim state, composed of West and East Pakistan, was born. In India fifty million Muslims became a religious minority, with the political right to be represented in the Indian Parliament. As to Pakistan, Wilfred Cantwell Smith has said: "Before August 14, 1947, the Muslims of India had their art, their theology, their mysticism; but they had no state. When Jinnāḥ proposed to them that they should work to get themselves one, they responded with a surging enthusiasm. Their attainment, on that date, of a state of their own was greeted with an elation that was religious as well as personal. It was considered a triumph not only for Muslims but for Islam."[P] But what is an Islamic state? The framers of the constitution decided against making Pakistan a theocracy, for they did not wish the final decisions to be the prerogative of the 'ulamā'; it was decided to make the whole people the final political authority. But the people have yet to become used to the practice of democracy, and so the intention to create a truly Islamic state is still just that: for Pakistan, after twenty-five years of experience and trial, is still in the formative stage and has had the misfortune to have East Pakistan split off from it as Bangladesh.

In Egypt in 1952 a revolution overthrew King Farouk and established a military regime. Two years later Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir ("Nasser") assumed power as president. In nationalizing the Suez Canal in 1956 and subsequently establishing the United Arab Republic, with Egypt and Syria as partners, Nasser attempted to achieve two aims: to rid Egypt of the last vestiges of colonial rule and to seek pan-Arabic unity. He succeeded in his first aim but not his second, for Syria withdrew from the U.A.R. in 1961. But the dream of pan-Arabic unity has survived his death, for his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, has, at present writing, entered into an agreement with Libya and Syria that is designed to issue someday in a supranational entity that will have one president, one flag, and one military command. Whether this agreement will hold up and whether it will succeed in incorporating into one structure other Muslim states, remains for the future to disclose. At all events, the ideal of a pan-Arabic superstate has not died.

Prophetic Movements Leading Toward Syncretism

Beneath the surface of every religion one discovers a consuming desire on the part of many earnest souls to recover its vitality or the dynamism inherent in its beginnings. This often leads them to a revivalist return to earlier periods and sometimes in the opposite direction to radical thrusts toward the future.

The history of Islam is full of examples. The modernism we have reviewed is one. Prophetic movements proclaiming new light on the religious situation are another.

The Aḥmadiya. One such developed in India into an organized religious movement that has distinctly heretical aspects in the eyes of the orthodox. Its leader, Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qādiyān (d. 1908) accepted homage as a Mahdī in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. A reading of the Bible convinced him he was also the Messiah (Jesus in a second coming), and in 1904 he proclaimed himself an avatar of Krishna. But he remained a Muslim in the sense that he said he was not a prophet in himself but only in and through Muḥammad. In his teaching he made it clear that holy war is not to be carried on by the use of force but only through preaching. His followers, the Aḥmadiya, are therefore at once pacifists and ardent missionaries. The Aḥmadiya have split into several branches. The original or Qādiyānī branch is consciously syncretist and all but outside the Muslim community. The Lahore branch is devotedly Muslim in

HAIFA, ISRAEL. *The Bahā'i Shrine on the slopes of Mt. Carmel is sacred to the members of this unique faith. The faith originated in Persia and has spread throughout the world. (Courtesy of the Israel Government Tourist Office.)*

character and has rejected the extreme claims that Aḥmad made for himself, although they consider him to be a genuine "renewer of religion." Aḥmadiya missionaries of both these branches are active in England, America, Africa, and the East Indies, where they make considerable use of the printed page and regard Christian leaders as their chief adversaries. They often maintain, as for example on the outskirts of London, their own mosques, to which they cordially welcome all comers, including conservative Muslims.

Bahā'i. Persia (or Iran) has unwillingly given rise to another syncretistic movement, one that has, like Sikhism, become a separate and distinct faith. This is Bahā'i. Its background is Shī'ite. Influenced by the teachings of a heretical Shī'ite to the effect that the imāms of the Twelver sect were "gates" by which the believers gained access to the true faith, and that the hidden imām seeks further "gates" to conduct men to himself, a certain Mīrzā Alī Muḥammad in 1844 added his name to the list and called himself Bāb-ud-Dīn ("Gate of the Faith"). His followers were called after him Bābis. He proclaimed that his mission was to prepare the way for a greater than himself who should come after him and complete the work of reform and righteousness that he had begun. When he said his writings were scripture equaling, if not superseding, the Qur'ān, and on their basis advocated sweeping religious and social reforms, he was executed in 1850 as a heretic and disturber of the peace. Among his followers was a well-born youth who, following Bābi custom, took the name of Bahā'u'llāh ("Glory of God"). He was accused of complicity in an attempt by a fanatical Bābi to assassinate the shāh in 1852 and was exiled to Baghdad. After some ten years there, when he and his followers were on the point of departure, he announced that he was the one-who-should-come of whom the Bāb had spoken. Moving with his followers, who now called themselves after him Bahā'is, he sought asylum in the Muslim areas to the west and was finally imprisoned by the Turks in Acre, Palestine, for the balance of his life. His writings reached the outside world. They advocated a broad religious view upholding the unity of God and the essential harmony of all prophecy when rightly understood. He called upon all religions to unite, for every religion contains some truth, because all prophets are witnesses to the one Truth that Bahāism supremely represents. The human race is one under God and will be united through his spirit when the Bahā'i cause is known and joined. Outlawed in Iran, Bahā'i, with its headquarters in Haifa in Palestine, is active in many countries, and especially in the United States.

Finally, what is Islam? We have come far enough to see that it cannot be treated simply as a set of more or less narrowly defined "religious" beliefs, for it is also a way of life, and more—an entire cultural complex, including art and philosophical and literary works. It also includes many vital activities, each interacting with the others and with non-Islamic religions and cultures. In this study we have become aware of these various aspects of Islam as we have pondered what constitutes the Islamic tradition, a tradition no more immune to inner movements of change, growth, and diversification than the other religious traditions of the world.

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