

By the same author

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN A NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD
RELIGION AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
THE COMMUNICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
A THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

WORLD CULTURES AND WORLD RELIGIONS: THE COMING DIALOGUE

Based on the Stone Lectures delivered at
Princeton Theological Seminary, 1958

by

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Lutterworth Press
LONDON

'61.1921

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they consequently rejected the authority of the founder's Khalifa, and embarked on their own strategy of proclaiming Islam to the world in a fashion which combines militancy and a liberalized interpretation of Islam, directed towards the West as they understand it. They have shed all traces of Ahmadiyya doctrinal peculiarities. Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation of the Koran (entitled *The Holy Quran*) is by its interpretative way of translation and its exegesis, as well as its introduction on "The Religion of Islam", very helpful for understanding their spirit and their specific brand of Islam.

Their name, "Ahmadiyya Anjuman i Isha 'at al-Islam" (the Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) reveals their missionary aim and ardour. They deploy an energetic activity, particularly by literary propaganda, by translation work and by building mosques in great urban centres. These Lahori Ahmadis, as they are called, work mostly outside their place of origin, India. They work in England, continental Europe (especially Germany and Holland), America, and South, East, and West Africa.

The other group, who are called Qadiani after their centre Qadian¹ in the Punjab, have remained faithful to the peculiar Ahmadiyya doctrines, especially in regard to the founder. They are as arduously missionary as the Lahori, in England, America and continental Europe, though not so widespread, but are more active within the Muslim world than their schismatic brethren.

Both groups give, to put it mildly, a misleading picture of Islam. They stress its rationality and humanism. This stress appeals to a certain type of Westerner who is weary of the "complexity" of Christianity. In their activities in the West, both groups zealously seek contact with non-Muslims of all classes, love debate, and are not without results although these so far have been modest. A noteworthy thing in regard to both, as with the Muslim writers we referred to above, is that many orthodox Muslims, although mistrusting and repudiating them as heretics *within the fold*, appreciate them as protagonists of Islam in the Western world. Heretics though they may be, they contribute in this way to the honour and glory of Islam and that, in itself, is meritorious.

¹ It was the centre and headquarters established by the founder. At present the centre is Rabwa.

BAHA'ISM AND SUFI

Before closing this chapter we ought to touch lightly upon two influences working in the Western world, viz. Baha'ism and the Sufi Movement of Shaikh Inayat Khan.

The former has its main centre of activity in the United States (e.g. the beautiful House of Worship at Wilmette, Illinois, near Evanston), but there are Baha'i to be found all over the world. Baha'ism originally hailed from a revival movement in Shi'ite Islam in Iran, about 1850, a kind of mystical Messianism with political overtones. This had its roots in ancient developments in Shi'ite Islam, in which Neoplatonism entered into a strange marriage with Muslim allegorism. The movement in Iran (called the Babi Movement) of c. 1850 turned into Baha'ism, and had a tortuous history leading to what it has become to-day.

This modern development goes back to 1908, which means that what now goes by the name of Baha'ism has nothing whatever to do with Islam, nor claims a special relation to it. In that respect it differs from the Ahmadiyya. No genuine Muslim would dream of claiming Baha'ism as Islamic. Its adherents call it "the Baha'i World Faith" and proclaim it as the universal religion in which all religions can meet, being all founded on teachings of great men who were the "Manifestations" of the one God. On account of this basic unity of all religions, unfolding God in progressive stages, the Baha'i Faith proclaims the one God, the one world and the one world order of justice and brotherhood.

Baha'ism, though entirely emancipated from Islam and by its propagation not in the least representing a Muslim endeavour in the Western world, deserves nevertheless to be mentioned in the context of this chapter. For it is, in the last instance, an unrecognizable offshoot of a variety in Islam which had an esoteric, mystical character. Therefore Baha'ism's claim to universality, and the religious-philosophical theory by which it is motivated, are entirely alien to genuine Islam but of the same stuff as the esoteric wisdom from India and the Far East. This accounts for the fact that Baha'ism is not laboriously propagated by Oriental advocates, but its pushing power in organization and propaganda comes from Americans and Europeans,

that is to say Westerners, just as in the case of Buddhism and Indian spirituality.

The same observations have to be made in regard to the Sufi Movement, which finds followers everywhere in the Western world. Remotely of course this movement reaches back to that powerful mystical stream in Islam called Sufism, which after long hesitation was accepted, within certain limits, as part of orthodox Islam. Despite the origin of its first leader, Inayat Khan, from India, the Sufi Movement is in no respect whatever a Muslim missionary outreach. By its mystic tone and solemnity, however, it appeals to many people in the West who are seeking for a spiritual dimension in their lives and cannot find it within the orbit of ecclesiastical Christianity. It is a sign of the spiritual indigence of Western culture and of the Christian Church, or perhaps one should rather say of the failure of Western culture and the Christian Church to manifest their true, inner resources, that so many caravans from the East such as this Sufi Movement or the Krishnamurti Movement, etc., supply the required goods in the desert of modern life.

The reader will possibly have noticed that in the present contact between the Islamic and the Western worlds all propagandist religious activity, in so far as it has its origin or background in Islam, comes from *Indian* Islam, not *Arab* Islam. This leads to a concluding remark of great importance.

Not only have we the right, but the facts simply compel us, to speak of an "Eastern Invasion" in the West. It does not matter that it has been brought about by the activity and eagerness of the West itself. The fact remains that the peculiar spirit, the dynamic, the motive forces and the achievements of the great Eastern cultures, religions and philosophies occupy a place, play a rôle, co-determine the chaotic multilogue in which the Western world finds itself, groping in the dark towards an undefined and indefinable new unity of life. Nobody can tell exactly how far this occupying a place, this playing a rôle, goes. We have no methods or instruments for measuring it. But the fact is there.

In regard to Islam, however, a restrictive modification is needed. The term "invasion" (by the Islamic world, culturally and spiritually, in the West) must to a great extent be modified towards "acquisition of a more solid and understanding knowledge of the Muslim world". The reasons for this modification

have been given above. Islam as a culture and as a religion has not, as the Indian and Far Eastern cultures and religions have done in a way still indefinable, put its leaven into the "lump" of amorphous modern world culture. In that respect the Islamic world is still an isolated monolith.

Nevertheless, in a quite different and very serious sense, the Western world is really *invaded* by the Muslim world. The present Western world, as a result of all that has happened on Western initiative to the Muslim world, is invaded by the Muslim world in this sense: that this awakened giant, unchained by our own efforts,¹ has on account of its geographical and historical propinquity and its world-central significance a special call on the West's responsible concern. The Muslim world, especially the Arab Muslim world, *invades* the Western world by its sheer position² with a claim for an attitude of greater moral responsibility. This is an "invasion" of a different order, but an inescapable one, as inescapable as the ongoing meeting of East and West. Therefore it should also occupy a place, play a rôle and co-determine the chaotic multilogue of the West.

¹ It does not matter whether these efforts intended this unchaining or not.

² Again, it does not matter whether the Muslim world *makes* this claim. Made or unmade, it arises out of the world-historical situation, *and is there*.