

THE EGYPTIAN UDABĀ'

AND THE

CRISIS OF ISLAM

A Study of the Islamic Thought of  
Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal,  
and 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād and its  
Influence on Egyptian Political,  
Social and Intellectual Life.

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## ABSTRACT

This study is centred around the thoughts and contributions of three Egyptian Udabā' namely, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (d. 1973), Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (d. 1956), and 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (d. 1964). The significance of their writings lies partly in the critical period in which they appeared, which was a period of religious, spiritual and national crisis. On the religious side, it was not confined to Egypt, but covered the whole Islamic world for it was the period in which the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished. With the collapse of Islamic political power, the Christian missionary thrust tried to penetrate the core of Islamic belief itself by portraying Islam as a necessary obstacle to progress. For this purpose, several attacks were simultaneously engineered. One was directed against the Arabic language which was described as unfit for modern usage. Its replacement by spoken dialects would have meant creating a delinkage between language and the Qur'ān, relegating the Qur'ān to the position of a liturgical and ritualistic document that interests only a few scholars and religious specialists. Another attack was directed against Arabic literature casting doubts on its content and value for modern generations with new thoughts, ideas and aspirations. A more powerful attack was directed against the Prophet Muḥammad, and his companions and immediate successors. The Udabā' took up the challenge by upholding the Arabic language, expounding the true facts of the Prophet's life, and by introducing new styles of literature which derive from the Islamic fountainhead, and using styles attractive to modern readers. Among other things, the thesis shows how the Udabā's contributions in this respect were instrumental in blunting the attacks of missionaries, and incidentally, in pre-empting the attacks of Marxism which assumed

dangerous proportions after World War II. Their assertion of the dignity of Islam and of the unquestionable Islamic identity of Egypt and of the great potentials of the Arabic language will remain as lasting contributions.

## FOREWORD

Modern scholars have generally tended to draw a line of demarcation between traditional Islamic thought and scholarship on the one hand, and modern secular thought and scholarship of Muslim intellectuals who were not in any sense theologians or religious scholars on the other hand. Ḥusayn, Haykal, and al-'Aqqād seem to be generally considered to belong to secular scholarship. It is perhaps due to this belief that most studies on these intellectual writers deal with their autobiographies, or political and literary careers and battles, ideas on literary and scientific criticism or social reform and so on. Studies related to their Islamic writings are rare. But not content with this situation, Ḥusayn once raised the following question: were the Islamic works (as produced by him and the other Udabā') written so as to be just left like this on shelves? So far, he adds, no comprehensive study on the ideas and the fresh approach incorporated in these writings has been offered. Yet, he hopes that the goal will be realized one day, and that their worth will be recognized in modern Arabic thought. (1)

The implication of all this is that Ḥusayn is fully aware of the importance of these works, but he is apparently disappointed, that these writings have been overlooked by modern scholars. It seems clear that his remarks are justified. Undoubtedly, the Islamic writings of the Udabā' are extremely important. These works contributed to the reassertion of the intrinsic worth of Islam in an age in which that faith was confronted with the "worst" crisis in its history.

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(1) Sāmih Kurayyim, Islāmiyyāt (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1977), pp. 9-10.

In addition to what was mentioned earlier, the whole structure of Islam including its values, principles, ethics, and institutions were attacked by missionary writers, doubts were shed on its suitability for change and progress, and its continuity was suspect. The collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate was seen as a collapse of Islam as a "faith" by such groups. These views deeply affected the Udabā' who felt the danger to Islam and to the Islamic world. Consequently, they faced the danger through a headlong confrontation with these groups and as already pointed out, they finally succeeded in averting the danger by a fresh approach to tradition which appealed to modern readers. The purpose of this dissertation is to present a critical study of the Udabā's Islamic writings in a historical context of decline and recovery, to show their contributions to Islam, and to reveal their impact in leaving behind a permanent school advocating the middle course and tolerance as well as intellectual foresight and emotional appeal.

It, however, remains to say that this dissertation, rather than mainly attempting to summarize all the Islamic biographies and other works on Islam of the Udabā', will concentrate on their methodologies, targets, motives and ideas. Differences and similarities in approach and outlooks are brought to notice. An attempt is also made to show how their ideas complement each other in spite of certain differences in modes of thinking. The point of importance here is that this study seeks to show that all the Udabā' together offered a "comprehensive" outlook on Islam, and related it anew to the lives of modern Muslims, giving them a new assurance and pride in the face of the great weakening of the Islamic temporal existence, and the intellectual assault on Islamic thought.

However that may be, as soon as we begin to discuss the question of the temporal weakening in Egypt, we must state that it is not our intention to offer a "detailed" picture about the political, social and economic situation in Egypt during the Uḏabā's time. Themes related to modern reform are brought to attention in their historical context, and whenever a relevance between the early period of Islam and the contemporary one exists, then this is indicated. In point of fact, the early era of Islamic history, with its great men headed by the Prophet Muḥammad and his immediate companions and successors, is discussed as a source of re-assurance and inspiration for our generation. It should be mentioned, at this point, that although we have attempted to reveal all the Uḏabā's efforts to use history as a source of inspiration, we have nonetheless attached a special concern to Ḥusayn in this respect, dedicating two chapters to discuss some of his most significant works in detail. Such a discussion is extremely important for it displays Ḥusayn's particular efforts to establish a "fountainhead" for Arabic literature, to establish a reference for use in order to obtain fresh insight into life and history.

Upon completion of a project such as this, my thoughts naturally turn to my supervisor from whom I benefitted enormously and to whom I am profoundly indebted. I am grateful to Doctor R.C. Ostle who supervised my work, and who kindly read the whole thesis several times, making many constructive suggestions and comments, and helping to improve the language of the dissertation. I am also grateful to Mr. Donald J. Gray who typed my thesis efficiently and who helped me in linguistic matters. I, of course, accept the responsibility for any errors and omissions that may remain.

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic history saw all the cycles of fortune which human life presents: the rise and fall of empires and dynasties; advance and retreat; conquest and defeat. It witnessed civil wars of various dimensions, and experienced all the violence and demoralizations which civil wars inevitably bring. It saw a breakdown of a unified outlook, and a rise of many schisms, some of which, according to Sunnī Islam, present a threat to the basic assumptions of belief and religious life. (1) Not only centres of power changed, but centres of scholarship and scientific life, as well as centres of spiritual life and religious activity; it was a curve of rises and declines. At the period which this work expounds and analyses, it seemed to face the prospect of an almost complete collapse. However, despite all the changes which these events brought, there definitely continued to be a mainstream of Islamic life, which survived all misfortunes, and surmounted all difficulties. Every shock was in time absorbed, every disaster transcended, and every pause was followed by a new "dynamic" vitality, which newly consolidated Islam, and enabled it to move forward, both politically and spiritually.

There is no doubt that the most critical crises to which Islam was exposed included first the civil war which started during the lifetime of the third Caliph - 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (d. 35/656) - and ended by the final triumph of Mu'āwīya Ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680) over 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib (d. 40/661) and the establishment of the Umayyad Dynasty. (2) The scars left by that war are indeed felt to the present day. In addition, the most serious threat came from extreme Shī'ism in the various manifestations of Ismā'iliyya, Kārāmīṭa, Hashshāshīn, Fātimids and their Druze offshoot.

Secretive, and Bāṭinī, they seemed to have seeped imperceptibly to the very foundations of Islam. (3) But eventually they were pushed off beyond the periphery of the Islamic mainstream, represented by Sunnī Islam and Ja'fari Shī'ism. Small communities of them survived and continue to live their secret lives and beliefs to this day.

In another respect, from the outside world, Islam faced three serious confrontations: the Crusades, the "Spanish Wars", and the Mongol invasions (4) It suffered initial defeats in all of them, but in time it was able to defeat and drive back the Crusades; to stop and assimilate the Mongols, and to stop the Spaniards and Portugese and throw them back from most of the places on Islamic lands in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf areas. Nevertheless, in these encounters, it lost its foothold on the Spanish mainland, and with it a brilliant manifestation of Islamic civilization. And although Spain lies, geographically, at the fringe of the Islamic world, its cultural, scientific, literary, artistic, and spiritual life, showed a freedom of expression, and an innovation, which shone throughout the Islamic world, and continues to form one of the great landmarks of Islamic (and Jewish) culture. (5) In our understanding, the loss of Spain meant not only a loss of a geographic foothold, but above all, a loss of one of the most advanced cultural "outposts". The loss has never been replaced, and is still deeply felt. Nevertheless, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the final over-running of Anatolia by the Ottoman Turks, the defeat of Byzantium and fall of Constantinople; in short, the replacement of the Byzantine by the Ottoman Empire, the culmination of the original dream of the first Arab Muslims, of taking Constantinople and making it the capital of Islam.

In point of fact, the Turks succeeded where the Arabs had failed. But, paradoxically enough the consequences were more far-reaching for Europe than for the Islamic world. To the latter, they gave not just a new dynasty, but a new empire, youthful, vigorous, and dynamic. This empire succeeded in meeting the attacks of Europe, and indeed in making dangerous thrusts in Eastern Europe, and establishing a foothold in the Balkans. In addition, this empire enabled Islam to stand not only as a great spiritual power, but also as a great temporal power. (6) Under the broad umbrella of a re-acquired confidence, Muslims moved from all directions to enlarge the domain of Islam. Bābūr Khān (d. 935/1530), a grandson of the great Turkish warlord Tīmūr Lang (d. 807/1404), who during his lifetime contested with the Ottoman Turks supremacy over central Asia, Anatolia and the Middle East, succeeded in founding a dynasty in India, opening the way for the consolidation and expansion of Islam in the Indian sub-continent, and integrating a great deal of Indian culture into Islam. Besides, traders from South Arabia spread Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia, reaching new areas and cultures, while traders and Sufi brotherhoods penetrated parts of Africa; adding new colours, races, languages, and cultures, to the world of Islam. (7) In our view, the convincing simplicity of Islam and the continued dedication of many Muslims led to the spreading of their faith. In short, the "model" of Islamic life, seemed appealing, attractive, and convincing even to new people.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the dynamic motion of Islam was slowing down, giving way to stagnation in intellectual outlooks and the spirit of innovation. It is reported that conquests of Islamic lands by the British, Dutch, and eventually the French, opened the way to complete bafflement, confusion and ultimately loss of confidence. (8) However, we think



that the defeat of the Ottoman Caliphate and its replacement by the rule and doctrine of Muṣṭafā Kemāl Atatürk (d. 1938) represent, perhaps, the lowest point reached in this fall as will be explained later. However, in the course of trying to prevent the defeat from becoming an irreversible rout, many of the causes of that defeat were identified. Above all, a sifting and isolating process was started to distinguish between causes attributable to the Islamic outlook as a whole, and causes attributable to other factors. For it is mentioned that in considering the original victory achieved by Christian nations over the Islamic world, Christian missionaries attributed the majority of the causes of the defeat to Islam, and thence polarized it against "Christianity". (9) The challenge against the claims of Christian missionaries was, at first, met by two reformers, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1898) and Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905). These made an endeavour to prove that Islam is a rational faith and, therefore, is suitable for change and progress. From this angle, they attempted to introduce new ideas for the re-organization of Islamic life to meet the requirements of modern life. (10) However, in our opinion, these thoughts did not basically show any daring departure from traditional interpretations. Perhaps, their main contribution lies in the fact that they tried to introduce a spirit of moderation and inquisitiveness. But the momentum they created was too small to affect the general outlook. Later on, another attempt to defend Islam and to assert its suitability for change and progress was made by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935). (11) However, due to his adherence to traditional ways in achieving the goal, he could not win the battle against missionary writers, who used modern scholastic methods in their attacks against Islam. Accordingly, there was an urgent need for a new group of intellectuals, who had profound knowledge of Western scholarship and science and who could fight the

battle on equal grounds, especially, at a time when Kemālism represented an initial admission, on the part of a crucial Muslim sector, of the above mentioned opinion of the missionaries. Approximately, in the early nineteen thirties, a bright generation of Egyptian intellectual writers namely, Ḥusayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād met the challenge seriously in its various facets. (12) Due to their remarkable knowledge of Western thought, languages and Western methodology, it may be safely assumed that they largely succeeded in "diffusing" the challenge which confronted the Islamic world and put it into danger as will be explained later.

It may be necessary, at this point, to try to describe the process of decline which brought the Islamic world to such a point of danger. The first point to remember is that the decline was not a mere political and military one, although its most observable manifestations were in these two areas. Actually, all the indicators of life were pointing downwards. Intellectual activity had slowed down considerably, and this surrender of the mind was given a touch of holiness by narrowing the gate of ijtihād or "exercisè of judgement" on spiritual matters although obviously the process of ijtihād never ceased entirely as is popularly supposed. (13) In any case, the effect of restricting the role of ijtihād was to divert most religious thought to the channels of summaries, commentaries, and repetitions of works of previous authors. It is not going too far to suggest that very little original thought is found. The number of learned and educated men and even of literates were diminishing and these were becoming increasingly isolated from the masses of believers. The institutions which linked them together, notably the mosque and its diverse offshoots, were neglected, and left to decline or to disappear. It is reported that the beliefs of the masses especially

in rural areas, were also largely de-linked from Islamic purity, and became tainted with superstition and animism. (14) Superstition and animism were, for example, found in the glorification of saints, the belief in their intercession and in their power to perform miracles. They were also found in attribution of sacredness to some trees or rocks, and in the preoccupation with jinn.

But to turn back to the issue of education, we must add that the narrow educational systems continued to be private in organization, run either by individuals for a living or by endowments, al-awqāf. Egypt, almost alone, seemed to retain an educational system that was widespread and of various levels, centred around al-Azhar mosque as a focus of higher learning. But the content of courses was traditional, revolving around language, fiqh, jurisprudence and religion. The system did little to spark minds or widen horizons. Above all, it is reported that it was closed to the new discoveries of the human mind in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, sciences, and humanities. (15) These discoveries were made by European scholars and scientists and failed to penetrate the Islamic isolation. For another de-linking had now taken place, which separated the Islamic world from other cultures, at a time when Europe was slowly laying down the foundations for a universal culture. Undoubtedly, the Islamic civilization which had eagerly sought the philosophy and sciences of the Greeks, the mathematics and astrology of the Indians, the freer culture of the Persians, was now withdrawn, closed, isolated, and uncertain. (16) In addition, another de-linkage must have had great effect, namely the de-linkage from routes of world communications. From time immemorial, the part of the world which later became the Islamic world, had been the centre of the world communications' systems by land and sea. Great innovations in maritime

technology allowed the British, Spaniards, Dutch and Portuguese to by-pass Arab routes, and establish mastery over the high seas and far-off oceans. (17) The role of the Islamic world as carrier and middleman of international trade, with all the wealth it brought, thus came largely to an end.

Similarly, the Islamic world also largely failed to link up with two new developments, which lead the process of transformation of human life: the first was the practical application of science, which later acquired the name of technology. In Europe, this of course led to the industrial revolution, which replaced man-made by machine-made goods. The latter being cheaper in cost, and mass produced, could now be transported by ships and railways to distant places and be offered there at prices well below the cost of hand-made goods. The technologies of mass production and bulk transport, came as a death blow to traditional handicrafts, which formed the basis of life and prosperity in near and middle Eastern cities. This brought decline to the cities and poverty to the masses. It took a long time before the challenge was finally understood and modern industry introduced. The process of controlling new technology in its diverse aspects is still far from being mastered or even fully understood.

The second development was the rise of a world economy, largely integrated due to a worldwide need for resources and for markets. The Islamic world with respect to resources was still following the subsistence economy model. It is reported that parts of it, like Egypt, re-organized their economies to produce a cash crop for the world economy during the mid-nineteenth century. (18) This process was forced on other parts of the Muslim world (e.g. the development of the Algerian wines) by colonial powers. By and

large, many of the economies in the Muslim World failed to benefit from the wealth or prosperity offered by the new world economy. The picture drastically changed only in the second half of the twentieth century, as Arab oil became a vital world commodity.

Lastly, the Islamic world failed to link up with the drive for "new frontiers" whose banner was carried by Europe. This process led to European settlement of the two Americas, Australia and New Zealand, as well as penetration of Africa and Asia. We have seen that Muslims - mainly Arab Muslims - opened new cultural frontiers in Asia and Africa. South Arabians established rule over parts of East Africa, and penetrated politically into parts of Asia. But they were overpowered and reduced by the superior forces and technologies of Europeans. The Ottomans did not feel a great desire to take to the High Seas, nor did the Moroccans who have a foothold on the Atlantic shore. In our understanding, however, the pioneering of Europeans did not imply mere lust for power or wealth, but it also expressed vitality, courage, love of adventure, of conquest, an exercise of will and faith. It brought disasters to many peoples, but it provided a "dynamism" that enabled great discoveries, not merely geographical. This same spirit has now turned to the exploration of outer space. At the same time, the spirit pervading the Islamic world became meek, defensive, static and closed.

One of the points which, it is hoped, this study will show is that the Egyptian Udabā' sought to make a careful diagnosis of all aspects of the life of a nation. Their "Islam" is the same as that of every other Muslim. But they differ from traditional fundamentalists mainly, by calling for an Islam re-linked with all the streams of thought, science, and technology and with all discoveries about man and his

environment. They, above all, give assurance that this "linkage" cannot cause any damage to Islamic faith, but will re-assert its vitality and soundness. Why have the Muslims retreated while others have advanced? This is a question which lies at the centre of modern Islamic thought. The reply of the traditionalists is very simple: because Muslims have abandoned their faith in letter and spirit. They, therefore, call for a return to the purity of the faith. This looks like adopting "isolation". The reply of the Udabā' goes parallel up to a point. Yes, there has been a corruption of faith, but this is due to an internal drying up, a loss of dynamism and motivation. The cause lies in the process of "de-linkage" which is alien to Islam as such. Islam has always considered itself a part of a great spiritual stream. The Islamic world continued to follow this stream in philosophy and science, implicitly believing in a common human pool of knowledge and endeavour. To them, there was one stream of Hikma, one pool of science for all human beings without distinction. They took from it and gave. It is high time to do the same now. The solution lies in re-linking Islam and Muslims, without fear, with the common pool of human endeavour in every direction as will be explained later.

Suprisingly enough, despite their clear message and important role, the Egyptian Udabā' are not well understood either within Islamic societies or by outsiders. Internally, they are often considered as valuable only for their defence of Islam without great acknowledgement for their understanding of Islam. It goes without saying, however, that the Udabā' went beyond defending Islam and its Prophet Muḥammad, against attacks by some of the missionaries, to present Islamic views of life in a systematic way, understandable to the modern Westernized reader. It may be necessary, at this point, to recall the fact that

since Islam has no church, every qualified Muslim has an equal right to assert his views. But since, in fact, there are specialized Muslim scholars, there is always a danger that these may be implicitly or explicitly assumed to be the only interpreters of Islam.

In addition, and as will be explained later, the Udabā' tend to be treated either as secular and therefore un-Islamic thinkers or unauthentic Westerners. They have no doubt expressed views that cannot be ignored in any future Islamic consensus, and as we are still living the process of the re-making of the new Islamic consensus, it is not yet possible to be sure what of their views will be finally integrated into that consensus. But it is true to say, at this stage, that they have pioneered liberalism, freedom of expression, democracy and universal rationality. They have also pioneered a courageous linkage with all cultures and especially, with the science of our age. They also have shown concern for the masses of their countrymen. They have brought a fresh spirit and an enlightened outlook.

The present thesis, The EGYPTIAN UDABĀ' AND THE CRISIS OF ISLAM, tries to show their contribution in true perspective. It is divided into seven chapters. Chapter I, ATTACKS ON ISLAM AND THE UDABĀ'S RESPONSES, offers a discussion on the challenges which confronted Islam in its modern age, and shows the intellectuals' responses to attacks on the Prophet Muḥammad, on the Arabic language, on Islamic history and culture. The chapter attaches considerable importance to the Udabā's endeavours to defend the classical Arabic language and to re-establish it as the medium of intellectual, literary and scientific expression throughout the Arabic speaking countries, thus pre-empting any possibility for the consolidation of diverse Arabic vernaculars. The chapter also attempts to emphasize the

Udabā's efforts to create a sense of pride among Muslims through exhibiting the beauty and wealth of the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'ān. Creating pride among Muslims and bringing back confidence to them, are among the main targets of the Udabā', especially, in the light of the incredible attack to which Islam was exposed.

From the sphere of the Arabic language, the Udabā' moved to Islamic history, another source of attack from missionaries. The first task for the Udabā', and in particular Ḥusayn, was to establish that Islamic history is rich with dramatic events including conquests, victories and defeat, and civil wars. Islamic history is also rich in inspiring material about the lives of the Prophet and other great Islamic heroes who changed the course of history. Ḥusayn undertook the responsibility of gathering all the material concerning the Prophet and the dramatic events in his time. He presented this material in a new stimulating approach in a book called 'Alā Ḥamish al-Sīra'. Chapter II, ṬAHĀ ḤUSAYN ON ARABIC LITERATURE, mainly focuses on this work as a source of information to which modern Islamic readers may refer, in order to gain renewable insights of life, history and human behaviour, and, thus, to regain faith in Islamic history and Arabic literature. Establishing that Islam has a "fountainhead" to go back to for inspiration, discussion focuses on the Prophet as a "main" source of this fountainhead. All the Udabā' join the discussion to counter the attacks of Western missionaries. They all affirm that Muḥammad's trace in history is still seen and it will be always seen. Discussion also focuses on the greatness of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 13/634) and 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644) showing their decisive role in completing the Prophet's endeavour to change the course of history, within divine guidance.



In the course of the Udabā's endeavour to emphasize the remarkable qualities and the great deeds of early Islamic figures in order to create a sense of pride in modern Muslims, they themselves started to feel a deeper attachment to the re-discovered world of Islam. Within this new attitude, they felt the need for a more substantive contribution to their own country. Since they were dealing with an era of Islamic history which witnessed a rise of civilization, why shouldn't they attempt to study the factors which lead, in principle, to the rise of civilizations in order to draw lessons for stimulating reform in Egypt? Haykal was particularly concerned with all the fascinating events of an empire in the making. All the above topics are discussed in Chapters III and IV. ISLAMIC BIOGRAPHIES: MOTIVES, INFLUENCES AND THE "SCIENTIFIC APPROACH"; and ISLAMIC BIOGRAPHIES: ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE. In these two chapters, differences of styles, methodologies and targets among the Udabā' are discussed.

Having shown that the Udabā' were able to create a sense of greater attachment and belonging, and to kindle a new love for the world of Islam and; having revealed that they started to turn from the realm of polemics and apology to that of concern about the issue of change and progress in Egypt, discussion focuses more on the latter topic. Chapter V, AL-FITNA AL-KUBRĀ: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, partly concentrates on the social, economic, religious and political problems that faced Egypt during the time of the Udabā', and shows their relevance to the period of al-Fitna al-Kubrā, the great civil war, which occurred in early Islamic times. In other words, the chapter links the modern era with the era of early Islam, emphasizing all the way the lessons that should be derived for achieving social change in Egypt as viewed by Husayn.

Chapter VI, THE ISLAMIC REVIVAL: GOVERNMENT, DEMOCRACY, AND SOCIALISM provides more details on the Udabā's Islamic thought on political, social, economic and religious matters. It focuses on such issues as theocracy and government, democracy and socialism. The material is again presented within a framework in which a strong tie is established between the past and the present. In our endeavour to introduce the Udabā's thought on the means which stimulate change and progress, we will "mainly" turn again to Ḥusayn. Chapter VII, ISLAM AND WESTERN CULTURE focuses on his and the other Udabā's call for the assimilation of Western culture as a source of strength in the first place. Then the chapter only concentrates on Ḥusayn's views on religious education and its importance in achieving cultural independence, national unity and loyalty. This chapter is followed by the CONCLUSION.

It may be noted that the discussion in this study has been put in two contexts. The first involves the dogmatic, linguistic and historical defence of Islam on the part of the Udabā'. The second, on the other hand, goes beyond the discussion of defensive aspects to include the Udabā's outlooks on government, economic, moral and social issues, science and religion and education. At this level, the study evaluates their thought in the above two phases, emphasizing the contribution of the Udabā' to Islam, and showing their influence on modern Islamic thought. The study will also focus on our own contribution in bringing into light "new" ideas about a crucial period of Islamic history and in straightening out certain views regarding the Udabā's writings on Islam.

This thesis is based on primary sources, i.e. the Udabā's writings in general and their Islamic works in particular. They mainly include the following: Ḥusayn's works, 'Alā Ḥāmish al-Sīra' (In Connection with the

Biography of the Prophet), Mir'āt al-Islām (The Mirror of Islam), al-Wa'd al-Ḥagg (The True Promise), al-Shaykhān (The Two Patriarchs of Islam), al-Fitna al-Kubrā (The Great Civil War) and Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr (The Future of Education in Egypt). All these remarkable works are analysed in chapters I, II, IV, V, VII in addition to Haykal's books, Ḥayāt Muḥammad (The Life of Muḥammad), al-Fārūq 'Umar ('Umar, the Judge between Truth and Falsehood), and al-Ṣiddīq, Abū Bakr (The Truthful, Abū Bakr) which are analysed in chapters I and IV. Besides, the thesis certainly derives information from al'Aqqād's works including: 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad (The Genius of Muḥammad), 'Abqariyyat 'Umar (The Genius of 'Umar) and 'Abqariyyat al-Ṣiddīq (The Genius of al-Ṣiddīq) which are analysed in chapters I and IV. However, it may be necessary to mention at this point, that in addition to the above, Aḥmad Amīn (d. 1954) had also written books on Islam such as Fajr al-Islām (The Dawn of Islam), Duḥā al-Islām (The Forenoon of Islam), Zuhr al-Islām (The Noon of Islam) and Yawm al-Islām (The Day of Islam). In these works, Amīn focused on the intellectual history of Islam from its inception up to the present, pointing to periods of advance and decline in the fields of scholarship, science and religious studies and activities. Advance in Islamic scientific and spiritual life occurred as a result of contacts with earlier great civilizations such as the Indians, Persians and above all the Greeks. Through such contacts, the Islamic stock of knowledge extended to include science and mathematics to which it, in turn, made great contributions. Besides, these enabled Islamic scholarship to apply platonic dialectic and Aristotalien logic to religious issues rationalizing through this, religion itself. Certain old Islamic schools of theology, 'Ilm al-Kalām for example attempted to bring Aristotalien logic and Greek philosophy to Islamic doctrine. The important point here is that by

assimilating new ideas and modes of expression, Muslims added tremendously to man's knowledge. The great Western civilization which made brilliant contributions to the stock of knowledge in the form of ideas about man and society and which transformed human life through its two basic principles, science and technology is somehow indebted to Islamic knowledge. According to Amīn, each civilization is indebted to earlier ones.

His discussion on the intellectual life of Muslims is extremely important as it aimed to create pride in earlier Islamic scholarship in a period of cultural stagnation and loss of confidence among contemporary Muslims. However, in spite of this, Amīn is not dealt with as a major writer in this study. In point of fact, Amīn is more of a historian of Islamic thought than a thinker on Islam, whereas the other Udabā', namely, Ḥusayn, Haykal, and al-'Aqqād combined historical scholarship and insights with analytical thought, and linked their scholarship and analysis to the modern problems and needs of Egypt. In addition, these three Egyptian intellectual writers also endeavoured to correct a distorted view of the Prophet Muḥammad in their biographical writings on him. As will be explained later, Amīn did not contribute to biographical writings on the early fathers of Islam in the form of books.

But to turn back to Ḥusayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād in connection with writings on their thought, we must state that a good number of books have been written about them. Among these one can mention Pierre Cachia's work entitled Tāhā Ḥusayn in which the writer offers a discussion on Ḥusayn's life, education, theories of scientific and literary criticism and his views on education and on social and political aspects. However, he hardly touches on Ḥusayn's Islamic thought. Cachia actually overlooked Ḥusayn's endeavours to draw an

image of Islamic culture that appealed to modern Muslims. Another book on Ḥusayn is entitled Tāhā Ḥusayn Bayna Khuṣūmih wa Ansārih (Tāhā Ḥusayn amidst His Opponents and Friends) by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ālūsī. In this work, the author focuses on Ḥusayn's headlong confrontations with traditional writers. He lays a special emphasis on Ḥusayn's crisis after publishing his work Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhili (In Connection with Pre-Islamic Poetry) in 1926, and provides useful information on this issue. However, he does not show how this crisis - occurring as a result of casting a new light upon different revered points of Islamic culture on the part of Ḥusayn - was instrumental in turning him back to the world of Islam as will be explained later. A third book on Ḥusayn is entitled Tāhā Ḥusayn, Hayātuh wa Fikruh fī Mīzān al-Islām (Tāhā Ḥusayn, an Evaluation of his Life and Thought within an Islamic Framework) by Anwar al-Jundī introduces a discussion on Ḥusayn's background, education influences, outlooks on various Islamic issues and ways of presentation. Though the writer offers some useful ideas on Ḥusayn's Islamic thought, his tendency to view the great Adīb as a secular writer blinded him from perceiving Ḥusayn's remarkable contribution in reaffirming the outlook of Islam in a new idiom accessible to the new mass of Muslim readers exposed in various degrees to modern education.

On moving to Haykal, amongst the recent works on him is a book entitled Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt written by Charles Daniel Smith. Here the writer mainly offers a discussion on Haykal's early life, education, political and literary careers. He offers a brief summary of many of Haykal's works including the Islamic ones. The book is instructive, yet there is probably a misunderstanding of Haykal's intentions towards Islam. Smith seems to hold that Haykal used Islam for political gains on the

one hand, and that he, in one way or another, allows for critical speculation as far as the Qur'ān is concerned, on the other. As a matter of fact, Haykal never put to doubt "Islamic truth" as set down in the Qu rān. Haykal's Islam is authentic and he played a major role in defending Islam and in filling a gap which could not have been filled by the dry works and polemics of the fundamentalists.

Another work on Haykal is Antonie Wessels, A Modern Arabic Biography of Muḥammad in which the author offers an analysis and evaluation of Haykal's work, Hayāt Muḥammad. He also touches on other Islamic works written in the period under discussion. This book is informative and useful to our study. However, the writer tends to label Haykal's work as "apologetic". While it is true that Haykal, who took note of the missionaries challenge against Muḥammad and Islamic culture, first met such a challenge by defending Islam and its Prophet, he went beyond that to lay down a basis for a "counter measuring" of Western culture itself from an Islamic angle.

But to turn now to al-'Aqqād, amongst the books which concentrate on his political career and thought is Rajā' al-Naqqāsh's work 'Abbās al-'Aqqād Bayna al-Yamīn wa al-Yasār ('Abbās al-'Aqqād between the Right and Left). In this book, al-Naqqāsh briefly deals with al-'Aqqād's biographies on men of genius, al-'Abqariyyāt al-Islāmiyya and he correctly observes that al-'Aqqād wrote the above works to compensate for losses in his political career. Al-'Aqqād may have considered himself a reformer who was not given his due right, who was ostracised and ungratefully repelled, but he must have known that greatness inevitably faces repudiation at the outset, and that it has to pass through a whole cycle of struggle, to overcome formidable resistance, until it finally succeeds within

the lifetime of the hero, or beyond it. In any case, whether he were to be given the appropriate recognition as a great man during his lifetime or after his death, his writings on great men compensate for his troubles. While this point of al-Naqqāsh is extremely important, it should be remembered that there are other crucial factors for al-'Aqqād's interest in Islamic greatness. These are comprehensively discussed in Chapters III and IV.

Another two books on al-'Aqqād are 'Abd al-Fattāh al-Dīdī's work, al-Falsafa al-Ijtimā'īyya 'ind al-'Aqqād. (The Social Thought of al-'Aqqād), and 'Abd al-Hayy Diyāb's book, al-'Aqqād wa Tatawwurhu al-Fikrī (The Development of al-'Aqqād's Thought), while Diyāb's book focuses on the development of al-'Aqqād's outlooks, ideas, methods of research and analysis during half a century of his life, al-Dīdī's work offers a discussion on his thought on such topics as democracy, socialism, autocracy and ethics and its importance in the survival of civilizations. All these topics are interesting and may be useful for this dissertation in one way or another. Yet, generally speaking, in their discussion on al-'Aqqād's political, social and ethical thought, the two writers present it within a national rather than an Islamic context. Al-'Aqqād's Islamic ideas are hardly treated by them.

A book which deals with all the Egyptian intellectual writers who defended Islam is entitled Islāmiyyāt (Islamic Writings) written by Sāmīḥ Kurayyim. Here the author offers a discussion on the motives which propelled Husayn, Haykal, al-'Aqqād, Amīn and Tawfīq al-Hakīm to attach concern to Islam. Then he deals with their Islamic writings as a whole. Of course, this book is informative and useful for the study at hand. However, it is apparent that the author did not probe deeply into their thoughts on

Islam. By not doing so, he was unable to see their great contributions to modern scholarship.



Notes on the Introduction

1. Regarding the beginning of sectarianism in Islam and the expansion of sects later on, refer to W. Montgomery Watt's works: Islamic Philosophy and Theology (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962), pp. 1-35; 50-71; and Free Will and Predestination (London: Luzac and Company Ltd., 1948), pp. 32-55.
2. Carl Brockelmann, History of the Islamic Peoples, trans. Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), pp. 65-70.
3. A. S. Tritton, Islam, Belief and Practice (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), pp. 77-82. Also see Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, pp. 100-105. Besides, refer to Muḥammad 'Abdullāh 'Anān, "'Aṣr al-Khafā' fī Miṣr al-Islāmiyya, al-Hākīm bi Amr al-Allāh", al-Risāla, Vol. 111, No. 96 (May, 1935), pp. 727-729.
4. Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1964), pp. 484-489; 537-556; 633-658.
5. Ibid; pp. 557-590.
6. Brockelmann, op. cit., pp. 256-343.
7. It may be mentioned that during the eighteenth century, many Sufi orders were found in Algeria and Morocco. These:  
  
Developed an intensive missionary activity not only in their home countries but also in the Sahara and West Africa.  
  
H.A.R. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), p. 60. One of these new orders was the Tijaniyya.
8. 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād, Lā Shuyū'iyya wa lā Isti'mār (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1957), pp. 125-146.
9. Muḥammad Husayn Haykal, al-Sharq al-Jadīd (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1978), p. 253.

10. For more information on the reformist views of al-Afghānī and 'Abduh, refer to Charles C. Adams, Islam and Modernism in Egypt (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), pp. 13-17; 104-176. Charles Wendell, The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image (California: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 188-200. Nikki R. Keddie, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (California: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 182-228.
11. For more information on the reformist ideas of Riḍa, refer to Albert Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798 - 1939 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 232-239.
12. Ḥusayn was born in 1889 and became blind in an early stage of his life. He studied in an Islamic Kuttāb, then joined al-Azhar when he was thirteen years old, and remained there for ten years.

He did not like it much, but it played an essential part in his growth. He came into contact there with the ideas of 'Abduh ... and he acquired ... a thorough knowledge of the Arabic language and its classical literature ....

Hourani, op. cit., p. 326.

Ḥusayn also studied French. Besides, he:

attended lectures at the new Egyptian University - lectures given by the great orientalists of Europe, Littmann, Nallino, Santillana, and which opened a new perspective on to his own inherited culture. Then in 1915 came four years in France ... (and) wrote a thesis on Ibn Khaldun ....

Ibid., p. 326. Ḥusayn was then thoroughly acquainted with both Arabic and Western literatures. This enabled him to present Islam in a way that appeals to the mind of modern readers as will be shown later. For more information on Ḥusayn's education, refer to his biographical work, al-Ayyām, Vol. 111 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ārif, 1973), pp. 2-139.

Haykal was born in 1888. He studied in the Kuttāb and then joined the khedivial Law School. Later on, he went to France to resume his studies in law and got his Ph.D. in that field. His education in the field of law has its impact on his Islamic writings. Haykal defended Islam, its Prophet, and its culture as a lawyer. In defending Islam, he used what he terms as the "scientific method". Kurayyim, op.cit., pp. 76-85. For more information about Haykal's life see Charles Daniel Smith, Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 33-60.

Al-'Aqqād was born in 1889. He studied in Aswān's elementary school and received his elementary certificate in 1903. Al-'Aqqād did not pursue his higher education as the above mentioned two Udabā'. Yet as he reports, with the encouragement of his father and uncles, he read books on religion, Islamic history, Arabic literature and Sufism while studying in Aswān's school. Anā (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, n.d.), p. 50. In addition, al-'Aqqād was able to master English before he was fourteen especially that most of the subjects in Aswān's school were taught in English. He developed his English by acting as an interpreter for tourists in Aswān. Shawqī Dayf, Ma'a al-'Aqqād (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1964), pp. 16-17. Al-'Aqqād's command of English gave him the opportunity to read English books by scholars such as Thomas Carlyle (d. 1881), Charles Darwin (d. 1882), William Hazlitt (d. 1830), and others. Al-'Aqqād's knowledge from his own readings in English and Islamic literature provided him with the chance to re-present Islamic history in a way that appeals to the modern reader. For more information on al-'Aqqād's life and education, see his work, Hayāt Qalam (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, n.d.), pp. 29-71.

13. For more information on the question of ijtihād, see N.J. Coulson, A History of Islamic Law (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964), pp. 80-81. Ahmad Amīn, "al-Islām wa al-Islāh al-Ijtimā'i", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. 111, No. 123 (May, 1941), pp. 5-8.

14. Samuel Graham Wilson, Modern Movements Among Moslems (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), pp. 23-29.
15. Amīn, "al-Wahda wa al-Ta'adud", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. 1, No. 25 (June 1939), p. 6.
16. Amīn "Law Intasara al-Muslimūn", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. 1, No. 30 (July 1939), p. 6. Also see the above mentioned author's work, Fajr al-Islām (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahda al-Miṣriyya, 1975), pp. 113-139.
17. With regard to great Western innovations in maritime technology, see Amīn, "al-Wahda wa al-Ta'adud", p. 6.
18. Charles Issawi, Egypt at Mid-Century (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 21-22.

## CHAPTER I

### ATTACKS ON ISLAM AND THE UDABĀ'S RESPONSES

We have mentioned before, that the period of Egyptian history during which Ḥusayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād lived, witnessed many challenges against Islam. These Udabā' set for themselves each individually, and sometimes collectively, the task of meeting several challenges. The first of these, of course, was the challenge of the West. Looming above this challenge was the bitter fact that the West - Britain, France, Italy, Holland and Russia - had succeeded in dominating and ruling nearly the whole Islamic world. In an attempt to rationalize this domination, consolidate it, and exploit it for imposing its cultural image on the subjugated Islamic world, Western exposés addressed to Islamic culture, reports Haykal, strove to intimate that the West was superior in power because it was Christian, while conversely the Muslim world was weak because it was "fatalistic" or "superstitious". (1) The list of causes was expanded in time to include the difficulty of the Arabic grammar, or the inadequacy of the Arabic language for "precision" in expression or the lulling effect of its rhetoric. (2) Al-'Aqqād reports that missionary writers claim that the expansion of Islam took place because it was spread by the sword. (3) In addition to that, many faults were attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad which were supposed to throw doubt on his credibility and with it, the whole outcome of his work. (4)

The phenomenon of "revelation" - the decisive link between the Prophet and God - was given a medical explanation, to cast "external" doubt on the Qur'ān,

even before considering its content. Likewise, al-'Aqqād mentions that the missionary writers claim that the Prophet's marriages, military campaigns, private life, household problems, indeed most known facts and incidents of his life, were given suggestive interpretations. They claim that Islam tolerated slavery, downgraded women, permitted polygamy, concubinage, etc. (5) They say that Islamic references to the Bible and Gospels, to Jewish Prophets, Jesus and his mother, Mariam, showed that Islam was no more than a Christian heresy. If only Muḥammad had understood Christianity properly, there would have been no Islam.

While many Western Islamicists tried and even succeeded in obtaining and drawing a fairer picture of Islam, notably as mentioned by al-'Aqqād, Sir Alexander Hamilton Gibb, the image promoted by the media of the time, was essentially the one described above and a great deal of scholarship was brought to give it support and credibility. (6)

It may be noted from the above that the life and history of the Prophet Muḥammad was at the centre of this encounter. This induced many intellectuals of the time, each in his way, to deal with this biography. After all, according to Islamic thought, Muḥammad is the Prophet of God and, therefore, he is not any person, or even any great man. Muḥammad is the founder of Islam and an eternal presence in it, not merely through his example, but also through the Sunnah which is one of the sources of Islamic law. As a matter of fact, he does stand in a special relationship to his age and to human history. Muḥammad was endowed with foresight and resourceful innovation. The Egyptian Uḍabā' attempted to present all the facts about the Prophet's life and history without exaggeration or bias through an approach in which they used new methods of analysis and presentation as already pointed out. To

start with Ḥusayn, he chose the "mythological approach" in his work, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra. By this term, Ḥusayn believes that the Sīra of the Prophet and this early period of Islamic history is a vital source of inspirational myth which should nourish and inspire the minds of Egyptian Muslims. Basically, as the classical literature of the Greeks was a source of inspiration for a long time in man's history, Ḥusayn suggests, that this equally applies to the classical Arabic literature which focuses on early Arabs. (7) This topic, however, is extensively dealt with in the following chapter.

A serious and comprehensive effort on the Prophet was made by Haykal in his work, Ḥayāt Muḥammad. As claimed by him, Haykal wrote a "scientific" presentation of the life of the Prophet, which, in his view, showed all the facts recorded in preserved biographies and histories, or Qur'anic texts and their accompanying circumstances. Haykal seems to hold that no fact is suppressed. Muḥammad, who is treated with great reverence, affection and understanding, is shown as he himself wanted to be seen, namely a "thorough human being", as stated below:

The life of Muḥammad is a human life (ḥayāt insāniyya) which reached the greatest heights attainable to men. And he, may God have peace on him, was particular in calling on Muslims to consider him as a human being, like any one of them, who is revealed to by God, so that he never approved the attribution of any miracle to him except the Qur'ān.

(8)

According to Haykal, Muḥammad, the human being, faced all the problems, tribulations, crises, hopes,

fears, frustrations, successes, failures, pleasures and pains which life presents. He was entrusted with the task of receiving the revealed words of God, passing the message, and standing by it until it is crowned with God's victory. Haykal, however, endeavours to put in historical or philosophic context the points which are usually used to attack the Prophet or throw doubts on his personality. (9) More information on Haykal's views on Muḥammad will be offered in Chapters III and IV.

Thirdly, al-'Aqqād's biography, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad was not a conventional biography, but an interpretive one. Its aim was neither praise in the traditional form - which is in fact a kind of emotional appeal and conventional ritual - nor naive idolization and idealization. Al-'Aqqād thought of himself as rational and realistic, if not even thoroughly scientific. He did not consider himself engaged in mere image drawing but also in understanding. Muḥammad's greatness was there, an undoubted historical reality. It stands in no need of amplification. It is great in its simple reality. He viewed his task as being simply one of showing the components of this greatness and drawing the proper conclusions from it. Regarding his approach, which focuses on the Prophet's greatness, al-'Aqqād says:

The reader will find out that the title "The Genius of Muḥammad" sets for the contents of this book, limits, which are not to be exceeded. It is not a new biography to be added to the diverse Arab and foreign biographies of Muḥammad ... Nor is this book an explanation of Islam, or parts of its principles, or a defence of Islam, or a reply to



its opponents ... It is, rather, an appreciation of the genius of Muḥammad, by measures acceptable to all men and not to Muslims alone and presented with a fairness that should light love for him in the hearts of all men and not in the hearts of Muslims alone. (10)

More information on al-'Aqqād's approach and ideas on the Prophet, will be provided in chapters III and IV.

At this point, one can also add another Egyptian writer who offered a new presentation on Muḥammad. This writer is al-Ḥakīm. Al-Ḥakīm took the line of quoting literal selections from old biographies, especially Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833), and presented them in a dialogue form, to suit his dramatic approach. His idea was to let these selections speak for themselves. His play, Muḥammad Rasūl al-Bashar (Muḥammad, the Prophet of Mankind), shows what can be done by preserving old texts and only presenting them in a different form. The method seemed to suggest that there was no fault with the content of tradition, and that the missing link lay in the format of presentation. Al-Ḥakīm's approach is expressed as follows by him:

In the writing of my play I have stuck to the authoritative books and reliable traditions. I have selected from them what really happened and was said and have tried to arrange it in such a way that the reader can imagine everything for himself, as though it occurred before his eyes and as if there existed no barrier of time between the reader and the

events. I have not allowed myself to intervene with commentary or explanation. I wanted to let the historical events and the actual words themselves describe the image. In this simple artistic plan I want to let the precious diamond sparkle in its perfect purity, not wrapped in any artificial setting. With this play I want to make clear to people that the image is genuinely great. And the greatness of it grows only out of the actual events themselves not out of the defence of an enthusiastic writer or the approach of a fanatical author. (11)

To sum up, it has been noted that the Egyptian intellectuals' reactions to Western critiques took several forms or channels. The historical channel was perhaps the most important or, at least, the most effective one. In our belief, this historical channel again branched into three sections: the first was the comprehensive or encyclopaedic re-writing of Islamic history, political, intellectual, social and scientific, such as that produced by Amīn. (12) Apparently, Amīn hoped that by presenting such a broad and unified picture of Islam, readers would take a new pride in it, regain selfconfidence, retain identity, preserve inner faith and social values. Gradually Islam became a part of national identity, the most tenacious force in the struggle for national survival and independence. The second section was one of selective history writing, for periods, countries, institutions, schools of thought, etc., which was not purely motivated by scholarly curiosity, but in fact formed a tributary for the main stream of Islamic history, giving it further support. (13) The third section is

biography writing. This aimed at showing the human content of Islam, as reflected in the lives of great Muslims. Central to these biographies was, of course, that of the Prophet Muḥammad and his "companions", mainly the "Wise" Caliphs.

An incidental point largely ignored or neglected, is worth consideration, as it played a decisive role in the encounter which took place around the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad. According to Haykal, writers who engaged in fault-finding and derogatory interpretations or intimations may have believed that the discrediting of Muḥammad would have far-reaching effects in the whole Islamic edifice. This could be achieved by calling into question his human texture, and by intimating that the decisive, peculiar and unique link between him and God, namely, the link of revelation, was no more than a medical aberration or disorder, due possibly to epilepsy. Muḥammad was judged according to an assumed model of human perfection, which seems to have been selectively made so that a negative verdict would be a foregone conclusion. Muḥammad's insistence on his thorough humanity, on his one human nature, and his denial of any claim to perfection, on his sameness with all human beings except on the subject of the revelation by God is overlooked. This is done for the sake of argument, or treated as a cunning stratagem which he used to cover faults and misdeeds, when cover was needed. (14)

At this juncture, we should state in fairness to Islam that through this encounter, before it, and forever after, any Islamic dialogue with Christianity becomes concerned with the relative status of the Prophet, Jesus Christ, and his mother, the Virgin Mary. Any attempt to underestimate Muḥammad by missionary writers on the ground, that he, among other things, did not perform miracles as was the case with

Jesus, shows that they tend to judge Muḥammad by the model of Jesus, which, to them, represents a perfection that must conform to his status as "son of God". In Islamic thought, Muḥammad's place is much simpler to define than the place of Jesus in a Christian context. Muḥammad has one nature only, the human nature. He is a great man in his own right, as a man chosen by God to be His messenger, the last and the seal of his prophets. The one miracle associated with him is God's word, the Qur'ān, and it was not to be attributed to him.

However, regarding the concept of miracles as applied to Jesus and his mother, Mary, Islam accepts unquestionably the fact of the miraculous conception of Mary, without sin, through a messenger of God, who breathed into her from God's spirit. It also accepts without question the performance of miracles by Jesus, and even "adds" to them - as it always does in treating writings and narratives of the Bible and the Gospel - the lyrical miracle of Jesus consoling his mother at the moment of his birth, and replying to those who, on seeing him, questioned her chastity by saying that he was blessed to be a servant of God (ʿabd al-Allāh), and a prophet to whom a message was revealed. Then he stressed the divine protection and consideration for his mother by saying that, in order to bring happiness and consolation to her heart, God invested him with outstanding qualities such as truthfulness and justice, and provided a peaceful life for him in this world and in the hereafter. (15) It goes without saying that the beauty of this latter miracle attributed to Jesus by the Qur'ān lies in the fact that it happened prior to the acquiring of any sensory perceptions, while the mind of Jesus was still in a state of tabula-rasa, or in a state of blankness which needs to be directed in order to understand the true nature of things. In view of this, the words spoken by Jesus at the moment of his

birth represent divine inscriptions on a mind in a state of complete purity. Mary's purity was asserted by her son while in the full purity of new birth.

All this imposed restraint on any Islamic argument with Christians, reminding them that God chooses to show His omnipotence not only by the imposition of binding laws of nature, but also by surpassing these laws through the performance of miracles. This is His prerogative, and He has chosen to prove this by citing examples of it in the Qur'ān, Jesus being one such example. Because of the existence of such information on central Christian personages, a temptation for counter argument on the same level as the Christian missionary writers, and using the same techniques employed by them, have been avoided by Muslim scholars. No one could have foreseen the consequences of such a brazen duel. But it was only through God's wisdom that it was averted. It is thus decreed that Islamic argument should rise forever above the trivial temptations of personal attack. It is in the context of the above that the defensive, "apologetic attitude" of Islamic writers in reply to Western attacks is to be explained. God had set the rules of the game for Muslim writers.

It must be stated, at this point, that at the time that Westernized Egyptian intellectuals were facing a whole range of challenges coming from the West, an alarming breach seems to have been made in Islamic defences, in the form of an outlook adopted and applied by Turkey, under the leadership of Muṣṭafa Kemāl Atatürk. The outlook amounted to a complete endorsement of the view that Turkey cannot possibly be modernized unless it is thoroughly "secularized". The secularization meant shedding all links with tradition. Under the Ottomans, Turkey had been an Islamic theocracy. Atatürk and his supporters considered this

system to be archaic, and unadapted to modern life. They advanced as the cause for Turkish backwardness the broadly established religious order represented by the 'Ulamā' and the Sufis, who had been supported by the state, and crowned by a sovereign Sultan holding the Islamic title of Caliph. Atatürk believed in a simple, almost magical formula of reform. Proclaim a secular state, abolish theocratic symbols, abolish traditional social symbols, replace whatever remained of the Sharī'a system of law and justice by some modern legal system, destroy all links with traditional culture, proclaim that you are part of the Western world, completely bent on adopting Western culture, and you are ready to enter the magic world of power, splendour and relative prosperity, to become an elite nation, equal in status and esteem to the elite nations of the time. Thus, the Caliphate was abolished, teaching of religion in schools forbidden, 'Ulamā' prevented from wearing their traditional clothes. Sharī'a courts were closed, and civil marriage replaced religious marriage. Polygamy was prohibited, and women were given equal rights in inheritance. Call for prayer and prayer itself were to be made in Turkish. The Qur'ān was translated into Turkish.

The Turbūsh was banned as a headdress, presumably because it symbolized backwardness (its origin was balkan and not oriental). Women were compulsorily unveiled, and accorded full social freedom. Besides the magnificent code of Majalla, which had represented the "Justinianization" of Islamic law in the same areas and spirit in which the "Roman" law had previously been codified, was repealed and replaced by the Swiss Civil Code. (16)

But the most far reaching "reform" of Atatürk was the abolition of the Arabic alphabet and its replacement by the Latin alphabet, and the expunging of

Arabic words from the Turkish language and the replacement by words of Turkish or Latin (and other European) origins. By this extravagant stroke, the whole of Islamic and Turkish cultures were largely cut off, or became accessible only in translation. A largely new language was imposed and left to grow almost from grass roots. It was not feasible, of course, to decree the replacement of Turko-Islamic culture by Western-Graeco-Latin-Christian culture. Such substitution, if possible at all, would have needed a persistent process for many generations, without any certainty of the end result. Yet new styles of music, literature, architecture and art were introduced in Turkey. (17) The great artists who "expressed" themselves in "abstract Arabic" calligraphy, were now downgraded, and this great line of artistic expression was left to meet a fate of natural disintegration. Even the beautiful mosques and buildings, blending Islamic and Byzantine architectural genius, were left to decay until they were belatedly restored by 'Adnān Menderes. (18)

In our understanding, Atatürk, venting his wrath and frustration on Arabic-Islamic civilization, seemed to have overlooked the stage of decay which Western civilization itself had reached in his time. Although he himself was witness to one of its most destructive outcomes and expressions, namely World War I, he seemed to have seen only its bright side and almost to have missed the secret of its attraction, namely its irresistible power, the basis of which lay in science and technology. Nevertheless, he did lay the foundation for a modernized economy based on state banks and state owned industries, and set Turkey on a course of economic change. (19) In retrospect, he may be considered as belonging to the school of leadership that considered modernization (eventually defined as industrialization) as attainable only by being forced

on a traditional society, because in such a society all beliefs, institutions, interests, centres of power are opposed to it. The whole inertia of society is against it.

In focusing on the responses of the Egyptian intellectuals of the time, we must state that though definitely favouring the idea of the application of reforms in an Islamic society as a constructive step towards the transformation of that society into a progressive one, they, nevertheless, believed that Ataturk went too far in his reforms. In spite of the fact that they favoured the secularization of government including legislation, and may have implicitly accepted the secularization of the legal system as far as Egypt is concerned, yet they seem to have rejected Ataturk's version of secularism which adopted an extreme and an abrupt nature in Turkey. (20) Speaking about reform on a theoretical level, the Egyptian writers think that it is a long process, complex in scope and content. Ataturk's reform movement was not, however, a natural outcome of such a process. In their opinion it was a hasty process which was not prepared. On the basis of this belief, Haykal, for example, describes Ataturk's reform movement as an "artificial product" made by this leader and his colleagues; Ataturk's reforms were imposed by law and forced, by all means, on a traditional society:

This reform movement does not appear as a necessary result of a natural development, but as an artificial product made by Muṣṭapha Kemāl and his colleagues and imposed on Turkey by legislation, and the force of law backed by the armed forces. Titles were cancelled by law, turbans prohibited by law, men were forced



to wear European dress and hats by law, and women were unveiled and allowed to enter men's circles by law. (21)

By and large, the continuation of Ataturk's reform movement depends upon the endurance of his dictatorial rule. So long as legislation is quickly enacted to counteract any resistance that might infiltrate the reform movement, the movement may survive. But this method is completely exceptional in social movements. That is why Haykal, for example, says:

Unless such a movement finds support in public opinion and among intellectuals and writers, it will be exposed to danger as soon as people start to realize that it is artificial ... Scholars and writers rather than legislation are the pillars of national reform, for, they spread confidence in reform and create a climate of an irreversible course. (22)

The main point Haykal is trying to make is that Ataturk's reform movement is not based on solid foundations which, in principle, give strength to social movements. This view is also adopted by other Egyptian intellectuals. A sound social movement must not cut off all links with tradition and force a new culture and civilization. Traditional cultures cannot be eradicated, but will be hidden, until the time comes when they, ironically, will raise a banner of progress, against an archaic and stifling system, which had earlier defeated tradition, by stealing that same banner of progress. In the course of this alternation, the concepts of tradition and change will have

undergone a great transformation and a new form of "submission" to the inevitability of change will emerge. (23) We believe that through the above outlooks on Ataturk's reform movement by the Egyptian intellectual writers, and through their efforts to revive the Islamic heritage, they moved this heritage away from Kemalist secularism.

Apart from the Kemalian issue, one of the most agonizing issues which represented a threat to Arab-Islamic culture, was that of the Arabic language and its literature. The language itself was criticised on several grounds: the difficulty of its grammar, the gap between classical and spoken languages; the difficulty in reading caused by the absence of short vowels, the sweeping rhetoric, the delay in translating and absorbing modern literary, philosophic and scientific works, the relative inability to expand vocabulary to cover modern scientific literature. The Arabic alphabet did not escape criticism for the absence of short vowels and for the technical difficulties in printing, with an assumed consequent delay in the enlightening process of publication. (24)

In our understanding, the Egyptian Udabā' refuted all accusations of impotence brought against the Arabic language. (25) Their great achievement, however, was to play a predominant role by transforming style, overcoming all rigidities of usage by expanding vocabulary through a revival of many classical words, by extending the meaning of used words, and by participating in the organic process of word coinage and adaptation. In this way, they introduced a style, characterized by lively, elastic, and often musical sentences as it was in the case of Ḥusayn. They seemed to look upon their own prose almost as an "innovation", since although prose had been used in many forms of literary expression in classical Arabic literature, it

had always been treated as minor in comparison with poetry, and often tended to assume a rigid formality, and simulate poetry in rhyme, or structural pattern. They looked upon themselves as having "freed" prose to adapt it for modern expression, not only in literature, but also in science as well. They do 'convey a feeling of being pioneers and discoverers. Thanks to them, prose was unchained much sooner than poetry.

We must also add that they were quick to set linguistic targets. Haykal, to start with, sets a number of objectives for language. First, language as a vehicle of expression must be capable of reaching every individual whatever his class or vocation was. It should not be either elitist or confined to specific fields of expression like official documentation, or teaching, for example. The second objective is that this universalized language cannot be the colloquial or spoken language by any stretch of imagination. The reasons for this are to be found in the differences between spoken languages of different regions, which, to Haykal, make it impossible to set common rules or principles for all of them. Moreover, these spoken languages do not actually boast of any great literature. Haykal, thus, insists on the necessity that the "correct Arabic language" be the written one, the language of the community. To him, however the public will not accept being addressed in the language of "old Arabs". And he asks:

How can you elevate the public to a proper understanding of the Qur'anic language, and how do you bring the Arabic language nearer to the understanding of the public ...? From answers to these two questions arose the revolution of literature during the last fifty years. (26)

In point of fact, this literary revolution has come in his opinion as a result of the British occupation of Egypt, which forced both the political and literary trends to new directions. The literary revolution saw an end to the previous controversy between spoken and written language, and left no room for discussion or argumentation. This is because:

no one remained to uphold the view that calls for using spoken dialects as a basis of literature, and debate took rather the new form of choosing between old and new forms of literature and language. (27)

We must state that it is clear from the above that the linguistic position of Haykal was motivated both by reasons of expediency and reasons of substance. Expediency required one common language for all regions, (presumably all Arab countries), which has an established literary background. Beyond expediency, one finds oneself face to face with the Holy Qur'ān. The target immediately becomes difficult and lofty, namely, that of "elevating" the public to an understanding of Qur'anic language. (28)

This is then the essence of the literary revolution of Haykal. Let us recall here that the broad meaning of the word "literary" covers all intellectual pursuits, and that patterns of expression reflect also patterns of thought. In addition to the above considerations, Haykal cites the considerations of national identity in response to British occupation. According to him, the literary revolution contributed to the preservation of the Egyptian identity. Haykal is right in considering this achievement as revolutionary. Unlike the

revolutionary achievement of Atatürk, it is also self-asserting rather than self-denying, continuous rather than interruptive, and preserving the spirit of a nation as expressed over a long period of history, rather than putting it to waste. By opting for the language of the Qur'ān, an intellectual definition of Egyptian identity was set. This definition creates three tiers, national Egyptian, Arabic and Islamic.

We find the same reasoning with Ḥusayn, with greater elaboration on the place and role of the Qur'ān in the literary revolution. To him, the Qur'ān has actually protected the Arabic language from destruction. Commenting on the important role of the Qur'ān, he states that if there is indeed a broad Islamic unity or even something like it, at the present, credit must be given, in this case, to the Qur'ān. And "if there exists an Arab unity to which Arabs are attempting to revert", Ḥusayn adds, the Qur'ān must be also given the credit for that. (29) After all, to Ḥusayn, the Qur'ān is the literal word of God which occupies the centre of the world of Islam due to its unique ideas and style. The Qur'anic themes and major ideas are discussed in Chapter III. As for its style, Ḥusayn describes it as a special style, unprecedented and never matched. The Qur'anic style is not like that of poetry, for it neither observes meters nor rhymes. Besides, it differs from prose, because it does not flow freely as prose and it is not "chained by those rules set later by Islamic writers". (30) Ḥusayn adds that the Qur'ān:

is made of well cut verses, (āyāt mufaṣṣala) which have their particular moods of connecting and disconnecting, of length and shortness, of harmony and discord

(al-i'tilāf wa al-ikhtilāf). You read some sūras and you find yourself compelled to be slow and patient because they had been cut ... to convey meanings which are elaborate and call for patience, like legislation ... You read other sūras and you find yourself compelled to speed up because they express strong and forceful meanings. They had been cut short, with connected endings. You feel like descending from a height, as when God frightens His creatures with great force overtaking them from all directions cutting off the route of controversy and polemic (tarīq al-jidāl wa-al-hijāj). (31)

It must be stated, at this point, that like Haykal, Husayn stands against the adoption of the spoken language. (32) In his work, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, Husayn mentions that he insists on teaching the classical language in Egyptian schools. This is because "it is the language of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the language of poetry, prose, science, literature and philosophy bequeathed to us by ancients". Husayn also states that he opposes all those who believe in the suitability of the colloquial language for understanding and communication on the one hand and for achieving the various needs for the intellectual life of Egypt on the other hand. Husayn says that he has absolutely resisted any call for using the colloquial language since his early days, and promised to continue such a resistance throughout all his life. He mentions that he cannot give up this "great heritage, kept for us by the classical Arabic language", by any means and adds:

I will always view colloquial Arabic as a corrupted dialect, ... which must fade into classical Arabic, if we give it (classical Arabic) the attention it deserves, by elevating the people through teaching and education, and reducing it through simplification and reform, so that they (people and language) meet without great effort or corruption.

(33)

On moving to al-'Aqqād and his contribution to the Arabic language, we must mention, to start with, that he wrote three books about the Arabic language namely, Ashtāt Mujtami'āt fī al-Lughā wa al-Adab (A Collection of Sections on Language and Literature), al-Lughā al-Shā'ira (The Poetic Language) and Buhūth fī al-Lughā wa al-Adab (Studies on Language and Literature). Al-'Aqqād expresses a high praise of the Arabic language in all aspects of linguistic components. To him, its phonetics are musical, using the full range of the apparatus of the human voice, its letters are arranged in sequential groups which are spoken by slight variations in voice control. Words, verbs, nouns, and adjectives are grouped by systems of meters, which by themselves express ranges of meanings. Al-Ishtiqāq, (derivation) enables an almost limitless expansion of words. Words express symbolic or realistic meanings systematically, leaving no room for confusion. Al-I'rāb gives the language a musical touch and assigns to every word one single proper place in the sentence. (34) He adds that the art of poetic rhymes and meters as a separate linguistic branch, is known only to the Arabic language, because of the peculiar musical qualities of words and sentences. There are meters for all human moods and purposes. Arabic does not excel only in aesthetic expression, but is equally capable of

precise scientific expression. Contrary to claims that it lacks verbal structures (tenses) which express shades of temporal distinction Arabic vocabulary contains words which convey all shades of temporal measurements. Verbs also express different shades of time and actions in time. (35)

In his books on the Arabic language, al-'Aqqād sets for himself two targets. First, he wants to praise Arabic and assert its great distinction to arouse feelings of pride in it and motives of protectiveness for it. In al-Lugha al-Shā'ira, he, for example, motivates the Arabic reader to be jealous for his language and to defend it against all attacks, reminding him that he is:

not called upon to defend his tongue only, but to defend the whole world from a grave loss it will incur, by any loss which this universal instrument of human logic (al-mantiq al-insānī) may suffer, after it had reached this high degree of evolution and perfection.  
(36)

According to al-'Aqqād, the above point is extremely important. This is because he believes that an arrow which is shot at the Arabic language is actually shot at our hearts, and in his words, "will not stop at the mouth or tongue or at words spoken in rhyme or prose". (37)

The second target of al-'Aqqād takes the form of confrontation with those who as claimed by him, do not understand the spirit of the language and the meanings of words. Regarding this group, he says that due to the fact that they do not generally broaden their studies



to include such subjects as the "general history of Oriental countries" and the Arabic language, they often make mistakes about "the state of that language". They make such mistakes because of their "ignorance of historic states and the needs these states create as subjects for poetry, oratory and other forms of national expression". (38)

Thus, in our opinion, al-'Aqqād goes one step beyond other writers of the period, in an attempt to face the linguistic school of orientalists, which in his view, used purely linguistic techniques as means for drawing sweeping conclusions about historical events and even about the very substance of culture. His argument against this school is based on the view that orientalists only consider texts from a lexical point of view and overlook "literary meaning, the spirit of words and the substance of expressions (madāmīn al-ta'bīr)". (39) The mistakes they made are not confined to their works, but include the works of some of their students. According to al-'Aqqād, such mistakes are committed due to "inability to penetrate to the truths of history" on the one hand, and to the "secret of aesthetic Arabic expression" on the other hand. (40)

In our understanding, this seems to be a reference to Ḥusayn's work, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī in which that great intellectual, applying the linguistic techniques of orientalists, cast great doubt on certain central revered points and accepted values and doctrines in Islam. To start with, Ḥusayn claimed that what is known as "pre-Islamic poetry" was not written before Islam, it was written later on. In order to justify this, he mentioned that the dialect of Quraysh (the Arabic of the Qur'ān) was not universal among Arab tribes at the time of the Prophet. Ḥusayn added that the tribe of Quraysh did not attain a special status before Islam

as held by Islamic tradition. He even went as far as to apply fundamental criticism to the Qur'anic text as will be explained later. These views were not tolerated by the majority of Muslims in Egypt as they raised fears of undermining the whole structure of Islamic culture and, thus, caused a great uproar in Egypt and Husayn was put on trial. Here, he claimed that he did not intend to undermine Islam, that all he wanted was to apply new methods of research and to introduce a scientific study in modern methodology.

In spite of his protestations to the contrary, Husayn's work struck at the roots of Islam. Al-'Aqqād criticized him for exposing the Qur'ān to fundamental criticism mentioning that the Qur'ān is not any book, that it is the direct revelation of God to Muḥammad. In addition, concerning Husayn's views on Quraysh's position and dialect, al-Aqqād stressed its unique place before Islam and the "universality" of its dialect. However, in spite of this, al-'Aqqād, as a Wafdist deputy in the Egyptian Parliament in 1926, stood by Husayn, who was still a member of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party. At the risk of antagonizing the Wafd and its leader Sa'd Zaghlūl (d. 1927), al-'Aqqād eloquently defended Husayn in the Parliament on the basis of upholding the right for "freedom of expression". (41) Nevertheless, al-'Aqqād wanted to show a generation which was fascinated by scientific methodology, that orientalist linguists, by whom Husayn was influenced when he published his book, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhili, cannot claim that they are applying scientific techniques which can indeed lead to assured conclusions. This he does without in any way denying or ignoring scientific methodology as some Islamic traditionalists tend to do. (42) It is done by applying the same methodology to produce different results. The words "science", "objective analysis", "reason", and "logic", cast a spell on the minds of the

new generations, because they were brought to their notice after a long period of neglect and complete intellectual stagnation. However, these vehicles of the human mind may be abused and al-'Aqqād seems to be more aware of this than his contemporaries. Al-'Aqqād, who fully realised the import of the great battle taking place in his time between the West, claiming to represent a Christian civilization, and the world of Islam, believed that, in the missionary writings on Islam, facts were at times presented out of context to convey impressions of faults, and faults were magnified, and great achievements of the Prophet and other remarkable Islamic figures were underemphasized. To him, all this is done under the name of "science" and "scientific methodology". In order to counter this, al-'Aqqād, in turn, resorted to what he calls the "modern" or "scientific approach" addressed to contemporary readers. In this style, he often quotes some modern writer's views or a theory which he describes as "scientific" to confirm a position that he takes in defending Islam, its Prophet and his companions. (43) Armed with these, he then engages himself in a polemic with missionary writers trying all the way, to remove from them the magic power which the word science seemed to cast on others, and even to bring the reader to his side.

Attaining the support of the reader through the magic spell of what he terms as the "scientific approach", al-'Aqqād now enters a new stage in which he seems to launch a final assault on his opponents. Here, al-'Aqqād does not resort merely to science and scientific methodology, but resorts to "intuitive" instruments in order to achieve what he appears to believe as "decisive" victory. This is a practice which was not unique to al-'Aqqād. As reported by him, missionary scholars themselves resorted to it in their attacks on Islam. However that may be, al-'Aqqād

greatly contributed in correcting some views on Islam which, in his opinion, were mistaken. It is interesting to mention, at this point, that in a lecture by Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bāqūrī, a former Minister of Endowment, he stated that al-'Aqqād was a distinguished writer, endowed with unique foresight, which enabled him to forcefully defend Islam and to attain a favourable response among Muslims. (44)

In concluding this chapter, we must say that, as already mentioned, the Egyptian Udabā' played a predominant role in developing the ability of the language for expression on a very wide range of intellectual issues, coining in the process new terms and modes of expression. Ḥusayn wrote in a style which combined both beauty and clarity and flowed with logic and irresistible music. Al-'Aqqād reduced high-flown rhetoric, and resorted to a style of dry but forceful rationality. (45) Haykal wrote in a clear and a beautiful style. The Egyptian Udabā' all together, contributed to the emergence of simplified classical Arabic, which became the intellectual, literary and scientific medium of expression. (46) With the advent of journalism, broadcasting and television, and the flourishing activity of publication, this language became the language of all the Arab world. Revolutions in printing, technology, together with the revolutionary adaptation of Arabic letters, for printing purposes, largely removed the technological difficulty. By this, the danger of cultural disruption which Turkey experienced was indeed averted. Thanks mainly to an inventive and productive generation of Egyptian intellectual writers.

Notes on Chapter I

1. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1968), pp. 11-17; 549-558.
2. Anwar al-Jundī, Adwā' 'alā al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āṣir (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī lil-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1968), pp. 20-27.
3. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, n.d.), pp. 24-29.
4. Attacks as made by orientalists and missionaries are expressed in the following quotation:

Muḥammad's life had been subjected to all sorts of attacks in the presentation of him made by the West, namely by orientalists and missionaries.

Antonie Wessels, A Modern Arabic Biography of Muḥammad (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), p. 5.

It must be mentioned, at this point, that regarding the attacks of Christian missionaries and other Western scholars on the Prophet Muḥammad, Emile Dermenghem states that some of these writers for example, made the Prophet "die of apoplexy caused by an excessive appetite." Some set out to say that he suffered from epilepsy. Among those scholars who were criticized by Dermenghem for their lack of objectivity in dealing with the Prophet and Islam is Father Henry Lammens. In this connection, Dermenghem states:

Father Lammens, one of the most erudite of recent specialists, is unfortunately one of the most partial also. His brilliant and ingenious books are spoiled by his antipathy for Islam and its Prophet.

Emile Dermenghem. The Life of Mahomet (London: George Routledge and Sons, LTD., 1930), Preface.

Haykal on the other hand, severely criticized Lammens in addition to Dermenghem himself and William Muir for forging a story in which they claimed that Muḥammad was infatuated by Zaynab Bint Jaḥsh, the wife of Zayd, and implicitly claimed that this resulted in her divorce. Zaynab later married the Prophet. In addition, he criticized Muir on other grounds. However, in spite of this, Haykal praises Dermenghem for defending Muḥammad and Islam in many ways. He also praises Muir and Lammens for their objectivity in dealing with the question of the authenticity of the Qur'ān. Refer to Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 10-11; 31-38; 322-325; 160-164. But to turn back to the question of attacks on Islam, Haykal mentions the names of Father De Broglie, Renan, Goldziher, Noldeke as writers with negative attitudes towards Islam and its Prophet. For more information about the names of those missionary and Western writers who launched various attacks on Islam refer to the above source, pp. 9, 11, 549.

5. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, pp. 29-58; 92-134.
6. .... Mā Yuqāl 'an al-Islām (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, n.d.), pp. 5-13. Al-'Aqqād highly appreciates Gibb and describes him as an objective writer who handles Islamic issues with the utmost care. Ibid., p. 113.
7. Husayn, Al-Majmū'a al Kāmila, Vol. III, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1981), pp. 7-11.
8. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, p. 45.
9. Ibid., pp. 160-167; 321-326; 449-451.
10. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, p. 8.
11. Tawfīq al-Hakīm, Muḥammad Rasūl al-Bashar ('Ammān: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, n.d.), p. 6. This quotation is translated by Wessels, op.cit., p. 11.
12. These include such works as Fajr al-Islām and Duhā al-Islām.



13. For instance, Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan's work, Tārīkh al-Islām al-Siyāsī (The Political History of Islam) in its four volumes, represents a good example of the second branch of historical writings.
14. Haykal, Ḥayāt Muḥammad, pp. 40-45.
15. These themes are revealed in Surat Mariam, XIX/28-33.
16. The Majalla, Majallat al-Ahkām al-'Adliyya (Digest of Civil Code): ... was promulgated as the Ottoman Civil Code in 1877. Joseph Schacht, An Introduction to Islamic Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 92.
17. Contrary to the new styles of music which cut off all links with previous Islamic styles, Egypt was booming with a broad activity in music which largely "balanced" tradition and change. Music saw such great composers as Sayyid Darwīsh, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad al-Qasabjī, Riyād al-Sunbātī, side by side with the great traditionalist 'Zakariyya Aḥmad. Umm Kulthum and 'Abd al-Wahhāb towered as great performers.  
  
Regarding theatre, the Egyptian one saw such great actors as Yūsif Wahbī and Najīb al-Rihānī, one a master of tragedy and the other, a master of comedy. See Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, al-Masrahiyya fī al-Adab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir (Beirut: Dār Beirut lil-Ṭibā'a wa al-Naṣhr, 1956), pp. 17-21. Also see Jurjī Zaydan, Tārīkh Adab al-Luḡha al-'Arabiyya, Vol. III (Beirut: Manshurat Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1978), pp. 503-506.
18. For more information about Atatürk's reforms, see Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 250-278. Also see Richard D. Robinson, The First Turkish Republic (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 65-92; and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Islam in Modern History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 172-174. Besides, refer to H.B. Sharabi, Government and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century (U.S.A.: Van Nostrand Company Ltd., 1962), pp. 39-42. And, Abid A. al-Marayati, The Middle East: Its Government and

Politics (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 378-380.

19. Unlike the Turkish industrialization model, a new promising industrial sector was built up by private initiative in Egypt. Lead largely by Tala'at Harb, Egyptian industry forged ahead. The first generation of industry hit many right formulas that were subsequently over-looked or disregarded.

It was not prestigious, but market orientated. It depended largely on local raw materials, especially cotton, causing little strains on the balance of payments. Bank Misr (Egypt's Bank) successfully solved the problems of capital - fixed and operational - by a brilliant combination of commercial banking and industrial finance. A crisis of liquidity that developed at the beginning of World War I was easily solved by a modest government intervention, quite natural and certainly legitimate. Issawi, op.cit., pp. 140-180. Also see Muḥammad 'Alī 'Alūba, Mabādi' fī al-Siyāsa al-Miṣriyya (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyā, 1942), pp. 39-40. Besides, refer to Haykal, Mudhakkrāt fī al-Siyāsa al-Miṣriyya, Vol. I (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1951), pp. 265-266.

20. In their time, Egypt had already adopted modern penal and commercial laws. The land law, since Muḥammad 'Alī, was drastically changed and largely adapted to the needs of modern farming. The fixation of tithes provided the certainty required for the administration of the land, although its outcome was an inequitable distribution of land, in favour of big landlords, who were largely absentees. Yet something was done to protect small landholders by the four-feddan law, which provided that holdings of four feddans and less could not be seized and sold in settlement of holder's debts. It was argued that this restrained foreign creditors from granting credit to small holders, to the detriment of the farming system itself. See al-'Aqqād, Sa'd Zaghlūl, Sīra wa Tahyīya (Cairo: Maṭba'at Hijāzī, 1936), p. 160. But the gap seems to have been largely filled by a vigorous system of cooperatives, which could obtain credit from a government Agricultural and Co-operative Bank. See Issawi, Egypt in Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press,



1963), p. 164. The civil code of Egypt remained largely influenced by fiqh. Some Arab countries such as Syria, Jordan and Iraq, adopted civil codes largely borrowed from the Egyptian one. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sanhūrī (d. 1964) played a vital role in this codification. Majid Khadduri, Political Trends in the Arab World (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1972), p. 241. The one remaining stronghold of Islamic law was that of "personal status" which was a subject of perennial criticism, especially over the choice of "House of Obedience", which compelled a wife to live in a house provided by the husband, if this house meets the standards demanded by the Islamic law. Alfred Guillaume, Islam (Edinburgh: R. and R. Clark Ltd., 1954), pp. 170-176. This was considered to disregard a basic freedom and to be a form of forced arrest or imprisonment. Aside from the above areas, the process of legislation was not hindered by any restraints stemming from religious considerations. The commercial law introduced a banking legislation that legislated usury. This step was met with an acquiescence, which seems surprising. Pious people still refuse to take interest on their bank deposits, but they continue to deposit their money in them. The banking system itself seems to be considered a necessary evil, and thereby tolerated under the principle of necessity. Opinions inclined to give usury a religious legitimacy, based largely on a distinction between a moderate and exaggerated usury, have not obtained a consensus of the Islamic community.

In countries where Islamic law is practised, usury is step-sided under semantic formulas which refer to it as a kind of service fee, but it remains an agonizing subject for 'Ulamā'.

Insurance seems to have raised some religious doubts, but is also tolerated. A fatwa (legal judgement) by Muḥammad 'Abduh legitimizing it remains an isolated opinion and insurance seems to be accepted on pragmatic grounds. Muḥammad 'Abduh, al-Amāl al-Kāmila, Vol. I al-Kitābāt al-Siyāsiyya (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya, 1972), p. 679. Modern company laws were enacted, authorizing the establishment of limited liability corporations. This form of capital mobilization and managerial organization was adopted by Bank Misr for its big ventures

and both the said bank and its subsidiary corporations established a sound basis for the industrialization of Egypt, and became a focus for patriotic pride. 'Alūba, op.cit., p. 72. Also see Haykal, Mudhakkrāt ..., pp. 265-266.

21. Haykal, "Fī al-Ṭarīq ilā Bārīs, al-Nahḍa al-Turkiyya", al-Siyāsa al-Usbū'iyya, III, No. 83 (October, 1927), p. 10.
22. Ibid., p. 10.
23. One does not exclude the fact that Haykal, for example, yearned for a change of power in Turkey by new forces which would annul Atatürk's extreme secular laws. Ibid., pp. 10-11. The yearning for a change in Turkey may be also applied to al-'Aqqād. The latter goes further to criticize Atatürk severely for murdering a good number of his opponents while establishing his extreme secular regime. al-'Aqqād, Sā'āt Bayna al-Kutub, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sa'āda, 1950), pp. 529-531.
24. Muḥmūd Taymūr, Mushkilāt al-Luḡha al-'Arabiyya (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Namūdḥajiyya, 1956), pp. 6-109.

It should be stated, at this juncture, that the above mentioned issues were also raised in articles and even poems as the famous lamentation of Ḥāfiz Ibrāhīm (d. 1932) to the plight of Arabic language al-Luḡha al-'Arabiyya Tan'ā Hazzahā Bayna Ahliḥā (The Arabic Language Mourns its Bad Luck to its People). See Dīwān Ḥāfiz Ibrāhīm, Vol. I (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1937), pp. 253-255.

25. Haykal, Fī Awqāt al-Farāgh (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-'Aṣriyya, n.d.), p. 371. Besides, refer to al-'Aqqād's work, Yas'alunak (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1968), pp. 252-258.
26. Haykal, Thawrat al-Adab (Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, n.d.), p. 6.
27. Ibid., p. 7.
28. Haykal's concern of elevating the public through education in order to understand the Qur'ān shows that Haykal attached a considerable importance to the Qur'ān in his thought. This

fact is significant because it proves that Haykal and other Egyptian intellectual writers have taken Islam seriously. Therefore, Anwar Al-Jundī's claim that the writing of this generation:

...was not a spiritual search, or a declaration of faith and belief or commitment and determination ....

is erroneous and must be straightened out in order to give the Udabā' the required recognition as far as Islam is concerned. See al-Jundī, "I'adat Taqyīm mā Katabahu Hādha al-Jīl al-Rā'id", al-Mujtama', Vol. XV, No. 702 (February 1985), p. 30. For more information about al-Jundī's thought in the above lines, see his work, Tāhā Husayn, Hayātuh wa Fikruh fī Mīzān al-Islām (Cairo: Dār al-'Ulūm lil-Ṭibā'a, 1976) Conclusion.

29. Husayn, Mir'āt al-Islām (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), p. 139.
30. Ibid., pp. 129-130.
31. Ibid., p. 130.

The starting point of Husayn's discussion on the wondrous nature of the Qur'ān (i'jāz al-Qur'ān) is that the Qur'ān is the word of God which is revealed to His Prophet, as mentioned above. This coincides with al-'Aqqād's view which inserts that any valid study on i'jāz al-Qur'an should concentrate on this point in the first place. Al-'Aqqād seems to believe that Muṣṭafa Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'ī who wrote a book on i'jāz al-Qur'ān did not focus on this point as may be required. See al-'Aqqād, Sā'āt Bayna al-Kutub, pp. 8-12. It must be mentioned, however, that since al-'Aqqād and al-Rāfi'ī were engaged in hostile arguments in the field of Arabic language and literature, one may not take al-'Aqqād's comment so seriously.

32. It must be mentioned, at this point, that like both Haykal and Husayn, al-'Aqqād completely rejected the idea of the adoption of the spoken language for writing.

Al-'Aqqād, Yawmiyyāt, Vol. II (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1964), p. 286. His disapproval of

adopting spoken Arabic for writing stems from a belief that it is "irregular" and "unsystematic". Al-'Aqqād, Sā'āt Bayna al-Kutub, p. 100. However, if spoken Arabic were used for writing, man's modes of thinking and outlooks would certainly deteriorate. After all, language is a tool of expression. al-'Aqqād, al-Fusūl (Cairo: Dār al-Sa'āda, 1922), pp. 223-226.

In spite of these views on spoken language, al-'Aqqād claims that classical Arabic has profited from the spoken one. The latter enriched the former with more "letters" in the wake of man's life. Al-'Aqqād, Khawātir fī al-Fann wa al-Qiṣṣa (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1973), pp 33-34.

33. Husayn, al-Majmū'a al-Kāmila, Vol. IX, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Misr, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī wa Maktabat al-Madrasa, 1982), pp. 297-298.

It should be mentioned that Ḥusayn, who advocated the need of elevating people through education to be capable of understanding the Qur'ān; called for a reform in educational methods and techniques. Ḥusayn criticized the old petrified methods used for teaching religion, Arabic language and literature. He urged for the need of adopting new educational procedures in Egyptian schools and universities. Concerning his call for a reform in the field of religious studies, refer to his work Nagd wa Islāh (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1956), pp. 252-253. With regard to Arabic language and literature, see his two works, Min Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1970), pp. 15-16 and; Fī al-Adab al-Jāhilī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-I'timād, 1927), pp. 2-8.

34. Al-'Aqqād, al-Lugha al-Shā'ira pp. 8-25. Also see his work, Ashtāt Mujtami'at fī al-Lugha wa al-Adab (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, n.d.), pp. 37-81; 100-103; 149-153.

35. Al-'Aqqād, al-Lugha al-Shā'ira, pp. 28-70.

It may be mentioned that al-'Aqqād's views on Arabic language as presented in his work, al-Lugha al-Shā'ira are highly appreciated by

'Abd al-Fattāh al-Dīdī. The latter believes that al-'Aqqād succeeded in showing the beauty and richness of the Arabic language, together with its power of adaptation, to modern developments in all fields of knowledge. Al-Tūnisī (e.d.), al-'Aqqād, Dirāsa wa Tahīyya, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣriyya, n.d.), pp. 75-80.

36. Al-'Aqqād, al-Luḡha al-Shā'ira, p. 7.
37. Ibid., p. 7.
38. Ibid., p. 68.
39. Ibid., p. 75.
40. Ibid., p. 79.
41. In the light of the above mentioned views of Ḥusayn in his book, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī, there was a demand for his expulsion from his post at Cairo University. Dayf, op.cit., p. 40. In any case, regarding al-'Aqqād's defence of Ḥusayn, refer to Rajā' al-Naqqāsh, 'Abbās al-'Aqqād Bayna al-Yamīn wa al-Yasār (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1973), pp. 99-104.
42. For instance, al-Rāfi'ī is among those traditionalists who apparently ignored scientific methodology in their writings. As claimed by Haykal, al-Rāfi'ī followed the example of the ancient school of Arabic Islamic thought. See Haykal, Fī Awqāt al-Farāgh, pp. 24-25.

Leaving traditionalists during the Udabā's time aside, and concentrating on traditionalists nowadays, Māhir Qindīl claims that they went too far in their rigidity and narrow-mindedness. They called for a complete rejection of Western thought and methodology, Qindīl believes that this has hurt the Islamic cause. He thus, urged this group to be more flexible and set al-'Aqqād as an example to follow. Al-'Aqqād, a moderate and a liberal writer, accepted Western methodology and even used it to defend Islam against the various challenges which faced that faith. Qindīl, however, did not elaborate on the techniques used by al-'Aqqād in defending Islam. Qindīl, "al-'Aqqād wa al-Infitāh al-Fikrī,"

al-Ra'ī al-Ām, No. 7669 (March 1985), p. 6.

43. For example, in dealing with the question of genius which he, among other things, considers as an inherited biological disposition, he quotes ideas from Cesare Lombroso (d. 1909) to support his definition. In any case, al-'Aqqād attaches a considerable concern to the concept of genius, and applies it to the Prophet and his immediate companions and successors in order to show that these were great men of spirit and great men of action.
44. Kurayyim, op.cit., p. 109.
45. Al-'Aqqād, Buhūth fī al-Lughā wa al-Adab (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Fanniyya al-Hadītha, 1970), pp. 17-80.
46. It must be mentioned, at this point, that in addition to the contribution of Husayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād to the Arabic language, other Egyptian scholars contributed to this language, each in his way. For example, the great poet Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932) introduced the poetic drama, a literary form hitherto unknown in Arabic language. Short story writers like Maḥmūd Taymūr and Yaḥyā Haqqī, contributed a wealth of literary stories. But it was al-Hakīm who experimented with the language, and crowned this experimentation with a classic comedy, al-Safqa (The Bargain). As a playwright, al-Hakīm had to face the problem of the written and spoken languages. He first wrote abstract early plays such as Ahl al-Kahf (The Seven Sleepers) and Shahrazād in classical Arabic. As he came to treat live subjects and personalities, he used colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Al-Safqa, however, was written to be equally readable in colloquial or classical Arabic, from the beginning to the end. Al-Safqa (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Namūdhajiyya, 1956), p. 160.

He thus made an attempt to reduce the gap between the two Arabics to one of pronunciation. In addition, the language academi@s of Cairo and Damascus, though highly reputable and prestigious centres of linguistic learning, were at first slow and too conservative in coining new words and terms.

Al-Majmā' al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī (Arab Academy for Science) is among the famous academies in Syria. Besides, al-Majma'al-Malaki lil-Lugha al-'Arabiyya (The Royal Academy for Arabic Language) is a well known Egyptian academy. Hanna Fākhūrī, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Būlusiyya, n.d.), p. 915.

Partly independent of them, partly trailing their footpath, scholars analysing science for school education went ahead with the task. Egyptian preponderance at this stage, helped in the recognition of terms devised in Egypt. But the most remarkable fact of Arabic translation was accomplished in Damascus, when its school of medicine decided to teach medical science in Arabic. The result was a thorough rendering of this important branch of knowledge in the Arabic language. Thus, despite lamentations and heightened polemics, Arabic was successfully adapting to most of the requirements of the age. This transformation took place almost imperceptibly, with a remarkable spontaneity.

## CHAPTER II

### ṬĀHĀ ḤUSAYN ON ARABIC LITERATURE

It has been mentioned earlier that, in their endeavour to defend the Arabic language against various challenges, the Egyptian Uḍabā' affirmed the position of classical Arabic as the proper vehicle of expression and communication. Having done that, they immediately faced the question of the use of this language in literary expression. (1) They all held that the language itself was the heart of a great heritage which should not be given up in the slightest way. It is the language of the Qur'ān, while colloquial is a corrupted dialect without any literature. The public has to be elevated through education to be capable of understanding it. How to achieve this revolution? That is the question which the Uḍabā' raised and tried to answer, each in his own way.

The question is generally answered in two parts. The first is to re-introduce old Arabic literature to contemporary readers. This literature itself is viewed with mixed feelings, following the different backgrounds of each writer. Ḥusayn, for example, praises the greatness of Arabic literature, for its force and capability to provide readers with pleasure and enjoyment on the one hand, and for its power for inspiring them on the other hand. (2) To him, a new coverage of old themes can help in motivating the youth to read old books, and discover their aesthetic beauty. He states:

If this book ('Alā Ḥāmish al-Sīra)  
succeeds in bringing to the souls  
(nufūs) of the youth a love of old



Arab life, and show them that it contains in its simplicity and ease a beauty, which is no less great or touching to the heart than that they find in modern complicated life, I shall feel happy and successful in reaching some of my aims. (3)

Haykal, however, believes that the main spring of literary writing is to be found in Western literature. Old literature is useful for mastering the classical language: (4)

We need to know pre-Islamic and early Islamic literature and all literatures prior to our age, so that the language may be continuous throughout ages, and, this we ought to discover in ancient literature in order to find in the history of language and literature and their forms that which is indispensable to keep the language over generations, strong, dignified, and removed from the infiltration of forces of disorders and weakness. (5)

Second, whether old literature is sought for its sake, or for linguistic excellence and purity only, both writers have agreed that new forms of literature are required, to stimulate modern souls and minds. Both of them, as well as al-'Aqqād, found in old Arabic history themes for contemporary literary expression. Central to all these themes is the rise of Islam, and the great transformation it brought in the lives of individuals, in the collective life of Arabs and Muslims, and in the course of historic events. They are moved by the effect of Islamic faith in the

transformation of individuals from a state of indulgence in pleasure, or ignorance or slavery, or despair, to the highest levels of conviction, endurance, and sacrifice, courage, charity and upright human behaviour. They are impressed by the great divide between al-Jāhiliyya and Islam, when, within a period of two to three decades, the same generation saw a unique change, that laid the basis for a new empire, a new quest for equality, a new wave of spiritual, scientific, aesthetic and intellectual endeavour. They look on this phenomenon as the fountainhead of all Arab culture and heritage. Through literary endeavour, they tried to bring it back to life, and make it relevant to the modern Arab or Islamic reader, in the way he understands.

In their endeavour to show the greatness of Arabic literature and the early history of the Arabs, the Egyptian Udabā' attempted to establish a link between the past and the present and as already pointed out, to come with a fresh approach in which new methods of research, analysis and presentation are introduced. In so doing they wanted to stimulate the interest of the new generation of Egyptians and Arabs in Arabic literature, history, and religion, three integrated fields of knowledge.

To start with Haykal, he believes that literature cannot be isolated from all other religious and spiritual matters. Literature cannot perform its mission if it neglected religion on the one hand, and if it did not establish a link between the past and the present in a way which really conforms with modern thought on the other. (6) Thus, Haykal called for new literary themes, and for using forms, like the drama, and the modern short story, which were not known to old Arabic literature, and called for the assimilation of new developments in science, philosophy and art.

According to him, such a change had taken place in European literature. Greek and Roman literatures were a source of inspiration for European literature in the sixteenth century, but poets and writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries established the independence of literature, and wrote in the spirit of their age. In his call for the need to write in the spirit of the age, Haykal says:

Some people may find the taste of life among (Arab) ancients sweeter than the taste of our life ... I do not disagree with their view and I often experience the same feeling ... But literature is the mirror of the age ... If ancient (Arabic) literature ... is necessary for complete cultural background for the writer, it is not sufficient by itself ... The writer must know enough of the principles of science to enable him to discover the essence of life and present it in an honest image which represents his age. (7)

In an attempt to present material on Islamic history and faith in a way which represents the spirit of our age, Haykal wrote an extensive literary book of faith, named, Fi Manzil al-Wahy (In the Home Land of Revelation). The book describes his pilgrimage to Mecca, and visit to the holy and historic places in Mecca, Tā'if and Medina, following the footsteps of the Prophet, and records his observations and meditation throughout this extensive pilgrimage.

Al-'Aqqād also made an attempt to establish a link between the early and the modern history of Islam, and

to expend his Islamic zeal in forms of expression which seemed to him uniquely suited to his talent. His main concern was that of upholding Islam, its history and its literature by praise, by defence, and counter attack against assaults of missionaries in a battle of survival. In his hand, the pen is often mixed up with the sword. In his book Anā, al-'Aqqād describes himself as a person "who has a pen whose scratches are heard and which frightens (others)." (8) This attitude of al-'Aqqād is by no means surprising, for in his day, the last walls of the physical defence of the Islamic world had fallen. Istanbul, the Constantinople of Islam, had capitulated its Islamic role, and no other Islamic capital could boast even a pretence of independence, let alone power. Islam was thrown back to its last ditch, the ditch of substantive truth, and spiritual integrity. Fundamentalists and traditionalists were, like the clergymen of Constantinople on the eve of its fall, locked in an interior world of their own, far removed from the world of reality. 'Abduh was an exception, but lonely and only marginally tolerated by traditionalists. (9)

It may be noted from the above that al-'Aqqād's literature was a literature of "combats". In this kind of literature, arguments, counter arguments and their accompanying psychological effects, were consciously exploited to re-affirm Islam and to create a sense of pride in its history among modern Muslim readers. Like his contemporaries, he raised the banner of scientific objectivity, reason, and logic. (10) He did not seem to believe much in letting the truth speak for itself. Someone had to fight for it, and he took the task upon himself. Husayn, in third place, had little to say for the combative literature of al-'Aqqād, or the reflective literature of Haykal. In his endeavour to introduce a fresh approach to history and Arabic literature, Husayn resorted to an imaginative form of

literature in which he used historical facts only as a spring board and general background for narration.

It must be stated, at this point, that in his introduction to 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, Husayn meditates on the role and function of literature, on Arabic literature in general, and tries to put his imaginative Islamic work within the context of these thoughts. His view of literature is largely "aesthetic". He sees in literature its effects on the internal life of the individual, his thoughts, feelings, and activity, imagination and inspiration. He says:

The literature which is truly fertile is that which gives you pleasure when you read it, because it satisfies your mind and feeling ... and because its revelation extends beyond its text. It sends you part of its fertility, richness, force, and gives words for your speech as it did to ancient (writers) and it will rest in your heart as a permanent image, or it will draw your heart in its own image ....(11)

Husayn's supreme model of great literature is Homer's Iliad, which to him, served as a fountainhead, a source, for all Greek literature, and which still serves, down to the present day as an inspiration to European literature. In the same manner, ancient Arabic literature provides a source and a fountainhead for all literature. The stories of Jāhili Arabs and their events, the biography of the Prophet, Islamic conquests, civil wars and disasters which hit the Arabs in different ages, have provided great themes which inspired writers and poets, and even folklore writers.

(12) Implicitly, he seems to have set for himself that task of threading together some of this heritage, and presenting it in form and language accessible and pleasurable to the modern reader. He is aware of writing in an imaginative, sometimes mythological form, to contemporaries who approve of reason only, and believe in nothing else. In 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, he reports:

I want these to know that reason is not everything, but men have other faculties which are in no lesser need of nourishment and satisfaction than reason, and that these stories and narrations if unappealing to reason, unacceptable to logic, and unconforming to scientific methodology, still find a ready response in the hearts of men, in their feelings, emotions, imagination, in their love for simplicity, and their need for rest from the hard work of life ....(13)

It may be noted from the above that Ḥusayn's work, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, has special importance in the realm of literature and history as well. In the following, we will present a study on the contents of this work, then we will offer an evaluation of this work, and make an attempt to show its importance in attaching Ḥusayn to the world of Islam, and its importance on a universal level. 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra is a long work in three volumes. It contains no great uniformity in form or subject matter, or even style of narration. In fact, a good portion of it is a repetition of the folklore legends of pre-Islamic history. These legends form several concentric circles, the narrowest circle being that of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib

(d. 578) and his household, and his holy function as a keeper of the Ka'ba of Mecca and provider for pilgrims. The central events of this inner circle relate to his oath to sacrifice one of his sons as soon as they become ten in number, and the following quick drama of the fate, ransom, marriage, and early death of his most beloved son 'Abdullāh (d. 569 ~~AD~~), the father of the Prophet Muḥammad. The sacrificial lot fell on him, but he was ransomed from the Gods by one hundred camels. He married, but stayed very briefly with his wife to join a caravan to Damascus and never to return home. He died among his uncles in Medina shortly before his arrival. (14) These successive dramatic events point out to the specific role for which 'Abdullāh was chosen. In Ḥusayn's eyes, he was not to die before its performance, nor to live after its completion: namely, the role of being the father of the Prophet Muḥammad. Looked upon from the other side of the coin, it represented Muḥammad's destiny to be an orphan. His father died at an early stage of his life and soon his mother too. He had no brother or sister - lonely, and in a constant search for a bond to fill the emptiness left in his soul by the early departure first of his father and then his mother. The emptiness, in good time, was filled through the Islamic community which became the great family, not of himself alone, but of all Muslims, a brotherhood blessed by God. (15) Muslims see in this innermost circle of events, the doom, miraculous saving, and short life of 'Abdullāh, the hand of God preparing the stage for the great imminent drama of Muḥammad's prophecy. (16)

The Second Circle focused upon in Ḥusayn's above work is that of religious conflict between paganism, Christianity, and Judaism in Arabia and the wars between Judaism and Christianity for the mastery of the Arabian soul, and incidentally or principally, the wars of the superpowers of the time, Byzantium and Persia

for the mastery of caravan routes from South to North Arabia. This was a background of deadly religious intolerance. The Judaized King of Himyar in Yemen, persecutes the Christian community of Najrān and puts twenty thousand Christians to the fire and the sword. Ethiopia retaliates by sending an expedition to Yemen, with logistical help from Byzantine ships. The Ethiopians defeat the King of Yemen. Their (the Ethiopians) commander of the army, Abraha, marches on Mecca to destroy the Ka'ba, the house of God. The Meccans do not give battle, but the Ka'ba is miraculously saved by birds that throw stones on the Ethiopian army. (17) As a matter of fact, this is revealed in the Qur'anic Sūra of the Fīl. (18)

Being saved, the house of God soon became the stage of the great conflict between idolatry and faith in one God. According to Ḥusayn, Judaism and Christianity had both failed in Arabia. The transformation needed a fresh wave, bringing a new faith, which, while carrying forward the same line of divine revelation, brings a new and firm purity. (19) Islam was that new faith which put a line of demarcation between believers in one supreme God, sole without equal, or partner, and those who do not hold this faith, al-mushrikūn. Reaching this point, Ḥusayn emphasizes the importance of the worship of the sole one God in Islam. Thus he reports that the Prophet Muḥammad in the year of Hudaibiyya (6/628), passes by the grave of his mother, Āmina, who had died long before his marriage in (576) and asks God to let him pray for her forgiveness for not worshipping one God. But God does not give him permission. He cries and Muslims cry with him. God is firm on this supreme principle which accepts no compromise. (20)

In addition to the first and second circles, a



third one is taken up in the second volume of 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra. The scene here is no longer Arabia, but Byzantine Alexandria, the conflict is one that takes place in the minds of men, the form used to reveal it, is a long conversation reminiscent of Plato's (d. 348/347 B.C.) dialogues; and the persons are Hellenic Greeks. The theme is the lingering nostalgia for Graeco-Roman Gods and way of life, and the dissatisfaction with the suppression of freedom, and the abuse of religious belief for the service of Caesar (symbolizing the temporal power of Byzantium).

In dealing with this point, Ḥusayn brings four persons to the scene, the governor of the city with his two friends Calcratus and Androcles, and a monk. Talking to these two friends, the governor sums up the situation by saying that Caesar represented and spoke for an alliance between earth and heaven, symbolized by Jesus Christ and Christianity, which existed ever since the new religion was imposed on people. He adds that "the position of Caesar in the old religions was the same as in the new one". While he persecuted the helpless Christians in the name of Jupiter earlier, he, ironically enough, speaks for Christ now, showing his power to the Athenians. In view of this situation, the governor appealed to his friends to submit to Caesar for, in his words, "life is better than death". (21) Reacting to the governor's speech, Androcles suggests that allegiance be divided between Dionysius and the Caesar and Christ: the night to Dionysius and the day to be divided between Caesar and Christ. (22)

This three-level existence is insupportable and unacceptable from a religious stance. According to Ḥusayn, the answer of the monk shows his disapproval of Androcles suggestion. The monk mentioned that men are made sinful, and added that if they gave all their time for repentance, they would not be able to remove even

part of the guilt which stuck to them except by a mercy of God that "touches minds, revealing to them the truth and guiding them to the right path". (23) The monk also tried to show that there is a power above that of human reason. This power guides men towards the path of truth. Focusing on reason, the Monk says that reason is good in itself, especially, in the light of the fact that the motives for evil do not stem from it, but from men's lusts and instincts. (24) But even though the monk holds that reason is characterized by being mutinous and vain ... it is nevertheless limited, and cannot explain all aspects of the miracles described in the Gospels. (25) The Monk, according to Ḥusayn says:

God performs these miracles through His prophets to show that reason is still weak and insufficient ... This will not find its correct role except when God performs His great miracle ... the one which reason understands most completely ... as not to be able to deny, and respects most highly as not to reject or oppose ....(26)

Reaching this point, the Monk also adds:

Reason has matured ... and it appeals for this miracle in all its force. (27)

The signs of this miracle are clearly appearing and Buḥaira, the Monk has seen them. (28)

In our understanding, the passages of the conversation are purely the work of Ḥusayn's imagination. Their setting suggests the relevance, not only of the Christian heritage to the course of events

that brought Islam, but also of Hellenistic thought. The conversation also hints that Christianity has not given complete answers to the questions of the period. By being state religion, Christianity became a tool of suppression. The alliance of Caesar and Christ brought about a contradiction which turned many from Christianity, and drove others, to the seclusion of monasteries, looking for signs of spiritual re-birth. It is not far-fetched to see a link between Ḥusayn's personal experience of persecution at the hands of the state, when he was removed from his post at the Egyptian University, and his warning, made under a historical cover, in a different land, religion, and using alien names, of the dangers inherent in any alliance of state and religion. (29) This danger is not confined to persons directly involved, but may damage the whole religious cause, and raise doubts about the credibility of religion itself. This was a theme which particularly occupied him. Ḥusayn and the other Udabā' were concerned to establish the non-desirability of "theocracy". They all precluded leadership by divine right and rejected the rule of un-restrainable autocrats on the basis that this does not conform with Islamic rules and principles. Islam focuses on three major concepts, equality, justice and freedom, and all leaders should absolutely abide by these principles. In any case, the Udabā's views on theocracy and government, and their relevance to the problems of the time in Egypt, are comprehensively discussed in Chapter VI.

But to turn back to Ḥusayn's conversation, we must state that it suggests a significant idea about the role of reason, which departs, in a way, from the high rational emphasis of some of the intellectuals of the period. He says:

Your reason had been excessive in

self-confidence thus becoming a mutinous tyrant, and now it is excessive in self-doubt, humiliated and submissive. Each of these conditions is a sickness from which you ought to be cured to reach this middle state, believing in your reason to some extent, and denying its power to some extent; treating it with the necessary humility that enables it to understand, think, and guide you in life, and that gives your soul a chance for faith, certainty, and that course of spiritual nutrition without which you cannot live. (30)

In our opinion, the above remark sheds an autobiographical light on Ḥusayn's inner intellectual life, oscillating between the mutinous tyranny of self-confidence and rational assertion, and the humiliating submissiveness of self-doubt, and consciously trying to steer towards a middle course, synthesizing faith and reason.

In any case, on turning back to Book II of 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, we must state that the choice of a Graeco-Roman setting for that book is also significant as it puts the drama of the rise of Islam in a world historical context. In Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, he sums up this context as follows:

Take all the products of the Islamic mind, and you will find that they come down to literary, philosophic and artistic works, which, whatever their personifications, are linked to Greek civilisation and its

literature, philosophy and art, to politics and jurisprudence, which, whatever else, are closely linked with Roman politics and jurisprudence, and the noble religion of Islam, and its call for good and demand for charity. Whatever people may say, they will not be able to deny that Islam has come to complete and confirm the Bible and the Gospels. (31)

In the remaining part of Book II, Ḥusayn concentrates on Arab folklore regarding the time when Muḥammad was not yet called upon to deliver the message of God and convey his revelation. The period is depicted by Ḥusayn as one of intensive search for faith and spiritual re-birth, among heathen Arabs and among neighbouring Christians of Egypt, Syria and 'Irāq. A new message is imminent, and Buḥaira, the Christian monk identifies Muḥammad, who, as a child of twelve accompanies his uncle, 'Abū Ṭālib (d. 619) in a caravan to Damascus, and advises him to interrupt the journey and return him back and take excessive care to protect him from the plots of Jews. (32)

Book II goes on to narrate the accidental meeting of Calcrates, and Zayd Ibn 'Amr of Quraysh among Banī Kalb tribe. Calcrates had been taken captive by raiders while travelling in the desert with his friend Buḥaira, the Monk, in search of a new light that was about to dawn, and he is now a slave with Banī Kalb, awaiting the news of Muḥammad whom Buḥaira had identified as the new Prophet. Zayd, on the other hand, had left Mecca to Bilād al-Rūm (Byzantium) three years ago in search for a faith that will satisfy his soul and spiritual craving. (33) He was accompanied by two other friends Waraqa Ibn Nawfal (d. 3/225) and 'Uthmān Ibn

al-Huweirith, and together they conversed with Jews and Christians. Zayd's friends are converted to Christianity, but he is in doubt. For he believed that Jews and Christians have complicated and changed the "generous nature" and the "original simplicity" of their own religions. (34) He also had learned from Christian monks that the new revelation will descend on the land of the Arabs. The two men become friends, and Zayd buys Calcrates freedom. They proceed together to Mecca, but they are killed on the way by robbers from Banī-Lakhm. (35)

With the end of Book II, the broad narrative comes to an end. Book III takes the form of episodes, "connected" or "disconnected", which form part of the Prophet's biography, or take place around it. As the narration moves to recorded events and persons, it becomes constrained in the use of imagination, for the narrative has to be authenticated by historical reference. Husayn mentioned that he used very few sources for his work. In his words, these do not exceed Sīrat Ibn Hishām, Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd and Tārīkh al-Tabarī. (36)

The narration now covers grounds more familiar to the Muslim reader. First, the episode of Muḥammad's management of Khadīja's trading venture in Syria and her love for him, at her request, when she already conceived an emotional inclination towards him. A servant of Khadīja who accompanied Muḥammad relates to his mistress a strange happening, which indicates a supernatural or divine concern for the young man. She consults with her cousin, Ibn Nawfal and obtains from him an assurance that Muḥammad was intended for a great mission. Then comes the quotation from Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) narrating the culmination of Khadīja's love when she sent Nafīsa bint Munia as a messenger to Muḥammad, after his return from Syria. (37)

Nafīsa said:

Oh Muḥammad! "What stops you from marrying?" He said: "I don't have the means." I said: "if you are spared that, and called to beauty, wealth, honour, and qualification, would you respond?" And he said: "who is she?" I said: "Khadija". He said: "how can I do that?" I said: "leave that to me". He said: "I do". So I went and told her and she sent to him, saying come at such and such an hour, and sent after her uncle 'Amr Ibn Assad to give her hand in marriage. He came, and Muḥammad came with his uncles and one of them officiated for him in marriage. (38)

This is a touching love story which had a momentous impact on Muḥammad. It is very human and realistic. It is a sign that heaven did indeed care for the Prophet.

The part of the Prophet's biography from the moment of revelation to the victory of the battle of Badr that occurred in (2/624) is told in the context of the deadly envy felt by 'Amr Ibn Hishām (Abū Jahl) for Muḥammad (Book III.) In the background, while Muḥammad was receiving revelation from the Angel, Jibrīl, 'Amr is ironically visited by the devil. (39) The context, which is based on Arab folklore, is reminiscent of Greek mythology of parallel scenes and games in the visible and invisible worlds, converging and diverging, to determine fates, and events. 'Amr was killed in Badr, but his son 'Ikrima became a Muslim and an illustrious soldier who died at the decisive battle of Yarmūk (15/636)

The remaining part of Book III is made up of "episodes" about different Islamic heroes, highlighting some aspects of their characters. One of these episodes is about Ja'far Ibn Abī Tālib (d. 8/630). It deserves special attention, for its autobiographical reference and substantive content. It will be fully translated and analysed below.

Having presented the contents of 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra in its three parts, we will now introduce an evaluation of this important book, and we will show its significance on a personal (as applied to Ḥusayn) and on a universal level. To start with, the questions which arise in our mind are as follows: what does the imaginative Islamic literature of Ḥusayn signify? To what extent did he succeed in achieving the targets he set in his introduction to 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra? Did he have a message in mind, and what could that message be? And if he did have one, to what extent was he successful in conveying it? Did his Islamic literary work have meaning only to his immediate audience or does it have a more lasting value extending to other generations? In short, what were the literary and intellectual merits of his words, what was their immediate impact, and what were their likely long term impact and prospects of durability?

Ḥusayn did succeed in showing the great and diverse wealth of folklore, legend, and semi-historical material surrounding the misty scene of pre-Islamic Arabia, and even the relevant world beyond it, in as far as it was connected with imminent events that were soon to take place. He repeatedly made the point that a momentous turning point in world history, such as the rise of Islam, could not have taken place suddenly without previous causes, and without signs and indications. But his narratives are not sufficiently linked. The techniques of connecting which he uses are



largely casual, outward, accidental, and often forced. A favourite method of connecting episodes which he uses, is to bring a person back to a new episode after he disappears from another. (40)

His literary achievements are largely in the field of linguistic style. His narratives follow the course of events as traditionally told. The main narrative is usually told as it has been handed over by ancient historians or narrators. Additions are made "around" the traditional narratives, mainly by filling in the background until he reaches the point of the narrative itself. These additions take the form of an extension of the narration itself. They rarely add a new dimension to the flow of the narration by way of depth, or interpretation. The musical and repetitive sentences he uses, do at times succeed in evoking feelings of tender nostalgia.

The spiritual and intellectual problems of pre-Islamic Christianity are not adequately identified. The problem of the lingering on of Graeco-Roman culture, outlooks, even Gods, beneath a surface of a different state religion, as Christianity came to be, may have been true. (41) It is quite possible that Ḥusayn wanted to hint that much of Arabian Jāhiliya lingered on after Islam, perhaps, even up to the time when he was writing. The real demarcation line between two cultural eras may not be as definitive as ideology supposes. Cultural lines of different eras can be crossed and re-crossed in various subtle and hidden ways, and things believed to have vanished can make surprise come-backs. And it is even possible for men in the new eras to defend themselves, as having consciously or unconsciously, retraced and even possibly re-crossed the demarcation line backwards to positions in the "land" of the old culture. Ḥusayn seems at the time of writing 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra to

have been intellectually intrigued by the demarcation line of Jāhiliyya and Islam. This curiosity had landed him in trouble. The question which seems to have occupied his mind is this: could the Jāhiliyya of historical and literary tradition have been an exaggeration which was needed to draw a contrasting picture to Islam? The question had been raised by orientalist before him, and conclusions were largely set to undermine the impact of Islam or to lessen the importance of its surprising and seemingly miraculous suddenness and internal perfection. (42)

The argument was pursued in two opposite directions, one being that much of Islam was embryonic in Jāhiliyya and the other being that much of the "evil" attributed to Jāhiliyya was invented to highlight the great achievements of Islam. From a doctrinal point of view, Islam is a triumph of good over evil, of belief in one supreme God of the universe, over belief in many Gods, of purity over idolatry, of morality over laxity, a creation of a brotherhood out of internecine conflicts, a nation out of disunited tribes; a sudden and miraculous replacement of two decaying empires, by a new vigorous empire, with great respect for man, and a belief in human equality before God. (43) The polemics could be summed up in the claim, against the traditional view of Islam, that the Jāhiliyya was not indeed Jāhiliyya (semantic arguments being also resorted to) and the miracle was not a miracle, and the whole matter could be resolved in a context of a methodology of historical research and analysis, which being "scientific" was above reproach or doubt. In our opinion, before writing 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra in 1933, that was exactly what Ḥusayn did in his work, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī published in 1926, and its moderated version, Fī al-Adab al-Jāhilī (On Pre-Islamic Literature)

published in 1927. (44) In 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, however, he seems to have discovered that scientific methodology was neither wrong nor faulty, but that the question raised was far bigger than one of semantic or historical analysis. Therefore, this time Ḥusayn did not merely view Jāhiliyya and Islam in a context of historical sequence, but in a context of human outlooks. They have both symbolic and realistic meanings. To sacrifice the symbolic in a narrowed search of the "really historical" may culminate in missing a point. It goes without saying, that the whole drama of Islam is set within a context which is simultaneously historical and symbolic. After all, the Qur'ān was revealed for many reasons. It was meant to explain events that were occurring, to answer crucial questions raised at that time, to make a reference to individuals who really lived and contributed to society or failed to contribute. (45) That was the divine scheme as revealed through the Islamic faith.

Be all that as it may, the question which, at the moment, arises in our mind is as follows: did Ḥusayn succeed in resolving in 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra the questions he had raised in his earlier two books? Did he come to a conclusion along the lines described above? This point will be treated soon. But we need first to go further into the internal structure of 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra before taking this crucial point.

The point that needs to be made, at this stage, is that the problem of Christianity on the eve of the rise of Islam was not so much the process of forces working for imposition, absorption, rejection, conciliation and confrontation, between the two successive and seemingly contradictory Graeco-Roman, and Christian-Judaic cultures as portrayed by Ḥusayn, but the deep rift in Christianity itself around the two aspects of the nature of Jesus Christ, the divine (son of God) and the

human (son of man). (46) The persecution which riddled the Byzantine Empire at the time was not that of believers in the Graeco-Roman Gods and way of life, but of monophysites.

It must be mentioned, at this juncture, that the general point of view of orientalist and missionaries on the subject falls into two parts: one is that the persecution which took various forms, political, economic and spiritual, created a rebellious atmosphere, which helped the Arabs to achieve an easy victory over Byzantium, especially in Syria and Egypt. (47) This seems very logical. The second is that the populations of these countries may have rashly taken to Islam mistaking it for a victory or support for the "monophysite" doctrine. (48) This is most improbable. The biography of the Prophet has on record a dialouge between himself and the Christians of Najrān in South Arabia which was carried out in an amazingly free, frank and respectful atmosphere on both sides. Both knew what the issues were about: both were aware of Islam's view of Christ and of itself as a complete revelation which affirms the Christian revelation and continues it. Both were aware of the Prophet's belief that Islam corrects errors of the supporters of the Christian tradition, arising from mistaken interpretations, or deviations from original texts. (49)

However, in our understanding, it was the Islamic view about the human and the divine in human lives and events which was being put to the test. Whether the two views are reconcilable or not, is a question that was not raised then or since. Subsequent history has taken a course which seems to assume that they are not. The modern view of man is deeply influenced by the Darwinian view of origins of species. A man governed by biological determinism in a universe governed by the

determinism of physical laws. This, in any case, was not the personal problem of Ḥusayn, or the problem of his generation, and was not a problem for Islam either, for there is no particular reason to raise it from a dogmatic point of view, although it did become a problem to some Sufis and Shī'is, and thereby a fringe question in Islam. Under the influence of Shī'ism, an image of the saint al-walī eventually arises in Sufism. Al-Walī, to Sufis, is a perfect man and an intermediary between man and God. However, as Islam rejects any model of perfection and asserts the human frailties of great men, the concept of al-walī has then to be contained within human bounds. Any hint of "incarnation" is considered a renegation. Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/913) was crucified for such hints. The same happened to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 598/1191). Moreover, according to the Islamic doctrine, every man has direct access to God and, therefore, no man or human institution is needed as an intermediary between man and God. The rules of righteousness are set forth in the Qur'ān, the word of God, the unalterable, everlasting presence throughout successive human generations.

The great companions of the Prophet Muḥammad have no place in doctrine, though 'Alī and his descendants acquire a special status in Shī'ī doctrine which, in one form or another, persists to the present day. Sunnī Islam tolerates reverence to 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn, his son, as long as this reverence remains outside doctrine and belief. It is "natural" and it is "deserved", but it is not a tenet of faith. The dividing line between Sunnī Islam and any Shī'ī sect rests on whether 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn are assigned a supra-human status or kept within the bounds of humanity. Islamic doctrine has exercised a persistent pressure upon Shī'ism to contain its reverence to Āl al-Bayt or family of the Prophet, within human limits. This is absolutely essential to

affirm the Islamic central concept of the "unity" and "transcendence" of God. Worship is only due to the "one" God, the creator of the whole universe. In any case, on turning back to Ḥusayn, we must state that when he wrote 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, he did not seem to make any recognition of the question of "human" and "divine in man", or pay it any attention. (50) His experience in solving his own spiritual crisis was partly emotional, almost mystic and partly rational.

Be all that as it may, on turning back to Ḥusayn's work, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, another point which such a literary book might have emphasized, is the Persian culture and religious background, seemingly centred around Zoroastrianism, which Islam was destined to eclipse almost completely. (51) The interesting point would have been the radically different outlook which Islam took here, since Zoroastrianism lies outside the line of Abrahamic revelation with which Islam identifies itself.

Such questions were also not dealt with in Ḥusayn's work al-Wa'd al-Ḥaqq which like, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra treated the pre-Islamic period, and the early era of Islamic history. This book which was published in 1950, forms a link between the imaginary literature represented by 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, and the biographical and historical literature represented by al-Shaykhān published in 1960, and al-Fitna al-Kubrā published in 1947/1953. In style, al-Wa'd al-Ḥaqq resembles the few last episodes of 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra in that it is built more deliberately around specific persons and incidents. The writer gives rein to his imagination in picturing the backgrounds of his heroes, who are chosen from fringe-society, living at the margins of Arabian tribal life. The few bits of information known about these backgrounds are used as

"references", but everything else is the work of imagination. When it comes to the Islamic period, care is taken to draw through them a picture of the "rise of Islam", as seen by people who come from half-outcast, half-slave surroundings. Through faith, they seek identity, dignity, equality, and freedom. Being easy targets in a tribal society which gives protection, and ascribes rights only to blood members of the tribe they are subjected by Meccans to persecution and physical torture. The Meccans wanted them to terrorise the free Qurayshis and give them a feeling of insecurity and danger, on the one hand, and to stop the spread of Islam among the numerous groups of half-outcasts in the Arabian Peninsula on the other. Qurayshis must have felt real concern about a possible rising or general social destabilization caused by these people which could tilt the scales against them. The persons whose lives are followed in al-Wa'd al-Haqq, stood firm. Some of them died in the process of persecution, and some were ransomed to live as loyal free Muslims. (52) It did seem, however, that Qurayshī tactics did succeed in containing the numbers of Muslims of both classes, but they failed in containing the spread of Islam itself. The deadlock was broken by the conversion of Medina, and the migration of the Prophet Muḥammad and the few Muslims of Mecca both free and outcast. The lives of these minor heroes are followed to the last bit of information known about them. Their early conversion and steadfast loyalty give them prestige and precedence and raise them to high rank, until they are overtaken by the cycle of time bringing changes in circumstances, environments and generations. (53)

Al-Wa'd al-Haqq though diffuse, does have a plan and unifying concepts. From a literary standpoint, it represents an improvement in style, conceptualisation, uniformity, and clarity of purpose. 'Alā Hāmish

al-Sīra, to Ḥusayn, was a springboard from which he moved in two directions, the first being history and biography, and the second direct treatment of Islam as such. Al-Wa'd al-Haqq stands halfway between his imaginative and his biographical historical literature, not only in that he settles down here to speak about specific persons, but also in that he shows an alertness to events and tries to understand their meanings; he detects social forces at work, and sees men overrun by these forces, yet trying to swim against the current, and play a part in counter-forces, which ultimately change the whole concept and power of social balance. History is not made only in Carlylean manner, by great heroes. Less known and unknown heroes are often the ones who tip the balance.

But to turn back to Ḥusayn's work 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra', it is noted that in this book, he seems to be rushing quickly, probably without an over-all plan, to fill gaps in contemporary Arabic writing. People look to literature to raise and treat in a simplified human way the questions which arise in their minds, the problems that trouble them, the matters that deeply touch their emotions, awakening talents, ideas and aspirations. (54) When Ḥusayn and his generation came on the scene, Arabic literature was still fossilized. They had to innovate in style, form, and content of literature. They simplified the language. They introduced the story, short and long. They wrote plays in prose and poetry; they applied literary criticism, used the essay form, and wrote long intellectual treatises. The content of this vast material reflects the intellectual life of the period.

One of the central places in these writings is occupied by Islam. In our view, most of these early Islamic writings seem to be rushed, written with haste, and a sense of urgency. It was a topic not so much of



their choice, but rather a historical compulsion. If they had not taken it up, the case of Islam in modern times, i.e. the presentation of Islam to modern man, would have been lost by default. It is difficult to speculate what would have happened if they had failed to rise to the task. In our perception, in a short time, something like the Turkish example might have prevailed. For example, a weakened Islam would have been pushed to the privacy of homes, where anxious parents, in half-secrecy, try to impart to their children some picture of Islam, with the vague hope that it will influence their spiritual and moral outlooks and behaviours. On a national level, the nation would have forsaken its collective soul; it would have lost a protective shield and effective measure. Inevitably, it would have suffered from a spiritual and moral void, and become more exposed to any intellectual invasion.

All literary writings necessarily derive heavily from self experience. This factor can become so autocratic, that a writer cannot write anything, whatever the form, which is not in some way autobiographical. Ḥusayn started his literary career with an autobiography. Al-Ḥakīm, al-'Aqqād and others, wrote biographical works and drew heavily on their autobiographical experience. Every one of them must have lived the life of Islam, and all felt the crisis of Islam deeply. Some of them were heavily swayed by the forces which caused the crisis. Ḥusayn was more exposed personally to it, because his first venture in literary history, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī, caused great concern about his position in the "game". In 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, he beats a retreat, under cover of mythology and legend. He is very careful not to hit or lay mines. But as he proceeds cautiously, he gradually finds himself emerging from the mist, or rather the smoke-screen, to the real world of Islam. This intense

experience is eloquently described in an episode entitled, Dhū al-Janāhayn (The Martyr of the Two Wings). The episode deserves special consideration, for its literary merit, its autobiographical significance, its spiritual and intellectual content, and its "symbolic" summing up of the whole period. Below is a summary of this episode, followed by a critical commentary. (For a translation of the whole episode, refer to the Appendix).

This episode revolves around the troubles which face human beings as a result of the oppression, cruelty and the evil deeds of some persons, and provides for the required means for overcoming such troubles. These means are derived from the Islamic code of ethics and include: patience, steadfastness in calamity, will power, adherence to principles, forgiveness, and readiness to sacrifice one's life in the way of truth and righteousness.

The story starts by exhibiting the troubles, agony and miseries of an old man, al-Shaykh (or Husayn himself), which were caused by the plots and the evil deeds of the hypocrites among men. In an attempt to escape from this depressing situation, he, takes refuge in an "isolated" quiet place, where "nature" appeared in its utmost beauty, with its trees, flowers, birds, wind, streams, moon, sky, etc. While sitting in a state of perplexity, he suddenly sees an apparition, ṣūra (of a beautiful child with a gentle voice). She tells him that she came to bring back peace to him, to relieve his troubled soul, to protect him from doubts, and to take him to the path of truth and righteousness, the path which God has set for the good among human beings.

In order to reveal her true intentions, she informs him that she consoled other remarkable Islamic men before him like Ja'far Ibn Abī Tālib, the Prophet's

cousin. Ja'far, a man of pure soul, principles, truthfulness and sincerity responded to the Prophet's call with love and enthusiasm. He endured all kinds of pain resulting from Quraysh's persecution, for the sake of consolidating Islam. Meanwhile, the apparition gives him the required consolation and encouragement in Mecca, in his voyages to Ethiopia and Medina later on. Then she accompanies him in his great voyage to Mu'ta when he felt pained as a result of the Prophet's appointment of Zayd Ibn Hāritha to lead the army. The apparition adds, that he (Ja'far) raised the issue with the Prophet who kindly, and with the utmost concern, advised him to proceed for his best. She also mentions that when Ja'far complained to Muḥammad for promoting Zayd, his intention was good, noble and charitable. He wanted to advance himself to danger as he preferred Zayd and other Muslims to himself. And when Zayd was killed and his turn came to lead the army and to carry the banner, he advanced with this banner, until his right and left hands were cut, and he fell down as a martyr. The Prophet said that God had compensated Ja'far for the hands which he lost, with blood stained wings, which enable him to fly in heaven.

The "episode" deserves a close study, as it seems to epitomize Ḥusayn's resolution of his spiritual crisis, which may have seemed to him as personal, but which in fact represented and symbolized, the spiritual crisis of the period. For the humiliation which Ḥusayn suffered at one time was due to a stand he took at a very critical time in publishing his book, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī. What he thought was that he was applying scientific methodology to pre-Islamic history in that work. However, he soon found himself standing in contradiction with the Qur'anic text, and tradition about the historical side of the story of Ibrāhīm. For the Qur'ān is explicit that Ibrāhīm, the father of prophets, had chosen Mecca as a home, and built the

ka'ba. Tradition elaborates the story in various ways, which are reflected to this day in pilgrimage rituals. (55) Ḥusayn cast doubt on the historical authenticity of the story. Of course, this seemed to the majority of Muslims to strike at the root of Islam. Stories and narrations related in the Qur'ān are generally treated as facts of history, things that naturally happened. Symbolic interpretations are very rare and treated with "reserve" or "doubt". In the Qur'ān, two kinds of stories are related. One mentioning names of persons, tribes and places, and these are taken to be true representations of something that happened at one time to these persons and in these specific places. There are, on the other hand, narrations which avoid mentioning any names. The places and anecdotes are related in a blurred manner to suggest a generality that calls for symbolic understanding and interpretation.

Be that as it may, the reason for the rarity of symbolic interpretations and their treatment with reserve or doubt by Muslim traditionalists is partly due to the fact that the Bāṭiniyya schools, which started from an Islamic standpoint, legitimized al-ta'wīl or broad and even free interpretation, which not only diverted meanings, but opened the door for "suspending", "replacing" and even producing different beliefs, rituals and texts. (56) On the other hand, fundamental criticism, which Europeans applied to the Bible and which Ḥusayn seemed to be emulating, had a completely different context. For although the Bible is considered by Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam, as God's revelation, yet this revelation is not the same as that of the Qur'ān. The only part of the old Testament which is revealed directly is that of the Ten Commandments revealed to Moses. The Gospels, while reflecting the teachings of Jesus Christ, were written by his disciples. (57) All this allows for critical

speculation. But the Qur'ān is the literal revelation of God, delivered through His Angel Jibrīl, to Muḥammad. Consequently, any Islamic view, however, tolerant and liberal, must start from two fundamental truths. First, that the Qur'ān which we have with us is the authentic Qur'ān revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, without error, omission, or addition. (58) Human error in writing or copying is irrelevant, for God has willed that He had revealed the book and He will preserve it as stated in the following verse of Sūrat al-Hijr:

We have, without doubt,  
Sent down the Message;  
And We will assuredly  
guard it (from corruption). (59)

Second, that the whole content of the Qur'ān is true, since it is the word of God. To question any part of it is to question divine truth itself. There is room for explanation, of course, but a line is drawn between explanation, tafsīr and free interpretation ta'wīl. Sunnī Islam as well as the dominant stream of Shī'ī Islam observe an absolute faith in the Qur'anic text. (60)

Consequently, Ḥusayn, at that time found himself, unwittingly, in the midst of an old controversy, without being able to extricate himself by resorting to a symbolic rather than historical interpretation of the story of Ibrāhīm. The torment he felt was not only due to the outward troubles which he had to face, such as the loss of his university position, but also to what may have seemed to him a disproportionate reaction to a seemingly "innocent", "scientific", and "modern" stand. The turmoil he felt is beautifully described in the "episode" which has been translated.

This episode has echos of psalms of romantic odes,

and of Sufi poetry. It avoids using the symbolism of wine, love, and their ecstasies, but instead uses as a frame a beautiful, though sorrowful picture of nature: a river, green trees, clouds, birds, sunshine, moonlight, night and day. Nature forms an important dimension in Islam, since the Qur'ān invokes its various faces: beauty, mathematical determination as revealed in the following verse of the Qur'anic Sūra of al-Rahmān:

The sun and the moon  
Follow courses (exactly) computed. (61)

It also establishes its obedience through natural law as stated in the same sūra:

And the herbs and the trees -  
Both (alike) bow in adoration. (62)

This is in addition to its penetrability by the human mind as evidence of God's creation, reflecting His power and glory. It is also invoked as the vision of eternal life. The choice of a frame of nature by Husayn for this episode goes beyond the romantic approach of some poets and writers, as nature stands not only as reality, but also as divine immortality. The appearance of an apparition is not strange or forced, for being blind, all his visual perceptions must be apparitional. The visual and imaginary are only separated by the application of rational categories. The apparition being, thus, more real to Husayn than to sighted readers, must have reflected a deeper layer of mystic perception, and at the same time, it enables him like the moon he describes: (63)

to play with the earth and all that  
is on it, a sarcastic and cunning  
game, without consideration for

anyone or anything. (64)

This apparition forms the centre of the whole episode. It is introduced as an enigma at the beginning then as an unsurprising surprise in the middle, and as an inward echo at the end.

The apparition plays several games with him. At first, she relieves his pain, and makes him admit that the enigmatic idea of "migration" (hijra) did occur to him as a crude idea. Having extricated from him a rejection of this idea, she playfully asserts that indeed it is what he needs, and what he has been asking for, but he was thinking of migration in a wrong direction. After giving him a "message" of peace, re-assurance, quietness, forgiveness for the guilty, and urging him to ignore the ignorant, and after enabling him to sublimate his personal trouble, and after calling him to think of his crisis on a universal level, she assumes the role of narrator to tell a story which now becomes a universal model. The crisis is resolved by a self-identification with the model. His grief is melted and sublimated in the tragedy of Ja'far, the grace granted to him by God and his high esteem accorded to him in heaven. The shift from the "personal" or temporal, to the eternal is reflected by a shift in the dialogue with the apparition from the immediate problem of Husayn to the narration that ends up in heaven, where Ja'far can fly at will in his two blood-stained wings.

As for his crisis, he had lived long with it and had now reached the point of resolving it. He knew it, and was ready, as indicated in the following statements:

He simply looked at it (the  
apparition) ... as if he had

expected its visit and presence.  
(65)

The question had been long asked and the answer was now ready. All that was needed was to spell it out. The statements which hold that he looked at the apparition without addressing it, as if he expected it to start speaking to him, which it did, carry the above theme.  
(66)

Apparently, Husayn's thought indicates that this long expected answer comes as a matter of divine grace, and not as a result of a personal discovery, and takes him time to discover it for what it is, to realize that God's grace was at last visiting him; as indicated in the following conversation between the old man (Husayn himself) and the apparition:

You have called and urged me to come to you and here I come ... while you express no welcome, and pay no attention ... The old man said ... "I called no one ... I only had thoughts that troubled my soul ... "(to which) the apparition (gleefully) replied: "say that I invited myself to you...." (67)

Then she proceeds to identify his problem, indirectly. "Say I am the migration (hijra) ...." and striking a deep note in him he admits that this was an idea which had occurred to him. Yet he says that he does not want to migrate. But even if he wanted, he adds, he would not find a way for migration. (68) That was the crucial point. For migration means departure, not only geographic, but also cultural. It is a new surrender of one's identity and an assumption of another.



But Husayn seems to believe that there is another kind of migration. It is an indispensable venture when things become stifling and stagnant. The apparition tells Husayn, "You want nothing but migration ...", a forsaking of one's land. (69) Husayn's thought indicates, however, that this should be an inward migration, both geographically and spiritually. This theme is held in the following conversation between the apparition and Husayn when she asks:

Have you not migrated to this place since this night? Do you not migrate to yourself every now and then, when you feel oppressed by the environment in which you live and suffer?.... (70)

Husayn apparently believes that the object of migration in a spiritual sense is to clear his (or mans) troubles, to relieve his sorrow, to implement deep faith in his heart by guiding him to the path of truth and righteousness as set by God. (71) To him, this achieves "content with ... conscience" until the moment of departure from life "whatever people's opinions ... were". (72) This conviction is achieved in "seclusion, loneliness and freedom together". (73) The destination is that world to which Muslims migrate. This theme is revealed in the following statement of the apparition while conversing with Husayn:

How many stories there are about these companions of Muḥammad who migrated before him, with or after him ... (whose stories) ... clear your soul from every bitterness, and purify your heart from every hatred, and convince you that I (this world of these migrants) deserve your love

and confidence. (74)

The apparition ends her conversation with Ḥusayn by promising to be always a "friend" and a "companion". (75)

In our understanding, it was this conviction that came to Ḥusayn "slowly slowly ... like a weary breeze" emerging from a sea of sorrow, trouble, and doubt. (76)

The above quoted episode comes towards the end of 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, Book III. The episode sums up the whole meaning of this journey, starting from the world of legend, to half legend, half history, and arriving at last, to the true ground of Islamic history. Much of the mist is cleared, and a vision comes at last, half expected, half surprising. We believe that the experience by itself is a combination of rationality and mysticism - recalling similar experiences of Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) as told in al-Munqidh Min al-Dalāl (The Rescuer from Error) for example. (77) After a lingering doubt and self questioning, in complete loneliness, the vision came at last slowly, slowly.

Repeating the example of those companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, who migrated before him, with or after him, Ḥusayn set his course for his own migration (hijra li-Allāh wa Rasūlih). This shows that this remarkable Egyptian intellectual writer has really taken a deep interest in Islam and, thus, must be given the required recognition for defending this faith and for stimulating interest in its history. More elaboration on the Udabā's efforts to defend Islam, its Prophet and his immediate successors and companions is introduced in the following two chapters on Islamic biographies.

Notes on Chapter II

1. It may be mentioned, at this point, that the reason why Ḥusayn, Ḥaykal and al-'Aqqād are called Udabā' or literary writers, is that they attached special importance to good literary expression in Arabic. In defining Arabic literature, al-'Aqqād says, it is a vehicle of expression which reflects all that occurs in human life. To him, literature nourishes the soul, mind and emotions. It inspires the individual to act freely, an important element for facilitating a dignified life for him. Al-'Aqqād, Muṭāla'āt fī al-Kutub wa al-Ḥayāt (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1924), p. 9. Also see his work, Yas'alunak, p. 237-238.

On the other hand, Ḥusayn believes that literature is an expressive tool which is influenced by the decisive events which take place in the life of nations. Literature varies from one age to another in both forms and contents. Ḥusayn, Alwān (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1958), pp. 5-16.

Even with the change in ideas and forms, old useful views must be retained, but re-introduced in new appealing modes of literary expression. See al-Ḥakīm, Fann al-Adab (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Namūdhabiyya, n.d.), pp. 12-13.

2. Ḥusayn, 'Alā Ḥamish al-Sīra, p. 9.
3. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
4. Ḥaykal, Thawrat al-Adab, p. 43.
5. Ibid., p. 40.
6. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
7. Ibid., p. 26.
8. Al-'Aqqād, Anā, p. 130.
9. 'Abduh advocated the need for reforms in the field of religion, education, Arabic literature and language. 'Abduh, op.cit., pp. 153-165; 179-189. Also see Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh,

Vol. I, (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1931), pp. 425-498.

10. Al-'Aqqād, 'Īd al-Qalam wa Maqālāt Ukhra (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aşriyya, n.d.), p. 18.
11. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 7-8.
12. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
13. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
14. Ibid., pp. 22-63.
15. God requested His Prophet to transcend his tribulations through a community of charity towards and feelings with others. In Sūrat al-Duḥā, it is revealed:

And He found thee  
In need, and made  
Thee independent.  
Therefore, treat not  
The orphan with harshness,  
Nor repulse the petitioner  
(Unheard);  
But the Bounty  
Of thy Lord-  
Rehearse and proclaim.

S. XCIII/6-11. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans. The Holy Qur'an (Cambridge: Murray Printing Company, 1946), pp. 1752-1753.

16. Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd, al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā, Vol. I (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), pp. 150-201.
17. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 64-127.
18. In the above mentioned sūra, it is revealed:

Seest thou not  
How thy Lord dealt  
With the Companions  
of the Elephant?  
Did he not make  
Their treacherous plan  
Go astray?  
And He sent against them  
Flights of Birds,  
Striking them with stones  
Of Baked clay.

Then did He make them  
Like an empty field  
Of stalks and straw,  
(Of which the corn)  
Has been eaten up.

S. CV/1-5, 'Ali, op.cit., p. 1792.

19. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 199-249.

20. Ibid., pp. 164-165.

21. Ibid., pp. 178-179.

22. Ibid., p. 181.

23. Ibid., p. 204.

24. Ibid., p. 208.

25. Ibid., pp. 213-214.

26. Ibid., p. 221.

27. Ibid., p. 222.

28. Ibid., pp. 223-224.

29. It must be stated, at this point, that as a result of the publication of his work, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhili, Husayn was for example condemned by Sa'd Zaghlūl (d. 1927). The latter rejected Husayn's views on religion and literature and even accused him of "insanity". Al-Naqqāsh, op.cit., 101; 103-104. As stated by Pierre Cachia, in the above-mentioned book, Husayn:

showed himself to be at variance with some views long held to be fundamental in Islam. Not only did he injure the susceptibilities of Muslims by representing their forefathers as engaged in literary fraud or by mentioning the Prophet without adding some formula of praise, not only did he deny the traditional thesis that the seven accepted variant readings of the Qur'ān had been handed down by Muḥammad, but he clearly spoke of the Qur'ān as a product of its environment ....

Pierre Cachia, Taha Husayn (London: Luzac and Company Ltd., 1958), p. 95.

30. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, p. 220.
31. ...., Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, p. 39.
32. ...., 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, p. 234.
33. Ibid., pp. 250-275.
34. Ibid., p. 282.
35. Ibid., pp. 282-284.
36. Ibid., p, 12.
37. Ibid., pp. 286-319.
38. Ibid., p. 320.
39. Ibid., pp. 424-448.
40. Ibid., pp. 170-210; 217-227; 265-271.
41. Ibid., pp. 170-210.
42. Al-'Aqqād, Al-Lughā al-Shā'ira, pp. 120-125.
43. Haykal, al-Sharq al-Jadīd, pp. 218-219 and; ... al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977), pp. 20-21. In addition, refer to al-'Aqqād's two works, Haqā'iq al-Islām wa Abātīl Khusūmih (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 1962), pp. 266-274 and; al-Islām wa al-Ḥadāra al-Insāniyya (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, n.d.), pp. 182-185.
44. It may be mentioned , at this point, that when Ḥusayn wrote his book, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī, he apparently believed that science could extend its methodology to provide answers for all questions which concern man and his existence, a position which he changed later on as will be seen in the following chapter.
45. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 170-224.
46. It may be mentioned that there were certain Christian philosophical and theological schools before the advent of Islam. Among these were the Jacobites and the Nestorians. While the Jacobites were influential in Egypt, Ethiopia and Nubia; the Nestorians were popular in 'Irāq and Persia. The Jacobites a monophysite sect, believed that Jesus Christ was God. They

asserted a metaphysical and physical union in him. The Nestorians, a sect influenced by Antioch, an old centre of Christian learning, disagreed with such view and argued that Christ had a dual nature in him, i.e. humanity and divinity. Controversies between these schools of thought were not only confined to matters that have to do with the nature of Christ, but it excluded these to include issues related to God's attributes, freewill and predestination and eschatology. Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, pp. 125-126.

Argumentations among Christians in the sixth century, which by the way, started in the fourth century, were developed in lines with Greek philosophy as stated below:

The controversies within the Church from the fourth to the sixth centuries coincided with a growing interest in Aristotelianism as distinct from Platonism. While Alexandria remained the great Platonist School, Antioch developed its philosophy along the lines of Aristotle. The results of this are seen in the methods which the Christian Antiochenes used in the examination of material data as the foundation of their systematic theology.

J. Windrow Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology, Vol. I (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), p. 49. For more information about Christian controversies before the advent of Islam, refer to al-'Aqqād, Matla' al-Nūr aw Tawāli' al-Bi'tha al-Muhammadiyya (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, n.d.), p. 35; 64-67 and; Muḥammad Abū Zahra, Khātam al-Nabiyyīn, Vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1972), pp. 31-33.

47. Lewis, The Arabs in History (London: The Anchor Press Ltd., 1954), pp. 49-55. Also see Robert Goldston, The Sword of the Prophet (New York: The Dial Press, 1980), pp. 50-51. For more information about the persecution of people during the Byzantine's rule, refer to Hitti, op.cit., pp. 142-143 and; Peter Mansfield, The Arabs (London: Cox and Wyman Limited, 1976),

pp. 35-36 and; Haykal, al-Siddīq, Abū Bakr (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1971), pp. 338-341.

48. Due to the fact that the population of Syria and Egypt were aware of the Islamic position with regard to the concept of the nature of Christ, together with other dogmatic issues, through their contacts with the Christians of Najrān; they did not rush to adopt Islam as a faith as claimed above. Hitti, for example, mentions that the bulk of the Syrian population did not convert into Islam before the second and the third centuries of the hijra. The History of the Arabs, p. 45.
49. 'Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya, Vol. II (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1975), pp. 158-166.
50. As far as Sufism is concerned, the problem of divinity and humanity had, for example, occupied the mind of al-Ḥallāj as already mentioned. Kāmil Muṣṭafa al-Shaybī reports that al-Ḥallāj believed that man could be looked upon as God incarnate. See his work: Al-Sila Bayna al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyu' (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), pp. 365-366. In other words, al-Ḥallāj believed that man's nature is both divine and human. In his work, Kitāb al-Tawāsīn, al-Ḥallāj states:

If ye do not recognize God, at least recognize His signs, I am that sign, I am the Creative Truth (ana'l-haqq), because through the Truth I am a truth eternally.

Arthur J. Arberry, Sufism (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1956), p. 60.

Al-Ḥallāj's belief in incarnation was not certainly accepted by orthodox Muslims. It was also condemned by such a prominent Sufi scholar as Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910). The latter accused al-Ḥallāj of propagating a false claim with regard to the Islamic faith. Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 66. As a result of propagating such a claim, al-Ḥallāj was put to death.



51. Among the central themes of Zoroastrianism is that the world, in which we live, is dominated by two gods, i.e. the god of goodness and that of evil. The former is associated with light, the second is associated with darkness. The two gods are engaged in constant struggle, but the final victory is for the god of goodness who will punish the god of evil and all his followers at the Day of Judgement. Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, pp. 103-104.
  
52. For example, the father and mother of Yāsir Ibn 'Ammār (d. 37/657), Sumayya and 'Ammār, were persecuted by Abī Jahl until death. Sumayya was the first martyr of Islam, and 'Ammār was the second. Husayn, Al-Wa'd al-Haqq (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1976), p. 112.  
  
As for those persons who were ransomed, Husayn mentions Bilāl Ibn Rabāh (d. 20/641). Bilāl, a slave of Umayya Ibn Khalāf, was rescued by Abū Bakr who bought him and gave him his freedom. Ibid., pp. 108-109. Since then, Bilāl became one of the Prophets' companions, worked as a caller for prayer, mu'adhdhin during the Prophet and Abū Bakr's reign, and later participated in the Islamic campaigns in Syria attaining, by this, a distinguished place in Islam. Ibid., pp. 132-135.
  
53. In addition to the high prestige approached by Bilāl, 'Ammār also obtained a remarkable rank. 'Ammār, whose father and mother were slaves freed by Abī Hudhayfa, was severely tortured by Abī Jahl. 'Ammār emigrated to Ethiopia and later went to Medina. A companion of the Prophet, 'Ammār greatly contributed to Islam. He participated in all the major battles during the Prophet's time. During 'Umar's reign, he was appointed as a governor of Kūfa and later became partisan of 'Alī and died at the battle of Siffin which occurred in (37/657) Ibid., pp. 118-119; 148-152; 158-164.
  
54. Husayn, al-Majmū'a al-Kāmila, Vol. II, Ḥadīth al-'Arba'ā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1973), pp. 17-19.
  
55. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit., pp. 50-51.
  
56. Muḥammad Husayn al-Zayn, al-Shī'a fī al-Tārīkh (Beirut: Dār al-Āthār lil-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr wa

al-Tawzī', 1979), p. 237.

57. Al-'Aqqād, Hayāt al-Masīh fī al-Tārīkh wa Kushūf al-'Asr al-Ḥadīth (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1955), pp. 174-176.
58. Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl, Vol. I (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Bahiyya, 1925), p. 511. Also see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, Vol. X (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr lil-Tibā'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī' 1981), pp. 164-165. Besides, refer to 'Imād al-Dīn Abī al-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm, Vol. IV (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), p. 154.
59. S. XV/9. Ali, op.cit., p. 638.
60. Other than absolute faith in Qur'anic text, Abū Zahra mentions that Sunnī Islam and main Shi'ī sects like the Zaydis and the Ithnā 'Ashriyya, have agreed upon basic issues related to jurisprudence, yet he does not elaborate on these matters. See his work, al-Imām al-Sādiq, Ḥayātuh wa 'Asruh, Arā'uh wa Fiqhuh (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.), p. 13, 16.
61. S. LV/5. Ali, op.cit., p. 1472.
62. S. LV/6. Ibid., p. 1472.
63. It must be mentioned, at this point, that the word sūra, apparition, is a term used by Sufis to give various meanings. In one of its manifestations, sūra, image, is a divine gift which God bestows on the good among people. Sūra appears to acquaint these with the knowledge of truth ... that knowledge which guides them in the world of reality and facilitates the means of happiness for them. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Hifnī, Mu'jam Mustalahāt al-Ṣūfiyya (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1980), pp. 156-157.
64. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, p. 469.
65. Ibid., p. 469.
66. Ibid., p. 469.
67. Ibid., p. 469.

68. Ibid., p. 470.
69. Ibid., p. 471. For more information on Husayn's views on migration, see al-Majmū'a al-Kāmila, Vol. XI, 'Ilm al-Adab, Jannat al-Shawk, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1974), pp. 449-450.
70. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, p. 471.
71. Ibid., p. 471.
72. Ibid., p. 471.
73. Ibid., p. 470. It may be pointed out that such words as seclusion, 'uzla and loneliness, wihda are Sufi terms. Seclusion is a means to which man resorts in order to console his soul, and purify it from all worldly matters. Through the process of the purification of the soul, man becomes acquainted with the knowledge of truth which guides him in this world. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya, Vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Hadīth, n.d.), pp. 336-341. Also see Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalabādī, al-Ta'arruf li-Mudhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf (Cairo: Dār al-Ittiḥād al-'Arabī lil-Tibā'a, 1969), p. 190.
74. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, p. 474.
75. Ibid., p. 474.
76. Ibid., p. 466.
77. Al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl (Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Aṭāya, 1950), pp. 14-34; 43-51. Generally speaking, in connection with al-Ghazālī's contribution to Islamic faith, Nabih Amin Faris states:

In the realm of religion, he grafted mysticism, which had hitherto been deemed as unorthodox, to Islam and established its orthodoxy. His mysticism vitalized the law by making personal religion and individual experience a part of Islam. His orthodoxy safeguarded the faith against unbridled emotionalism. Through his writings he led the Moslems back from scholastic labors upon theological

dogma and minutiae to a living contact with the word. Through them he brought philosophy, which he regarded merely as thinking, and philosophical theology within the range of the ordinary man. He freed Islam from the dead formalism of scholastic literalism, and quickened it by the warmth of the living spirit.

Refer to his work, The Arab Heritage (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 155.

### CHAPTER III

#### ISLAMIC BIOGRAPHIES: MOTIVES, INFLUENCES AND THE "SCIENTIFIC APPROACH"

Men have always kept a keen interest, intellectual, emotional and even spiritual about the lives of other men, especially those important persons who influenced the lives of others, or the course of historic events. Consequently, the art of biography writing became one of the forms of literary expression and history writing. There are many great examples of this art starting with "Plutarch's lives" up to the present day. In Islamic history, biography writing became one of the main forms of history writing, the most important example being Wafayāt al-A'yān by Ibn Khallikān. (d. 681/1282). The primary example of this form of writing is to be found in the biographies dedicated to the Prophet Muḥammad, the most important of which is the biography of Ibn Ishāq (d.150/767) that has been lost; but which we still have as the biography of Ibn Hishām which is almost entirely based on the former and larger biography of Ibn Ishāq.

Modern historians seem to have some doubts about the credibility of all details and events found in that biography, because of the time lag between the death of the Prophet and the writing of Ibn Ishāq's biography. But there is no reason at all to doubt the basic lines of this biography for the following reasons. Firstly, in the intermediate period, many biographies have been written but are lost to us. In his work, Fajr al-Islām, Aḥmad Amīn mentions that the first book about the life of Muḥammad was written by 'Urwa Ibn al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwām (23-94 A.H.), one of the most prominent jurists, fugahā' of Medina. In addition, his contemporary 'Abān Ibn 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (22-105 A.H.),

also wrote a book on the Prophet's life. A third biographical work on Muḥammad was written by Wahb Ibn Munbbih (34-110 A.H.). This is in addition to other writings on the biography of the Prophet. (1) We are entitled to assume that some of these biographies, if not all of them, were available to Ibn Ishāq and he must have drawn on them. A second factor which prevents shedding doubts on the basic line of Ibn Hishām's biography has to do with oral tradition. Just as the latter has proved to be a good source of literature and history and has given us a large picture which is basically consistent and closely related to events known with certainty, it should have transmitted to Ibn Ishāq a large collection of credible material which he drew upon in his biography. All the stories he relates show the usual Isnād or chain of tellers which in the view of Arab historians reflects the degree of credibility attributable to these events and episodes. We may here note that the sayings of the Prophet were collected in much the same way. Thirdly, we have in the Qur'ān a good many references to important events and episodes in the life of the Prophet and these can form points of absolute certainty and can be used as tests and measures for episodes narrated by other means. The picture which we can derive from Qur'anic references alone is very largely consistent with the pictures which are not only drawn from Ibn Ishāq, but also from Ibn Sa'd and other historians. On the basis of the above, Sīrat Ibn Hishām, which is an edited and abridged version of Ibn Ishāq's extensive biography of the Prophet remains a great, honest, plausible, and credible account of the Prophet. No biography of the Prophet can escape following the frame work set by Ibn Hishām.

Interest in the lives of men is deeply rooted in human psychology. Every human experience or knowledge starts by contact with another human being starting

with father and mother. This is why the images of parents have thrown a deep impact on children. Both images may be abstracted in the experience of a group or a nation or a community, and through this abstraction, the influence is widely diffused. (2) Images with no immediate relation to a particular person eventually cast an influence on him through admiration, emulation and identification. This is why through history and literature, human beings tend to be classified as certain "models" with sharply drawn characteristics and qualities. Men are called upon to find in these models lessons and inspiration. Such models can represent saints and other religious characters as well as national heroes or men of science or art or moral stature.

The most important Islamic figure which all Muslims admire, seek to emulate and identify with, is the Prophet Muḥammad. This importance is derived from the fact that Muḥammad is perceived as the "father figure", the teacher, the educator, the messenger, the explainer and interpreter of the word of God, and the man who was entrusted with seeking to spread it among human beings. Thereby, inevitably he faced all the limitations of human life, individual and social, in fighting his way to a final success. In addition to this distinction, or perhaps because of it, God had endowed him with qualities, virtues and capabilities which are in a way rare if not actually unique. Being in touch with "the news of heaven" he must have a wisdom which is approved by God himself. But to keep the basic line of distinction referred to, he always reminds his followers that he is nothing but an instrument of God and that he knows no more in unrevealed matters than anyone of them knows, and that in such matters, he needs their advice and he stands willing to admit and accept any better knowledge. Failing this distinction, Muḥammad might have been put in a position of

"incarnation", but the precautions taken by the Qur'ān and by himself absolutely prevented that from happening. In Islamic doctrine, the transcendental realm of God and the temporal realm of men are set apart. For all the above reasons, the biography of Muḥammad has puzzled writers depending upon their intellectual and metaphysical backgrounds, and we shall say more on this point when we come to speak on the various biographies written during the period of our study.

Concentrating on the Egyptian Uḍabā', we must state that the biographies of Muḥammad and other heroes of early Islam presented a special appeal and attraction to almost all of them. Biography books of the same heroes were written by different writers, using diverse styles, highlighting various events and quotations, and drawing numerous broad and specific conclusions.

Before showing the contributions of different writers in presentation and explanation, we need to look into the motivation behind this endeavour. The range of biographies written varies from one writer to another. But all the Egyptian Uḍabā' wrote about the Prophet Muḥammad, Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. (3) As for 'Alī, although al-'Aqqād wrote a book on the life of that Caliph, Haykal did not as he died before achieving the goal. But the lives of these heroes represent a main and recurrent theme throughout the period. Differences in motive, outlook and points of view appear not only through substance or style of presentation, but also in the further choice of other heroes of Islam. (4) These differences will be treated in due course, but the point to be raised at this stage is simply as follows: why did Ḥusayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād choose to write books about these heroes at the risk of repetition of the same subjects and conclusions? In other words, what is the significance



of biography writing in contemporary times?

One cannot escape the belief that the Udabā' considered the biographies of these great man a most suitable framework for saying the things they wanted to say. In other words, these heroes were not merely historical figures, but also embodiments of contemporary subjects. The questions which were raised during their lives were not only relevant to our time, but must have seemed to be its most pressing questions. The heroes moreover, represent great living models of human life as seen by the eyes of Islam.

Biography, in this respect, has a double use: it shows the actual embodiment of Islam in the lives of human beings, and provides examples of human behaviour from which contemporary men can draw lessons and inspiration. (5) In our belief, the first of these uses provides a rational assurance, a spiritual tranquillity, and a sense of identity and belonging, in a period of loss of confidence. The second provides the activation necessary for linking the teaching of Islam with the problems presented by daily life on the social and individual planes. We have already noted a case of this linkage in the case of Ḥusayn. Events embodied in these biographies cover a very wide range of situations which may be faced by any human experience. Their relevance is not merely rational, but also emotional.

One of the ideas recurrent in Islamic thought, in general, is that none of these heroes would have found a place in history, or in the minds and hearts of people, if they had not been touched by Islam. To Ḥusayn, for example, this "touch" occurs from two sources specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān, namely the Qur'ān itself and the "presence" of the Prophet. (6) In our understanding, the Qur'ān is here for every Muslim to read. The "touch" of the Prophet is

"recreatable" by recalling his greatness, and the best form of this recollection is reference to the biography and sayings of the Prophet. But it is also attainable through adoration in song and poetry, and hence the Mawlid (the Prophet's birthday). These Mawālīd, concentrating on emotional appeal, can easily lose their link with reality and become a glorification of a "superman" image, to apply the current usage of our day. Pure Islam has always rejected this tendency which is mainly demonstrated by popular Sufism, and considered its imagery blasphemous superstition. This wide popularity of the Mawālīd was considered by Riḍā for example, and the Udabā', who are perhaps influenced by him in this respect, as a product of the age of decline and degeneration. (7) In a way, therefore, the biographies of the Prophet seem to be part of an endeavour to fight superstitions and popular beliefs, and thus to return to Islamic purity. The Udabā' wanted to show that the effect of the Prophet's personality is not transmitted by a mystery symbolized by some rituals performed by Sufis in a popular sense, but it is seen in the legend of his outstanding deeds, in the sense that the latter are valuable enough to be recorded and judged, unlike the actions of ordinary men, whose only mention in history books is as a collectivity, namely a nation.

It must be stated, at this point, that while rejecting superstitious aspects which characterized popular Sufism in Egypt and other Islamic countries, the Udabā' and, in particular, Ḥusayn and al-'Aqqād amongst them, attached special concern to intellectual Sufism. The two Udabā' highly appreciated its code of ethics and morals. In any case, an important point which should be stressed here is that in rejecting superstitions and in fighting them, the Egyptian Udabā' played the role of "professional" religious men at a time when they were simply "laymen".

Be all that as it may, in turning back to the Prophet and the effect of his personality in history, we must add here that it is seen in the natural influence of a great man on his companions and successors, and on other people. According to Ḥusayn, for example, the companions of the Prophet are the generation privileged to experience that "touch" directly, with all its effects far and wide. The special reverence which Islamic thought pays to these companions arises not only from their value as sources of information, narration and explanation about the revelation and life of the Prophet, but also because of the transformative effect which this experience had on them. (8) They are valuable for creating the whole experience.

The period of the rise of Islam is not only miraculous in the sudden blooming of greatness among individuals, but also in the sweeping glory of events. Faith activated minds and wills, which now turned to great deeds that transformed human history and created a great civilization which though now in a state of decline, is yet very much alive. To Haykal, it is a miracle of moulding, leadership, mobilization, and management that occurred and which has never been repeated since. (9) The lessons of this unparalleled transformation need to be assimilated if another transformation is to be achieved. Besides, the Udabā' believe that the period under study represented a golden era in Islamic history. Here is Muslim society with Muḥammad as prophet receiving the message of God, teaching it and leading and moulding men to achieve for it success and consolidation, within a span of two decades. He is flanked by great companions including Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Khālīd and others. Beside him are also great women: Khadīja, 'Aisha Bint Abū Bakr (d. 58/678), Hafṣa Bint 'Umar (d. 45/665), his daughter Fātima (d. 11 A.H.), and his two

less known daughters Ruqayya and Umm Kulthūm (d. 9 A.H.), and a host of companions, who believed in his message, struggled for its success, and felt great love for him. (10) This is the Islamic Utopia. In this respect, the Islamic Utopia is different from any other Utopian model in that it is an actual human experience. (11)

In our understanding, the Islamic vision of life starts from a view of human nature which is naturalistic, but linked with a divine source. Man is not either debased or tainted with original sin, or tormented by a feeling of guilt. He is what God created him to be, with a keen preoccupation with this life, with life on earth and all the glories, riches and pleasures it gives. This preoccupation is not unhealthy, but has to be disciplined by a divine decree. Limits, hudūd, have been imposed by God which should not be exceeded, and laws prescribed which have to be obeyed. God, moreover, educates by examples, by showing that evil action will always attract divine anger.

All Utopian thought assumes that human nature is perfectable, if only the outward environment in which man lives is drawn to a perfect order. The Islamic view of human nature is that it is in need of a pre-ordained set of rules, which if obeyed, will help it to reach a balance between the demands of life and the demands of heaven. For this reason, Islam emphasizes these rules and a great part of Islamic thought is concerned with laws and rituals which help to maintain the rules. The emphasis is, thus, put on the balancing of human nature rather than on changing the outward environment. And in Islamic conception, the assumption is that the balance of human nature will result in a better outward environment rather than vice versa.

It is noticed from the above discussion on Islamic Utopia that it is something whose credibility is derived from its reality, and not from an image of assumed perfection. We believe that this reality is makeable and breakable, achievable and losable. How to achieve the re-making and avoid the re-breaking? This is the question. It is the question which every generation has to face in its own way. The early history of Islam presents, at least, two complete cycles: the cycle of the life of the Prophet, and the succeeding cycle of the simultaneous search for empire and eternal unity. The two cycles are immensely rich in events which disclose all the strength and all the frailty of human nature. According to the Udabā', the cementing, moulding, sustaining and preserving factor is faith. (12) Not just any faith, but strong faith in God, in His Prophet, and in His revealed word, the Qur'ān. A true understanding of this faith becomes necessary, not an outward glorification that can easily become chauvinistic, but an inner living of Islam. (13) In our understanding, inner living of Islam consists of belief, feeling and action all together. The belief is a belief in one God. The feeling is one of love and good faith towards other fellow men, and the action is one of charity.

However that may be, all the above points regarding Islam, its Prophet and his successors and its history arise in the context of an Islamic-Christian Dialectic, which ranges in its argumentation between an earnest dialogue and a loud polemic. This remark applies specifically to the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad as brought to notice earlier. In the course of this dialectic, the points of difference between the two faiths are identified. Christianity does not admit the prophecy of Muḥammad, while Islam admits the prophecy of Jesus. Christianity believes in the trinity, Islam in the Unity of God. Christianity deifies Jesus,

and Islam rejects the doctrine of the son of God. Lastly, Christianity believes in the crucifixion and redemption of humanity through the sacrifice of the son, while Islam believes in the individual responsibility of every human being, and unmediated communication with God. (14) Haykal goes further to assert that the West has, in fact, derided Christianity. It had accepted Christianity only in form due to historical reasons, but soon found that the Christian principles of asceticism, withdrawal, forgiveness, and high moral ideals were not compatible with the needs of the tough life of the middle ages. In adapting Christianity to its needs, the West transformed its tolerance and beauty, and disturbed its inner spiritual harmony. The Islamic doctrine of unity, however, harmonizes spirit and body, reason and emotion and integrates human beings individually and collectively with the whole cosmic system. (15) In our opinion, basically, Haykal seems to take the view that the early Christian demands for salvation were not compatible with the realistic needs of every-day life. The view derived from original sin creates a feeling of guilt and duality within the human soul which is very difficult to reconcile except through the mysterious media of rituals, whereas Islam unites from the start the human soul by accepting the demands of life as legitimate within means prescribed by God.

The polemic appears in a similar form in Haykal and al-'Aqqād. Haykal refers to a letter he received from an "Egyptian writer" containing an Arabic translation of an article he (the Egyptian writer) sent to a periodical of German Orientalists as a book review of Haykal's, Hayāt Muḥammad. (16) The review criticizes Haykal for considering the Qur'ān an authentic historical document, and for failing to mention that Muḥammad suffered from epilepsy and that the revelation he claimed was only a product of this epilepsy. In

short, the review claims that Haykal's book is not scientific. (17)

This review rests on the double spell of "scientific methodology" and "orientalist impact". It is interesting to notice how Haykal, in replying to his critic tries to reverse the orientalist impact in the opposite direction, by quoting extensively from Sir William Muir to assert the authenticity of the Qur'ān. (18) Haykal is always particular in denying the existence of any consistent body of opinion which can be described as "orientalist". Some orientalists, even many of them, may be unfair to Islam and Islamic heroes. But others are fair, if not in all their statements, at least in some of them. (19) That is good. Moreover, some Christian intellectuals have acquired the habit of denying Christianity itself, in the context of the struggle between church and state. (20) This habit of the mind is extendable to the treatment of Islam, but a Muslim intellectual should always remember that Islamic history and thought knew no such struggle, because Islam never possessed a church, and always opposed any attempt to create one. (21)

Al-'Aqqād too had a parallel experience. The idea of writing about the Prophet Muḥammad and other heroes of Islam came to him as a spontaneous response to remarks made by a group of Egyptian intellectuals with Western education as well as a response to the Marxists. The first group, al-'Aqqād claimed, denied the existence of great men in Islamic history, and even went so far as to attack Islam and its Prophet. Al-'Aqqād mentions that in a meeting between him and his friends, where the subject of conversation was Carlyle and his work, Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, one of those present, described as a clever man:

pretending knowledge, and thinking that disrespect of prophets was a condition for knowledge and modern sciences ... said something about the Prophet and his marriages ... and summed up his (the Prophet's) heroism as a heroism of sword and blood. (22)

This disrespect for Muḥammad, the attacks on him for his marriages, and his description as a hero of the sword on the part of the above mentioned Westernized Egyptians formed an important factor in inducing al-'Aqqād to write his work, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad. On the other hand, concerning the Marxists, al-'Aqqād condemned them for claiming that greatness is inconsequential in making history, and it may not count at all. In holding such a view, Marxists denied the existence of great men in Islamic history. This factor induced al-'Aqqād to write his works on early Islamic heroes headed by the Prophet Muḥammad. (23) In these writings, he attempted to develop a pride in Islam, its Prophet and other Islamic heroes rather than in Marxism. (24)

Having displayed the reasons which motivated the Udabā' to write on the Prophet and other great men of Islam, we must add that in their endeavour to achieve the goal, none of them tried to explain the "Prophetic phenomenon". They accepted Muḥammad as a prophet, for whom God revealed His word, and they accepted the Qur'ān as the literal revealed word of God. We believe that the problem of the creation of the Qur'ān which worried and disturbed a generation of Muslim intellectuals during the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, to the extent of causing a temporary split among Muslims in which the Caliph al-Ma'mūn Ibn al-Rashīd (d. 218/833) intervened on the side of al-Mu'tazila, did not seem to



have concerned them at all. (25) This attitude is natural for, in the final analysis, a belief in the creation of the Qur'ān allows for perceiving the Qur'ān as any created object. This in turn, permits for making changes in the Qur'ān if the need arose. The Udabā' affirmed that the Qur'ān is the eternal word of God which was and will never be subjected to omission or addition or error. In this way, they seem to have assimilated the lesson of history expressed by the whole episode of the Mu'tazila. In spite of this, there is, however, a tendency among modern scholars to detect a Mu'tazilī influence on 'Abduh, together with the Udabā', on the grounds that they attached a considerable concern to "intellect" and "sciences" in their thought. (26) A point of particular importance, in this connection, is that "rationality" is one of the basic concepts which is focused upon in the Qur'ān. Al-'Aqqād set out to mention many Qur'anic verses which display the value of intellectual foresight and innovation in man's life and, thus, motivate man to think. (27) After all, thinking produces action. Man must resort to "reason" and "reasoning" in all those matters or human problems in which no Qur'anic version or Prophet's tradition is available. These include all those spiritual and temporal matters which concern man. According to the Qur'ān, all those who use their intellectual powers for the good of humanity are assigned a "special" position among Muslims. As their contribution to man and society is far greater than those who do not make good use of their intellectual faculties, it does not then follow that they will be put on equal levels. (28) It is important to mention that those who do not think as required and, therefore, fail to contribute to society are severely admonished in the Qur'ān. At many points, they are described as being "blind", "deaf", and "dumb". (29) Set out briefly, they are labelled as a group who brought about "injustice" to themselves and to their cause.

By now, it has become obvious that the principle of rationality and its significance for man and society is greatly stressed in the Qur'ān. At this point, it should be mentioned that al-'Aqqād dedicated a book in which he asserts the value of rationality in Islam entitled, al-Tafkīr Farīda Islāmiyya (Reasoning: A Religious Obligation). A part of this work is devoted to explaining the Qur'anic verses which call for the need to use human intellectual resources. A concept on the intellect and its significance is developed by al-'Aqqād. Here, he distinguishes four types of intellects, beginning with what he calls al-'aql al-wāzi' (the ~~restraining~~ intellect) which, to him, undertakes the task of distinguishing between good and evil. Then comes what he terms al-'aql al-mudrik, the understanding intellect. This gives reasons as to the choice of the good rather than the evil, and its scope covers areas beyond the realm of moral imperatives. 'Aql al-Hikma, the sagacious reason, comes in the third place and its function is to analyse the factors of the choice of the good and to show the wisdom behind such a choice. Finally, al-'aql al-rushd, the mature intellect, offers a comprehensive picture of the positive aspects of righteousness and even of all aspects of knowledge. (30)

There is nothing which is strikingly extraordinary about al-'Aqqād's reflections on human intellect except that he bases his discussion on "Qur'anic verses". In the light of this, it may be argued that the Udabā's considerable concern for rationality is not necessarily linked with that of the Mu'tazila. It is deeply rooted in the Qur'ān. In addition, it must be recalled here that their interest in rationality has to do with the modern outlook on science. The Udabā' lived in an age which glorifies science. This is because it is generally believed that science gives in its field

certainty and precision which had not been encountered or achieved by the human mind prior to the age of modern scientific discoveries. Be all that as it may, a fundamental point here is that science with its universal values and great discoveries, together with scientific methodology, were used as tools to attack the world of Islam on various levels and to undermine its culture, its great personages and dogma by missionary writers and others. If this is the case, it then follows that there was no way to face the situation except by revealing the importance of science in Islam on the one hand, and by resorting to scientific methodology to defend that faith on the other. And once again this is what Husayn, Haykal, and al-'Aqqād have done.

It is worth mentioning, at this point, that the Udabā's above position may be, in one way or another, compared to that of the Mu'tazila. Both had similar objectives, and both resorted to the proper means in order to achieve their goals. In this connection M.M. Badawi states:

Like the Mu'tazila before them, they had to defend what they regarded as Islamic orthodoxy against the attacks of sophisticated opponents using the selfsame weapons of these opponents. Both Haykal and al'Aqqād, we must remember, wrote with the attacks of Christian missionaries and western orientalist very much in mind. (31)

In resorting to the tools of their opponents, the Egyptian Udabā' have contributed to the reassertion of the intrinsic value of Islam.

However that may be, on turning back to the question of the authenticity of the Qur'ān, we find that this question was treated by Haykal. To him, in essence, the view is, that the assertion in the Qur'ān itself, that it cannot be tainted with the slightest falsehood, is corroborated by the history of "writing down", which started at the same time as the revelation itself; and collection, which was done one year after the death of the Prophet, thus, providing a master copy. Haykal reports that this copy was kept in the safe custody of Ḥafṣa, wife of the Prophet and daughter of 'Umar. "'Uthmān's edition", which is the only edition available to all Muslims, reproduces that text after reviewal and comparison with all other available texts. It appears that some of these texts contained, at times, words which were used by different tribal dialects. Whenever a textual conflict occurred between non-Qurayshī and a Qurayshī usage, the chief editor, Zayd Ibn Thābit (d. 45/665-666) chose the Qurayshī usage. No question of authenticity arises, and nothing is lost by using Qurayshī usage, rather than synonyms used by other tribes. (32)

Ḥusayn holds the same view, although he expresses sorrow in the name of scholarship for the extinction of the various manuscripts containing those usages. This purely linguistic loss had deprived scholars and researchers of information relating to Arabic languages and dialects but in his words:

The matter is far more significant  
and serious than information of  
scholars and research of researchers  
in languages and dialects. (33)

In addition to the above, it is characteristic of all the Udabā' that they call for simple views of phenomena. This is because they accept the view that

the power of Islam and its appeal, from the day of its rise to the present day, is found in its simplicity. Here lies the secret of its spread and endurance. It has a great capability of raising simplified questions and giving simplified answers and thereby, making questions and answers comprehensible and acceptable to the human mind. (34) In their thought, Islam is rational, and in its view, rationality is simplicity. As questions and answers become complicated, people start to disagree about them, and to lose sight of the basics on which agreement occurs. In this framework of thought, we may safely assume that the Udabā's belief in the simplicity of Islam reveals a keenness towards acquainting the masses with "true" and "pure" Islam.

So far, it has been seen that none of the Udabā' revealed any concern about explaining the prophetic phenomenon. (35) All that concerned the Udabā' was to assert that the Qur'ān is the literal word of God and to affirm its authenticity, rationality and simplicity. Regarding the issue of the centrality of the Qur'ān and problems of arriving at a profound understanding of it, this differed from one writer to another. Taking Haykal and al-'Aqqād for example, we find that while it is true that both scholars used the Qur'ān as an undoubted reference to the biography of the Prophet, they only used it as a source material, corroborating historical material, some of which was written two centuries later, giving it credibility in all matters treated by the Qur'ān, and refuting conclusively all doubts about the over-all image of the Prophet. Haykal mentions that differences exist among historians as to many details of the Prophet's biography, but the live image derived from the Qur'ān alone is clear enough and irrefutable, historically and theologically. (36)

Husayn, on the other hand, seems to have understood the question of the centrality of the Qur'ān more

deeply than Haykal and al-'Aqqād. Ḥusayn went beyond using the Qur'ān as a source material to confirm historical events, to exhibit its uniqueness from stylistic and dogmatic viewpoints. Ḥusayn's considerable concern with this realm, stems from the following consideration. Ḥusayn holds that the world of Islam is not the biography of Muḥammad; nor does Muḥammad lie at its centre. Unlike Jesus Christ, who even by Islamic doctrine is ~~the~~ Word of God, Kalimat Allāh, Muḥammad is only a messenger of God. That word itself is the Qur'ān, which, alone, occupies the centre of the world of Islam. In our opinion, this trend of thought has motivated Ḥusayn to treat the biography of the Prophet, the Qur'ān and the Sunnah in one integrated work entitled Mir'āt al-Islām. It is not clear, however, whether in the structural form Ḥusayn adopted in this great work, he intended to comment on Carlyle's lecture on The Prophet Muḥammad's heroism entitled, "The Prophet as a Hero. Mahomet: Islam". (Friday, 8th May 1840).

Regarding Carlyle, we must state initially, that despite a difference of almost one century between the writing of the Egyptian Udabā' and Carlyle's writings on heroism, the heroic approach of Carlyle in general, and his treatment of "Mahomet" deeply influenced the biographical writings of some of the Udabā'. Carlyle went a long way in accepting Muḥammad as sincere, original, and honoured by being asked to make known to all creatures the truth as revealed to him, and therefore deserved the title "Prophet of God" (37) Yet, when it comes to the "Koran", Carlyle finds it a "wearisome confused jumble", ... "insupportable stupidity" and in his words:

One feels it difficult to see how  
any mortal ever could consider (it)  
as a Book written in Heaven, ... as

a well-written book, or indeed as a book at all; and not a bewildered rhapsody, written ... as badly as almost any book ever was. (38)

Though lacking in literary merit, Carlyle adds, it is genuine and bona fide:

With a kind of breathless intensity he (Mahomet) strives to utter to himself; the thoughts crowd on him pell-mell: for very multitude of things to say, he can get nothing said. The meaning that is in him shapes itself into no form of composition, is stated in no sequence, method of coherence ... The man ... has not time to mature himself into fit speech ... A headlong haste; for very magnitude of meaning, he cannot get himself articulated into words. (39)

Carlyle chose a consistent and comprehensive approach to the Prophet and Islam, which presents the heroism of Muḥammad in a "naturalistic" context, a context that sees nothing in the universe beyond natural phenomena. The counterpart of this outlook in terms of belief is either pantheism or atheism. His "naturalism" may be taken as "pantheistic". In his lecture "The Hero as Divinity. Odin Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology" (Tuesday, 5th May 1840), Carlyle states:

The Highest Being reveals himself in man. This body, these faculties, this life of ours, is it not all as a vesture for that Unnamed? (40)

For him, therefore, there is no inconsistency in believing that Muḥammad was simultaneously a prophet revealed to by God, and the author of a bodily written "Koran". "Vestures of the Unnamed" need not be of the same level of reflection to him. To Carlyle, some are more perfect than others, and "Mahomet" was not chosen because he is the:

Most eminent Prophet ... He is by no  
means the truest of Prophets ....  
(41)

Having suggested that Carlyle treats the Prophet's heroism within a naturalistic framework, we can add that, in general, a purely naturalistic approach can rest either on a belief that "God is nature", or "there is no God, but only natural law". (42) As far as Islam is concerned, its transcendentalism stands in irreconcilable conflict with both views. Thus, a naturalistic view of Muḥammad can be only fractional and, has to be completed by a view of his relation to God. The latter is, of course, embodied in the Qur'ān which reflects the transcendental aspect of Islam "Muḥammad is dead, but God is alive, eternal". This is the great summing up of Abū Bakr at the crucial moment of the death of the Prophet. The Qur'ān is the expression of that eternity. (43)

The above remark foreshadows a general observation about Haykal and al-'Aqqād's biographies on Muḥammad, i.e. Hayāt Muḥammad and 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad. The portraits emerging from them do not clearly distinguish between the nature of excellence referring to the Prophet and that referring to other heroes of early Islam. The Prophet's greatness tends to be portrayed as far too human, different in degree perhaps from the greatness of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, for example, when in point of fact, it occupies a special position as a



fountainhead and persistent source of faith and inspiration. Muḥammad indeed was a direct medium, not a passive one, a live human medium, required to apply his human powers and free judgement, with a promise of divine help and guidance, a promise that gave him assurance, endurance and determination. These points were better understood by Ḥusayn than by Haykal and al-'Aqqād as will be explained below. At the same time, it must be mentioned that these views were adjusted by the two scholars themselves later on.

In any case, one reason for al-'Aqqād's and Haykal's inability to put a line of demarcation between the Prophet and non-prophets in their writings on Muḥammad may be traced to their special insistence in describing their works on the Prophet and even on the early heroes of Islam as "scientific". However, due to their obvious lack of interest in any theory of knowledge, they do not seem to stop for a definition of the term "scientific". At one place, it seems to convey two meanings, one relating to phenomena and the other to comprehension. The implication about phenomena is that they are universally subject to natural laws, and about comprehension is that its only medium is the human mind working through "scientific methodology". The view is at times blurred by confusing scientific with modern outlooks, or by confusing methodology of research with style of presentation. No consistent view is held about the applicability of natural law to human or divine phenomena.

In our understanding, this attitude of Haykal and al-'Aqqād in the above mentioned works, reflects the newly established respect for science. The generation of readers whom they addressed desired to go to the grassroots of the Islamic faith and see it written in a new presentation. But in the end, this meant a review of traditional views, in the light of a 'naturalistic',

'modern', 'rational' and 'scientific' approach on the part of Haykal and al-'Aqqād. The exercise made by them ended in a discarding of much superstition, and in an assertion that the whole body of Islamic faith stands the test of science, and indeed corroborates it. (44) In other words, Islam does not conflict with science or reason, but espouses and even embodies both. (45) But this is done at the risk of overlooking the balance between the natural and the transcendental.

The linkage between the natural and transcendental was strictly observed by Ḥusayn in Mir'āt al-Islām where he treated the Prophet's biography, the Qur'anic miracle and the Sunnah in an integrated and unified outlook. We suggested earlier that Ḥusayn, in adopting such a structure probably intended to show that the outlook of Carlyle and those Western scholars who follow in his footsteps on the Qur'ān, is far from the truth. Thus, one of the major points on which Ḥusayn concentrated is the question of revelation.

To begin with, and in order to assert that the Qur'ān is the literal word of God, revealed to Muḥammad through the Angel Jibrīl, Ḥusayn states that the Holy Book should be viewed as the greatest miracle, al-mu'jiza al-Kubrā, which occurred in human history. In an attempt to bring out the special character of the Qur'ān from a stylistic and dogmatic viewpoint, he makes a subtle comparison between the Qur'ān and the pre-Islamic poetry, while keeping in mind that the Qur'ān was viewed as a product of a poet by missionary writers, and other Western scholars. Unlike the poetry which Arabs were familiar with, he maintains, the Qur'anic style lacks meter, rhyme, and the flow of imagination peculiar to poetry. (46) Furthermore, he points out that its subjects are not the traditional subjects of poetry. If we examine its contents, he says, we can easily notice that it does not describe

ruins and places or nostalgia concerning lost images of life or love, nor does it describe animals and hunting, the desert and camels, oases and trees as was the case with pre-Islamic poetry. Equally, he maintains, the Qur'ān does not focus on such themes as boasting, derision and obviously, it has no elegies for the dead. It does not describe war from the viewpoint of attacks or retreats. The Qur'ān, he adds, "does not exaggerate or take extreme stands, and it never goes beyond truth" and justice. (47)

Such topics are obviously much simpler and incomparable to the Qur'anic ones. An important feature of the Qur'ān is that it deals with subjects which are extremely important for the welfare and the wellbeing of man and society. It concentrates on such concepts as the unity of God, His attributes, His creation of the universe, rituals, ethics, free will and pre-destination, human relations, reward and punishment. The starting point to Ḥusayn is naturally the concept of the unity of God, His omnipotence and eternal knowledge. This stems from reasons which have to do with the Udabā's defence of Islam as will be discussed in Chapter IV. In any case, Ḥusayn describes God's capability as "infinite", His knowledge as "unbounded", and His will as "unbeatable". After all, He is the creator of Heaven and earth and Who knows everything about them, whether great or small. (48) A point of particular importance, in this connection, according to Ḥusayn, is that human beings cannot conceal anything from Him, whether big or small for, as he (Ḥusayn) states, God hears every word, sees and knows everything in this universe. He even knows the turbulence of man's heart, his temptations, and his secret wishes, good or bad. Ḥusayn states:

He (God) knows all that was, that is, and that will be. He takes note

of all their (men's) acts and all their wishes, good or bad, charitable or uncharitable, obedient or defiant, and writes down all this in a book which is kept with Him.  
(49)

This book is produced on the Day of Judgement according to which men are either rewarded or punished in view of their deeds. On this point, Ḥusayn mentions that the Qur'ān offers a beautiful description of the eternal life awaiting believers, and in contrast, the eternal hell awaiting polytheists and unbelievers. "It describes the Hour of Judgement and its great horrors". It says all this to purify hearts, and to motivate men to abide with Islamic ideals in which lay their salvation. Reaching this point, Ḥusayn moves to another Qur'anic concept, namely history, ethics and the lessons which should be derived. Thus, he maintains that the Qur'ān speaks of unknown events and experiences which happened to earlier prophets precipitating great disasters from which believers survived while unbelievers perished. In other respects, the Qur'ān, according to him, legislates about certain things which are absolutely required for the good health of society and individuals. These include such matters as marriage, divorce, inheritance, buying, selling and contracting. (50)

Having briefly displayed the most important topics of the Qur'ān, Ḥusayn reverted to the question of revelation which intensively preoccupied his mind, and made another attempt to prove that the Qur'ān is the eternal word of God, and not the product of a poet, or a madman as claimed by all those who seek to undermine Islam and its Prophet. Ḥusayn now refers to Quraysh's rejection of the idea of revelation which is parallel to some contemporary views and focuses on their

challenge to Muḥammad, hoping that this argument may be convincing enough to put the Qur'ān in its required place.

In his endeavour to achieve the goal, he tries to show the impact of the revelation, as transmitted by Muḥammad, on Qurayshis. Qurayshis and Arabs, he maintains, were filled with wonder when they listened to the Qur'ān with all its new themes whether on religious, social, theological, historical or ethical levels. However, he adds, they certainly could not yet understand the secret behind Qur'anic words as told by Muḥammad. In a state of perplexity, they say it is the work of a poet, but finally decide that it is not. Similarly, they say it is not the rhyme of an oracle priest either, nor the magic of a magician. The question still remains, what is it then? They, Ḥusayn maintains, settle by saying that it is the work of a madman. But this is illogical, and does not explain it either, for the man is there among them to watch and see day and night. As a matter of fact, his "strangeness" is to be exclusively found in these words which he reads for them. In these words, they are challenged to bring or say anything like it, but naturally enough, they cannot, however hard they try. Being so disappointed, they attempt to shift back the challenge by telling the Prophet to do something miraculous. They, for example, ask him to let springs and rivers flow, to plant palm trees and vineyards that will make him rich. (51) In Ḥusayn's words, they even go further to ask him to:

Bring down God and His angles for  
them (to see) or to shoot them with  
meteors from the skies, or to ascend  
to heaven ... or to bring down to  
them a treasure from heaven. (52)

To all this, Muḥammad has only one reply to give, namely, that he cannot perform any of these miracles. After all, he was a human being like them, who, according to Ḥusayn, is:

Undistinguishable in every respect, except that God has graced him to preach His message, and to convey to men God's assurance and warning. (53)

Once again, it is necessary to mention, at this point, that according to the Islamic doctrine, the Qur'ān is the only miracle attributed to Muḥammad the Prophet, and the human being as well. On the distinction between Christianity and Islam, it is particularly important to repeat that there are no models of perfection in Islam, no matter how great its personages are. Contrary to this, there are two models to apply for religious greatness in Christianity. One is the single model of Jesus Christ and the other, the model of the "saint" despite the cancellation of saints by Protestant Christianity. These Christian models have been largely abstracted and highly glorified. As mentioned earlier, Christ represents a perfection which suits his status as "Son of God" or "God incarnate". He never falls to temptation for his divine nature prevents such a fall. This purity is maintained as Christ is the centre of ritual. The Christian concept of sin, equates human lust with sin, and abstracts a human soul in conflict with bodily desires. Abstract or divine purity stands in sharp contrast with the demands of a fallen man. Be all that as it may, on moving to saints, it should be stated that they are often viewed as performers of miracles and their miracles are highly glorified.

Islam, however, takes man for what he is, and takes life for what it is as previously brought to attention. While the Christian ideal, in its pure form, is one of

transcending a fallen nature, and an imperfect life, the Muslim ideal is tolerant of both. Islam is interested in laying down the rules for man's life in this world, al-hayāt al-dunyā, without losing sight for a moment of an ultimate and eternal life, al-ākhirā, as a final and lasting goal. A great man in Islam lives this world with all its turbulence, internally in his soul, and externally in the world around him. But he and all other Muslims are required to live it according to the rules which are laid down by God. If a person succeeds, he attains eternal paradise as a reward. Succeeding, does not come through perfection - for perfection is unattainable by men - nor does it come through a denial of, or a withdrawal from life, or an avoidance of desire, but through doing more good than bad. God measures precisely the good and the bad deeds of man, and allows for a high rate of weighing in favour of good deeds (ten times). If after this weighing operation, the net result is positive, man is pardoned and allowed entry to heaven, or he is eternally condemned and punished. The Christian model of perfection is then replaced by a model of summation of good and bad deeds. This is why the concept of scale or balance, al-mīzān, is central in Islamic doctrine, for it represents the modality through which this summation takes place. The final result, as in any grading system, is either success or failure. However that may be, the point of importance here is that in Ḥusayn's emphasis on the "humanity" of Muḥammad on the one hand, and in his earlier concentration on the Qur'anic concept of reward and punishment on the other, he, in his own turn, is presenting points of argument and counter-argument between Islam and Christianity especially in the face of the Christian principles of sin, human perfection, and performance of miracles. In point of fact, this re-enforces his argument on the uniqueness of Qur'anic themes.

But to concentrate, once again, on his discussion on the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, he further makes another point in this respect. One of the important things and undeniable aspects of the miracle of the Qur'ān, he states, lies in the fact that:

The Arabs had previously contested it without success ... If the (Prophet's) contemporaries were unable to produce anything like it, later generations are even less likely to succeed. Other nations are least likely. (54)

Husayn made it clear that the crucial point at issue was that the Qur'ān, which embodied the message taught by Muḥammad, is necessarily eternal and indeed above time, as witnessed by men's inability to produce anything like it throughout history. Reaching this point, Husayn offers a discussion on the style of the Qur'ān as another aspect of its miraculous character. Here, he stressed the unique stylistic features of the Qur'ān and the immeasurable splendour of its language. As may be noted, this part has already been treated in Chapter I.

A point of particular importance regarding Husayn's discussion on the Qur'ān and the Prophet as a whole is that he tries to show that Muḥammad, in many respects, does not belong to his time or his generation only, but to all times and all generations. And even where he, as a human being, is to be looked upon in certain respects as temporal, or subjected to and conditioned by the course of his time the Qur'ān, the revealed word of God, is eternal. In our opinion, this is not a split-hair religious issue, it is the first reality that any study of Muḥammad needs to face.



In the light of the above, we believe that Ḥusayn substantially contributed to modern Islam. He lent his credibility to affirm the intrinsic value of the Qur'ān, as the centre of the world of Islam, in a way which precludes any apologetic tendency. If one examined Ḥusayn's views on the Qur'ān thoroughly, it would not escape one's notice that this writer made it clear that the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān cannot be comprehended by the human mind. In so doing, he apparently attempts to show that the miracle of the Qur'ān cannot be proven by science and scientific methodology. While it is true that science gives us certain and precise knowledge in its field, nevertheless, it cannot extend its methodology to all those questions which concern man, his existence, and his position in the universe. The field to which scientific methodology can be applied is limited by a built-in limitation of the human mind itself. Briefly, he wants to show that there are other faculties of comprehension in addition to intellect.

So far, we have tried to display Ḥusayn's endeavour to exhibit the inherent value of the Qur'ān, and to defend it against various challenges. It however, remains to be added that in dealing with the Qur'ān, he in a one way or another, contributed to the field of "Qur'anic interpretation". It goes without saying that his treatment of the Qur'ān shows an imaginative approach which can really help in enlarging the horizons of interpreters. In point of fact, interpreters are usually occupied in the treatment of words and their literal meanings. Ḥusayn, however, is more concerned with sentences, āyāt, and of the flow of meanings, within an imaginative background. Although he does not give a description of his approach, one can assume that by emphasizing the beauty of style, and the

music of words and sentences, he brings to the realm of interpretation, the sensitive approach of the artist. The Qur'ān has been variously treated from juristic or theological angles, but the intuitive and the aesthetic approach of the artist may yield new discoveries for future interpretations.

In concluding this chapter, we must state that we have made an attempt to show the motives behind the Udabā's interest in Islamic biographical writings. We also discussed influences on their thought, and finally concentrated on their methodology, and pointed to certain differences in styles among the Udabā'. More information on the latter topic together with other subjects that have to do with the Udabā's writings on the Prophet Muḥammad and his successors, are offered in the following chapter, ISLAMIC BIOGRAPHIES: ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE.

Notes on Chapter III

1. Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, p. 158. Also see Amīn's work, Duhā al-Islām, Vol. II (Cairo: Matba'at Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1938), pp. 319-339.
2. Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (New York: The John Day Company, 1943), p. 20.
3. It may be mentioned at this point, that Amīn also attached a considerable concern to the Prophet Muḥammad. But he, unlike the above mentioned Uḍabā', did not write books on the Prophet, but wrote articles on him among which one can mention, "Muḥammad al-Rasūl al-Muṣliḥ" (Muḥammad, The Reformer-Prophet). Here, Amīn visualizes Muḥammad as a reformer who played a remarkable role in transforming the society of Arabia and changing its course of history through the revealed message. "Muḥammad al-Rasūl al-Muṣliḥ", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. I, No. 18. (May, 1939), pp. 1-4. In another article entitled "Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh" (Muḥammad, the Prophet of God), Amīn sets the Prophet as a prime example who, through the divine providence, played a prominent role in achieving social solidarity in Arabia by maintaining equality, freedom and justice. "Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. II, No. 69 (April, 1940), pp. 1-3. In a third article "Sīrat al-Rasūl fī Kalima" (The Biography of the Prophet in One Word), Amīn offers a brief presentation of the life of the Prophet with emphasis on the most important principles of Islam. "Sīrat al-Rasūl fī Kalima", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. III, No. 109 (January, 1941), pp. 3-4.
4. It should be stated that al-'Aqqād wrote more biographies on early Islamic figures than Ḥusayn and Haykal. Among these one can mention 'Abqariyyat Khālīd (The Genius of Khālīd). This book, published in 1946, sets Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd (d. 21/642) as an example of a military leader who excelled in making good preparations for war contingencies, in setting plans for warfare and in motivating the fighting men to accomplish their duties with faith and bravery. 'Abqariyyat Khālīd (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, n.d.). Abū al-Shuhadā' al-Husayn Ibn 'Alī (The Father of Martyrs, al-Husayn Ibn

'Alī) published in 1945, is a study of al-Husayn's (d. 61/680) military conflict with the Umayyad's which ended with his martyrdom in the battle of Karbalā'. This book develops the theme of sacrifice in the way of truth and righteousness. It was compiled in Mawsū'at 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād al-Islāmiyya, Vol. III, Shakhsiyyāt Islāmiyya, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.). Another book which is also compiled in this "encyclopedic work" is Dā'ī al-Samā', Bilāl Ibn Rabāh (The Caller to Prayer, Bilāl Ibn Rabāh) published in 1945. This book focuses on the loyalty of Bilāl (d. 20/641) to the Prophet Muhammad. It also elaborates on slavery in Islam. Another biography compiled in Mawsū'at 'Abbās ... Vol. III, is Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān fī al-Mīzān (An Evaluation of Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān). In this work, al-'Aqqād offers a negative picture on Mu'āwiya (d. 60/680) claiming that this caliph was greedy, dishonest, cowardly and a great opportunist. In order to prove these negative elements, al-'Aqqād selected from historical sources all that asserts that Mu'āwiya was not a man of principle. Al-'Aqqād presented this material without any attempt to verify it.

5. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 59-60; 545-546.
6. Husayn, al-Shaykhān (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), pp. 16-23; 121-130; 140-141.
7. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, pp. 5-8.
8. Husayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 49-64; 97; 131-149.
9. Haykal, al-Fārūq 'Umar, (Cairo: Maṭba'at-Miṣr, 1944), pp. 13-20.
10. ...., Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 120-159; 398-427.
11. One of the most important principles in Islam is justice. Taking this concept in early Islam, we find that it was applied to every day matters by the Prophet and his successors who followed his example. When dealing with such a topic, the Egyptian Udabā' did not treat it as a plain conception, but as that which must be applied in life in order to serve a purpose, a concrete purpose which benefits all those who suffer from the injustice of the social life, and who look for protection. This shows an endeavour to

return to Islamic purity by the Udabā'.

The Udabā's understanding of Utopia is different from Plato, for example. In The Republic, Plato sought to construct a state based exclusively on the "abstract" ethical concept of justice. The Republic, trans. Paul Shorey, Vol. I-V (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1963), pp. 315-423. Plato was actually content with playing with words alone.

Apart from Plato, the Udabā's understanding of Utopia is even different from such a Muslim philosopher like Abū Naṣr Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). The latter sought to construct a virtuous city exclusively based on justice, and under the leadership of a perfect man.

The leader belongs to a certain class of men and possesses a perfect intellect which fortifies him with the knowledge of truth by means of a contact between his intellect and the active intellect (al-'aql al-Fa''āl). The true knowledge which he receives qualifies him to rule and command with wisdom, deep insight and justice. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Arā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), pp. 23-29.

12. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 55-57; 262-263; 522-546. Also see Ḥusayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 49-64; 87-96; 150-193.
13. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 522-534.
14. Ibid., pp. 2-8. For more information about man's responsibility in Islam, in specific, refer to al-'Aqqād, Mawsū'at 'Abbās ....., Vol. IV, al Qur'ān wa al-Insān, al-Insān fī al-Qur'ān, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1971), pp. 225-238; 250-262.
15. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, p. 12. For more information on the Islamic doctrine of unity, in specific, see al-'Aqqād, Mawsū'at 'Abbās ... Vol. I, Tawḥīd wa Anbiyā', Ibrāhīm Abū al-Anbiyā' (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1970), pp. 320-321.
16. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 27.
17. Ibid., 27-30.

18. Ibid., 31-38.
19. Ibid., 30-31. Other than Muir, whom Haykal believes that he regarded the Qur'ān we have as the authentic word of God without error, omission or addition; he (Haykal) mentions Henri Lammens as another example in this regard. Ibid., p. 38. Thus, as far as the question of the authenticity of the Qur'ān is concerned, the above orientalist are fair in their writings. In any case, for more information about Muir's views on the Qur'ān, refer to his work, The Life of Muhammad (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1923), Introduction.
20. Haykal says that some Christian writers, whom he does not mention, denied the existence of Christ in history. Others went too far to accuse Christ of insanity. See his work, Hayāt Muḥammad, p. 28.
21. Ibid., p. 28. For more information about the question of religion and state in Islam, refer to al-'Aqqād, Mawsū'at 'Abbās ... al Islām fī al-Qarn al-Ishrīn, Vol. IV, p. 560.
22. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, p. 6.
23. It may be mentioned, at this point, that al-Ḥakīm too had a similar experience to al-'Aqqād and Haykal. The idea of writing about the Prophet came to him as a response to Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire's (d. 1778) writings on Muḥammad. This is in addition to other remarks made by some Western scholars. As far as Voltaire is concerned, al-Ḥakīm mentions that he severely attacked Muḥammad and accused him of bringing a false, barbaric faith. Taḥṭa Shams al-Fikr (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Namūdhajīyya, n.d.), p. 19; 25-28.
24. It should be mentioned, at this juncture, that al-'Aqqād dedicated a portion of his writings to attack "Marxism" and to reveal its danger to Islam and to the Islamic world. For example, in Raj'at Abī al-'Alā' (The Return of Abī al-'Alā') published in 1939, al-'Aqqād attacked Marxism and dictatorships in general. Raj'at Abī al-'Alā' (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1973).

His attacks on Marxism are further revealed in

1955 with the publication of al-Shuyū'iyya wa al-Insāniyya fī Sharī'at al-Islām (Communism and Humanism in the Law of Islam). This book forms a part of al-'Aqqād's encyclopedic work, Buhūth Islāmiyya, Vol. V (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1971). In addition, Marxism is criticized in al-'Aqqād's work Afyūn al-Shu'ūb ... (The Opium of the People) published in 1956. Afyūn al-Shu'ūb, al-Madhāhib al-Haddāma (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣriyya, n.d.). Marxism is also condemned in Lā Shuyū'iyya wa lā Isti'mār (Neither Marxism nor Imperialism) published in 1957.

25. Regarding the problem of the creation of the Qur'ān see 'Abd al-Hamīd al-'Abbādī; Muḥammad Muṣṭafa Ziyāda; Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-'Āwādī, al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya, Tārīkhuhā wa Hadāratuhā (Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, 1954), pp. 154-155. Also see Marshal G.S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, Vol. I (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 480-481. Watt, What is Islam (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1979), pp. 127-128. For more information on the question of the created Qur'ān, refer to Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 263-274.
26. For example, Albert Hourani perceives an influence of the Mu'tazila on 'Abduh. Hourani, op.cit., p. 142. It may be mentioned, at this point, that William Shepard seems to believe that Amīn was, in one way or another, influenced by the Mu'tazila, though he (Amīn) criticized their attitude "to use the power of the state to impose their theological views, particularly of the createdness of the Qur'ān". William Shepard, The Faith of a Modern Muslim Intellectual (New Delhi: Ihmmr Printing Press, 1982), pp. 177-178.
27. Al-'Aqqād, al-Tafkīr Farīda Islāmiyya (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.), pp. 8-33.
28. Refer to Sūrat al-An'ām, VI/51.
29. See Sūrat al-Baqara, II/19.
30. Al-'Aqqād, al-Tafkīr Farīda Islāmiyya, pp. 5-21.
31. M.M. Badawi, Modern Arabic Literature and the West (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), p. 53.

32. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 31-38. It should be stated, at this juncture, that the traditional view of the composition of the Qur'ān is the one which remains most widely accepted today by Muslims and most orientalists. In recent years, however, this topic has been re-opened as a subject of scholarly enquiry largely through the work of Professor John Wansbrough. See his book, Qur'anic Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 102-118.
33. Husayn, Al-Majmū'a al-Kāmila, Vol. IV, al-Khulafā al-Rāshidūn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1973), p. 379.
34. Haykal, al-Fārūq 'Umar, p. 3.
35. It should be stated, at this juncture, that theories about Prophecy in Islam were expounded by many Muslim scholars among whom, one can mention 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and al-Ghazālī.

According to Ibn Khaldūn, prophecy is a human phenomenon: The Prophet is a human being, his traits are human traits, his knowledge is human knowledge, his powers are human powers, his acts are human acts, and his purpose is a human purpose. This does not mean that every human being is a prophet or can become a prophet through learning and practising a certain art. Nor does it exclude what the Muslims called "divine selection". On the contrary, Ibn Khaldūn believes that prophecy is, in a sense, the highest form of human existence. The prophet is an extremely rare individual who must possess special, and rarely attainable, natural powers from birth, and lead a correct life prior to, and during his mission as a prophet. Consequently, to explain the phenomenon of prophecy, Ibn Khaldūn enquires into the nature of man and attempts to show how a human being becomes a prophet.

The knowledge of the prophet is



attained through a movement of the human intellect to the sphere of angelic knowledge or pure intellection and back to the representation of that knowledge in adequate images through which he communicates it to his fellow men. But the prophet does not ascend to pure intellection through the art of reasoning employed by the philosopher. He simply possesses an innate ability (Fitra, jabilla) and an aptitude (isti'dād) that enables him to see beyond the veil of sense objects and attain the knowledge of the spiritual world directly. His powerful intelligence, further, enables him to persist in this practice until it becomes a habit.

Muhsin Mahdi, Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), pp. 85-86. Also see 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddina, trans. Franz Rosenthal, Vol. II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 411-424.

On the other hand, in al-Ghazālī's "account of prophecy in the Ma'ārij al-Quds", he attempts:

To put the class of prophets as a distinct species above man: "Just as the human species is distinguished from other animals by the rational soul ... similarly the souls of prophets are distinguished from men's souls by a guiding and guided intellect which is above all (normal) intelligence, rules and governs it through divine excellence. Just as the movements of a human being are miraculous for the rest of animals ... so are all the movements of a prophet miraculous for human beings" ... We are also told that 'prophecy is a divine favour and gift which cannot be acquired by effort - although effort and acquisition are necessary to prepare the soul for the reception of revelation by acts of worship

accompanied by exercise in thinking and by pure and sincere deeds. Thus prophecy is neither a pure chance (without a natural desert) so that every creeping shuffling creature may be its recipient, nor is it attained by pure effort so that everyone who thinks may have it ....

Fazlur Rahman, Prophecy in Islam (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), p. 96. Ma'ārij al Quds fī Madārij Ma'arif al Nafs (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1927), pp. 141-146.

36. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 61-64.
37. Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus; On Heroes and Hero Worship (London: Aldine Press, 1973), p. 292.
38. Ibid., p. 299.
39. Ibid., p. 300.
40. Ibid., p. 245.
41. Ibid., p. 278-279.
42. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, al-Radd 'alā al Dahriyyīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1955), pp. 16-26.
43. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, p. 507. Also see Ḥusayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 17-18.
44. Al-'Aqqād, Mawsū'at 'Abbās ... , al-Falsafa al Qur'āniyya, Vol. IV, pp. 25-28.
45. In their belief of conformity between faith and science or reason, Haykal and al-'Aqqād are influenced by 'Abduh. For more information about 'Abduh's thought in this regard, see his work, Risālat al-Tawḥīd, (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1918), pp. 26-27. Al-'Aqqād, Mawsū'at 'Abbās ... , al-Islām fī al-Qarn al-Ishrīn, Vol. IV, p. 641. Malcolm H. Kerr, Islamic Reform (California: University of California Press, 1966), p. 109.
46. Ḥusayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, p. 125. Also see ... , Min Ḥadīth al-Shi'r wa al-Nathr (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1965), p. 24.

47. Husayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, p. 125. For more information on the subjects dealt with in pre-Islamic poetry, refer to Shawqī Dayf, al-'Asr al-Jāhilī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1960), pp. 183-332. Also see Husayn, Ahmad al-Iskandarī; Amīn; 'Alī al-Jārim; 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bishrī; and Ahmad Dayf, al-Mujmal fī Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Amīriyya, 1930), pp. 16-25. Besides, see Sa'd Ismā'īl Shalabī, al-Uṣūl al-Fanniyya lil-Shi'r al-Jāhilī (Cairo: Dār Ghurayyib lil-Tibā'a, 1977), pp. 61-83. Ahmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, al-Hayāt al-'Arabiyya min al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr wa Matba'atuhā, 1962), pp. 230-264. Ahmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr, n.d.), pp. 47-71.
48. Husayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, p. 125.
49. Ibid., pp. 127-128.
50. Ibid., pp. 126-127.
51. Ibid., pp. 128-129.
52. Ibid., p. 129.
53. Ibid., p. 129.
54. Ibid., p. 129.

## CHAPTER IV

### ISLAMIC BIOGRAPHIES: ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

In the foregoing chapter, we have mentioned that Ḥusayn dealt with the biography of the Prophet, the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and other topics including ijmā' (consensus of opinion) and ijtihād in one book, entitled Mir'āt al-Islām. It is to the credit of Ḥusayn that he was able to combine several major subjects in one work. This action has a considerable importance as will be explained below.

According to the doctrine of Sunnī Islam, Islam has four sources, the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, the ijmā' and the ijtihād. The first two sources form the fountainhead while the other sources are derivative from them to enable new interpretations and adaptations to suit changing circumstances. In our understanding, the Qur'ān occupies a unique and special place in all Islamic outlooks. As mentioned earlier, this stems from the belief that it is the word of God revealed to Muḥammad, His messenger and therefore, it towers above everything else. The fact that it had been conserved as it had been revealed to the Prophet, has given it an additional authority which no other Islamic text ever attained.

We should also add that Muḥammad, on the other hand, occupies an intermediate position between God and the world of men. He is the recipient of the word of God, its recorder, teacher and preacher as already mentioned. However, the life of Muḥammad is beset by two accepted assertions. On the one hand, as the messenger of God, he only relays what he receives from above. The message he relays is authentic beyond doubt

and is absolutely true and binding on everyone including the Prophet himself. In this respect, he is equal to all men and enjoys no special status, privilege or position. On the other hand, he does not possess a knowledge which exceeds the knowledge related to him by revelation and, therefore, anything which he says or does, on his own and without divine instruction is "human" and liable to error. This establishes a puzzling contrast between the Prophet and the Qur'ān, namely, whereas the Qur'ān is not liable to error, the Prophet is, and this doctrine by itself has had the effect of raising a major question in the Islamic mind, namely, to what extent should Islam derive from the human utterances and actions of the Prophet as distinct from Qur'anic revelations? Some Islamic scholars assert that despite this difference, the fact that Muḥammad was chosen as the Prophet of God and did in fact occupy a special position through God, and had a peculiar access to God by God's will, his (the Prophet's) words should be given a special reverence and considered as part of the doctrine. This position is enhanced by the fact that inevitably many of the words of the Prophet were explanations of Qur'anic revelation and, at the same time, many of the Qur'anic āyāt were either observations on incidents in which he was involved or represented particular instructions addressed to him (the Prophet). (1)

In point of fact, in Islamic history, there were two trends within Sunnī Islam itself. One of the great schools of Sunnī Islam, namely, that of Mālikiyya puts special emphasis on the utterances of the Prophet as a source and an explanation. (2) At the other pole, the Ḥanafī school, claiming that it was not possible to establish the authentication of these utterances and accepting only a few of them as authentic, seems to have circumvented most of the sayings of the Prophet. (3) In point of practice, however, the

difference in the outcome does not seem to be great, because the Prophet himself strictly observed adherence and submission to the Qur'ān and often affirmed before his followers that some of his practices were purely a matter of personal opinion and therefore unbinding on anybody. (4)

Concerning the other two sources of Islamic law, i.e., ijtihād and ijmā', we find shades of differences of opinion among Sunnī scholars. Ijtihād receives more emphasis by liberal minded scholars, and less by conservatives. (5) On the other hand, the authority of ijmā' as applied in the middle ages is rejected by many Muslim thinkers among whom were the Udabā'. In his work, Mir'āt al-Islām, Husayn accepts ijmā' only as applied to the early period of Islam. In his view, the great figures of that era headed by Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Alī and other companions of the Prophet were "interpreters" of the spiritual message of Islam. They accompanied Muḥammad, witnessed his deeds and heard his conversations. Being of impeccable integrity, their interpretations had a pervasive effect, and through interpretation they innovated. (6)

However that may be, regarding the principle of ijmā', it is worth mentioning that, at present, a new course in interpreting spiritual matters, which is not like the traditional one, has been followed by the Udabā'. But it is not possible to say which of the Udabā's views will be ultimately integrated into any future Islamic consensus in Egypt. As a matter of fact, this naturally depends on subsequent scholars and on the tolerance of the Egyptian state and society.

Reaching this point and turning back to Husayn's book, Mir'āt al-Islām in which he focused on the

sources of Islamic law, we should state that, for all the above reasons, namely, concentration on the centrality of the Qur'ān, and the position of Muḥammad as a medium of revelation, this book occupies an important place in modern Islamic thought. What adds to this importance is that Mir'āt al-Islām also treats the Prophet's biography in a stimulating manner. However that may be, in concentrating on Ḥusayn's discussion on the Prophet, we find that he, to start with, emphasizes the fact that Muḥammad was, above everything else a teacher and educator. The Prophet spent his life teaching the message of God. He explained the meanings of the Qur'ān and, at times, drew out details of rituals which were summarily laid down in the Qur'ān. In his talks in the mosque or his contacts with men and replies to their replies, in his management of men and events, he acted as a great master, fully aware of the impact of his words and example. Here lies the basic force and motivation of his personality. (7)

Ḥusayn's treatment of the Prophet's biography is not simply unique in its breadth only, but also in its intellectual content. He puts less emphasis on action and more on thought. (8) In line with Ḥusayn's emphasis on the intellectual content, he treats the various dialogues, debates, observations, commentaries, and arguments which abound in the Qur'ān. The dialogue of Muḥammad with the polytheists of Quraysh, as presented in the Qur'ān, formed the starting point. Polytheism in all its aspects, such as the worship of idols, or of many Gods, or of deified human beings is the one "unpardonable" sin in Islam. The highlighting of the principle of the unity of God by Ḥusayn and the Udabā' and Islamic scholarship in general derives from two facts: first, the assertion of Islam itself that the unity of God is its first principle and its distinctive assertion in the face of any other dogma. Second, it

was inevitable in confronting attacks by Christian missionaries that the principle of the unity of God was opposed to the Christian doctrine of the trinity. While it is true that for the Christians, there is no contradiction between the unity of God and the Christian trinity, and while it is also true that Islam considers Christianity as a monotheistic religion, and stresses that Christ himself never claimed for himself or his mother a divinity; the doctrine of the trinity presents a point for argument and counter-argument between Islam and Christianity. Ḥusayn and the other Udabā' as well as all Muslim scholarship believe that in the principle of the unity of God Islam has a point which could be strongly used in this dialogue.

On turning back to Ḥusayn's emphasis on the more intellectual issues, he concentrates on the Qur'anic dialogues with Christianity and Judaism with which Muḥammad was engaged. Again, this was necessary to meet the various challenges against Islam, on the one hand, and to highlight more favourable attitudes towards Islam by other religions on the other hand. In his endeavour to realize the goal, Ḥusayn mentions that the Qur'ān distinguishes between the teachings of Jesus Christ and the beliefs of Christians. In the same way, the Qur'ān draws a similar distinction between the Biblical Judaic faith and Jewish beliefs and practices. Within this broad and flexible framework of acceptance and rejection, Islam adopts and confirms beliefs in common, thus upholding a basic and crucial belief in one continuous stream of divine revelation through prophets to humanity, which is binding on all human beings. In this way, and in many others as well, a common human heritage is emphasized, opening the way for a broad brotherhood, notwithstanding diversity of belief among the three religions. Nevertheless, he adds, Islam does assert a distinctive line beyond the ground of mutual belief between Islam, Christianity and



Judaism. This is firstly explained by the emergence of deviations from the original revelation. (9) Secondly, it is explained by certain changes which took place in the three revelations. Every new revelation added to the one before it. Annulment and replacement of some rules between one revelation and another occurred. As far as the Islamic revelation which, according to Ḥusayn, occurred gradually, parallel to historic events, annulment of some rules and their replacement with others concerning the food practices of the Jews took place. (10)

A most revealing dialogue - commentary, according to Ḥusayn - is that which the Prophet holds with al-munāfiqūn as treated in the Qur'ān. The word munāfiqūn used in many places in the Qur'ān defies translation by a single word. To Ḥusayn, literally, it means hypocrites, but on close examination it is found to include cynics, opportunists, defaulters, defeatists, subverters, demoralizers, and all kinds of ill-wishers. In short, all those who outwardly profess belief, but are always ready to change position at the first opportunity. (11) The Qur'ān gives a close account of their oscillations, and even, as Ḥusayn notes, of their physical expressions. It exposes them, and brings their motions and emotions to the surface. (12)

In Ḥusayn's thought, the verses of the Qur'ān referring to al-munāfiqūn are usually interpreted and understood with reference to specific persons and events. (13) But when universalized, they appear to refer to that sector of any society (perhaps he had Egyptian society in mind) which is most dangerous and disruptive to the spiritual health of society as well as to its stability and order. Life is not to be understood as merely a struggle between believers and unbelievers. For there is ever a volatile substratum,

which can swing from one side to the other, and must be reckoned for what it is. At times, it seems that this substratum is not just a block or sector in society, but a hidden force in every soul, a force that has to be suppressed and surpassed in the individual's search for faith. Between the poles of principle and anti-principle, there lies the ground of no principle at all. (14)

By identifying and addressing al-munāfiqūn, the Qur'ān introduces an important nuance. Men are not drawn in black and white, but in realistic shades of colour. Ḥusayn reports that when the Prophet was asked to punish a munāfiq, he refused to do that on the basis of a belief that he was not ordered to explore the hearts of men. (15).

Having discussed Ḥusayn's approach and ideas concerning the Prophet Muḥammad's biography, we now move to Haykal. Unlike Ḥusayn who presented a good portion of the Prophet's biography through concentration on dialogues and debates between the Prophet and non-Muslims as derived from the Qur'ān, Haykal resorted to another approach. In his work, Ḥayāt Muḥammad, Haykal uses the usual "chronological" method in this book, i.e., describing the life of Muḥammad as he grew from childhood to youth and to older years of life in time sequence. This biography is direct, broad, exhaustive, and rarely accompanied by personal commentary. His personal opinions, however, are stated in the two introductions which he wrote to the first and second editions. (16) In this biography, he refers to the Prophet all the time by name without the traditional phrase of prayer and greeting which every Muslim is required to repeat whenever the Prophet is mentioned: salla al-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam (God bless him and grant him salvation). He simply quoted at the beginning of the book the Qur'anic verse which

requests all the faithful to pray for the Prophet and greet him. (17)

God and His Angels  
Send blessings on the Prophet:  
O ye that believe!  
Send ye blessings on him,  
And salute him  
With all respect. (18)

This innovation was criticized at the time, but was eventually taken in good spirit. In point of fact, it did have the effect of a greater "personalization" of Muḥammad, in the mind of readers, and helped in the re-drawing of a natural image conforming to the facts of history, and better suited to an age which believes in the "scientific" outlook and a certain degree of "secularization".

On moving to al-'Aqqād's discussion on the Prophet, we find that in his work, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, unlike Haykal, he takes the "topical" approach. This means that instead of using chronological order, he takes as titles various attributes, human, psychological and intellectual, or attributes of leadership in war and peace, and tries to bring up under each of these titles all that is known in Muḥammad's biography pertaining to them. Therefore, following this approach, al-'Aqqād tries to draw a portrait of Muḥammad by identifying the main facts of his life and the main qualities which characterized him and gave him his place during his time and in history. Muḥammad's genius is expressed in his preaching the new faith of belief in one God, in his military campaigns, in politics and in administration. (19) His personal virtues are seen from the angles of eloquence, friendship, leadership,

homelife as husband and father, dignity, devotion, and manhood. (20) Even though these expressions of genius and personal virtues are related to the events which reflect them, the overall impact of the study is one of "static" adoration rather than dynamic unfolding. The dramatic elements of suspense, turbulence, fluctuations of fortune, oscillation between hope and despair, are largely absent. (21) His techniques of expression range between "drawing" in words, rather like line and colour, "classroom" teaching, preaching, and an attempt at a summation which shows meanings, explicit and implicit, and asserts greatness.

In his introduction to 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, al-'Aqqād draws a strange distinction between 'abqariyyat Muḥammad, the genius of Muḥammad, and his actions:

For genius is a virtue inherent in  
the soul, even before it is unfolded  
in action and crowned with success.

(22)

Muḥammad deserves to be praised and glorified, irrespective of his action. Al-'Aqqād seems to apply this vague and surprising distinction in all his subsequent studies of Islamic geniuses. He seems to have fallen here into a basic error, which runs contrary to logic. As far as Islam is concerned, it is basically occupied in a search for a unity that transcends diversity. But al-'Aqqād carried to the extreme his habit of separating the personality from its actions. In his mind this may have been a form of "scientific methodology", but in the end, just as science has described for us in meticulous detail a multitude of the diverse aspects of phenomena, and stopped short of speculating about a unity that integrates the whole picture, al-'Aqqād has failed to

show the unity behind his personalities. In subsequent studies, he shows awareness of this "blank" and tries to remedy it by proposing a "key" to the personality of every hero. (23) This will be taken up at a later point.

However that may be, al-'Aqqād's distinction between the genius of Muḥammad and his actions may reflect an autobiographical meditation on his part. He probably believed in his own genius and sought to protect himself from any criticism or blame against his personal intellectual career by asserting that his genius was something different from his career!

In our opinion, it is difficult to assess all the effects on the modern Arab-Islamic mind of the biographies of Muḥammad which were written by these writers. But it is no exaggeration to say that these effects were far reaching. Muḥammad was personalized, and the Qur'ān more thoroughly familiarized to the modern Arab Muslim. Attempts at undermining them failed. A sense of great attachment and belonging was enhanced. A new love was kindled, and an identity re-discovered. In a world of superiors in economic, political, and military power, ruthless in taking advantage, and extorting its price, a world which views things only in terms of resources, and markets, and human beings only as labourers, consumers, or else soldiers; in a world which views the human drama as a worldly contest for power and believes in a man lulled by consumerism and pleasure; in a world which has substituted outer space for heaven and declared God to be dead, modern Muslims find in Muḥammad a great example of belief in God and in human worth. In the Qur'ān, they find a source of faith, knowledge and contentment. If Christianity be symbolized by mother and child or Jesus on the Cross; and if Judaism be symbolized by prophet and tablet,

Islam can only be symbolized by the book, for it is generally believed to have forbidden the drawing of human images. Muslims inscribe in their mosques verses from the Qur'ān, and raise such verses in their homes and even carry them in chains and other ornamental forms on their persons.

Having discussed the Udabā's effort of biography writing with regard to the Prophet, we will now move to discuss their writings on other early heroes of Islam. Ḥusayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād wrote biographies of the first two caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Haykal wrote a biography of 'Uthmān, while al-'Aqqād wrote a biography of 'Uthmān, 'Alī and others as already mentioned. However, as far as Ḥusayn is concerned he covered the period following the death of 'Umar not by separate biographies of some of its heroes, as al-'Aqqād did, but by a comprehensive history which deserves a separate treatment in the next chapter. In what follows, an attempt will be made to treat the biography writing by the Udabā' from the point of view of styles, methodologies, targets, achievements, and significance within the context of the era's issues.

To start with Ḥusayn, in introducing his biography of the first two caliphs, al-Shaykhān, he writes that he does not intend to describe the great events that took place in their days, or to ascertain truths about details which were written down long after the events themselves. It is enough to say that their rule had witnessed the victory of Arabs over Byzantines, and the final destruction of the Persian Empire. That by itself is a unique historical miracle. His intention, however, is to draw the personalities of the two caliphs, Abū Bakr and 'Umar as they appear from historical sources which describe them, and to narrate the events of their time as it appears: (24)

"in that mark which is laid on the lives of Muslims, and which had a far-reaching influence on events and divisions which the Arab nation subsequently experienced." (25)

Ḥusayn deals at length with the question of succession to the Prophet, or the election of a ruler for the Islamic community after the death of the Prophet. In his thought, it is not the historical account alone that matters, but the vast questions it opened, which are still alive to the present day. Among the questions with which Ḥusayn and even the other Udabā' were concerned were the following: does Islam require a certain form of government? Did it ever tell Muslims how to elect their ruler? Did it ever require a ruler to do anything beyond the observation of principles and rules laid down by the Qur'ān and the Prophet? In modern terminology, did Islam ever require the establishment of a theocracy? The answer of Ḥusayn and the intellectuals of his time will be considered at length later in our discussion on the Udabā's views on government, theocracy and democracy, which takes the previous and contemporary history of Islam into consideration. The point of relevance here, is that such questions had arisen from the moment of the death of the Prophet. (26) An understanding of what happened then throws crucial light on the whole concept of the continuity of Islam as will be comprehensively explained in chapters V and VI.

Apart from the question of government, a second point which Ḥusayn brings out at the end of his biography on the second caliph, 'Umar, has to do with 'Umar's ideal of social justice in managing the affairs of the Islamic state. To Ḥusayn, this great caliph, not only managed to keep up with the problems and issues of his time, and find the right solutions for them, but

was far ahead of his time - in many respects even ahead of our time. He was the first man in history to think of devising a practical scheme of the distribution of wealth on a basis of clarity, certainty and equality. The scheme consisted of a broad formula for the application of state revenues, which at that time was composed of three items: booty, al-ghanā'im; land taxes, al-kharāj; and the poll tax, al-jizya on non-Muslims in lieu of military service. The idea was to assign for all members of the population, male and female, and including illegitimate children, a right to a fixed income, depending on various factors, noting that this income should not destroy work incentives. (27) This scheme, however crude and elementary, was the first "social security" plan, humanity ever knew. It could have been refined and developed, had it not been interrupted by the events following 'Umar's death, namely, 'Uthmān's misgovernment. (28) This is in addition to the tidal wave of problems arising from the sudden realization of the magnitude of the Islamic conquests, and the tremendous worldly opportunities it created for the untamed and unruly bedouins of Arabia.

This emphasis on the part of Ḥusayn shows an important aspect of the image of Islam he was trying to convey, namely, that it is the Islam of the common and downtrodden, al-mustad'afūn, in fulfillment of two Qur'anic verses: (29)

God has promised to those  
Among you who believe  
And work righteous deeds, that He  
Will, of a surety, grant them  
In the land, inheritance  
(of power), as He granted it  
To those before them; that  
He will establish in authority  
Their religion - the one



Which He has chosen for them;  
And that He will change  
(Their state) after the fear  
In which they (lived), to one  
Of security and peace:  
They will worship Me (alone)  
And not associate aught with Me.  
If any do reject faith  
After this, they are  
Rebellious and wicked. (30)

And We wished to be  
Gracious to those who were  
Being depressed in the land,  
To make them leaders (in faith)  
And make them heirs,  
To establish a firm place  
For them in the land,  
And to show Pharaoh, Haman,  
And their hosts, at their hands,  
The very things against which  
They were taking precautions. (31)

It must be mentioned, at this point, that Ḥusayn's concern about justice and the down-trodden among Muslims, has to do with the situation in Egypt in which he was deeply involved. This point will be elaborated on in the following chapter, when we deal with the situation in Egypt at the time of Ḥusayn.

A last point which Ḥusayn considered in his work, al-Shaykhān was to draw a distinction between the Prophet and his successors and to sketch with great feeling portraits of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, which we do not need to reproduce here, except very briefly. They are, as he says, firmly and deeply printed on the Islamic minds as great men of faith and belief. Their relation to the Prophet was one of unbounded love and

loyalty. The first Abū Bakr, was unquestioning, and the second, 'Umar, was inquisitive and at times almost rebellious, but never disobedient or wavering in loyalty. (32) Their faith permeated and filled their lives. Brave and steadfast in war and peace, they were never moved by the fluctuations of fortune. As leaders they rode above events, and took full control of the situations in which they found themselves. Both were innovative, though Abū Bakr is generally thought to have been less innovative than 'Umar. They passed the thresholds from subordination to the Prophet in his leadership of a religion in the making, to leadership of a nation, and to world leadership with the utmost ease. This, to Ḥusayn, was possible by the lessons they learned from the great example of the Prophet, by the teaching of the Qur'ān and by an intrinsic human worth with which they were both endowed. Each one of them lived an ascetic life of personal denial, and distributed time between the responsibilities they undertook on behalf of a newly created Islamic nation, and the search for personal salvation in prayer and worship. (33) This integration of sainthood and leadership has never been surpassed throughout history, and, therefore, it created a sense of pride among Muslims at a time when confidence in Islamic history and heroism was shaken as a result of the various challenges discussed earlier.

Like Ḥusayn in al-Shaykhān, Haykal also treated the question of the re-affirmation of Islam in his works, al-Ṣiddīq Abū Bakr and al-Fārūq 'Umar. In the latter, Haykal explains his immediate purpose in writing his biographies by saying that he had noticed the impact of the work of some Western and missionary writers, supported by imperialist powers, on countries of the "Islamic Orient". These writings attempt to demoralize these countries, and destroy freedom of thought, and freedom of true and objective research. He had also

noticed the stagnation of Islamic thought and the narrow vision of some Islamic writers. Accordingly, he adds that he assigned for himself the dual task of defending Islam, its founder and his companions, and of introducing a fresh, positive, objective, and scientific outlook, which seeks the truth and nothing but the truth. In other words, he was attempting to liberate modern Islamic thought from stagnation. Part of his method for achieving this objective lay in describing the rise of the Islamic Empire, as an example of the great teachings of Islam. (34)

Haykal shows an intense occupation with the Imperial side of Islam, i.e., Islam as a universal faith. Thus, he mentions that Abū Bakr knew by intuition that Islam was "Imperial in its essence". Its message was not directed to the Arabs alone, but to all peoples. Muḥammad sent messages to the kings of his time, calling them to enter into Islam. Talking briefly about the question of the rise and the fall of the Islamic Empire, Haykal says that an empire can only be based on a firm spiritual and moral basis, which was built by Islam, and on the principle of the equality of human beings, which is one of the main tenets of Islam. Nations of the Islamic Empire remained for many centuries the bearers of the torch of world civilization, but they were overtaken by decay, and old age. This decay was not due to any fault in the principles on which the empire was based, but it went through the inevitable cycle of rise and fall. The decay itself was rather due to departure from these principles. (35) In our belief, this looks like an expression of sorrow for the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate, and shows that the vision of an Islamic Empire was very much alive in the mind of Haykal. Being one of the most "scientific" and objective among his whole generation, he was not slow in translating his beliefs to a worldly context. He shows an awareness of

the potentials of both Arab nationalism and pan-Islamic vision, and he senses a role for Egypt here (possibly replacing that of Turkey). "The present which had been formulated by the Islamic Empire", he writes:

is particularly concerned with all the Arabic speaking peoples, which due to this (the common language) believes that it is related to the people of the Arabian Peninsula. Egypt lies at the centre of these peoples' circle ... This present is also generally concerned with all Islamic peoples in Asia, Africa and Europe. (36)

This imperial past links for eternity all those peoples, and deserves their consideration. They must understand the causes which led to the corruption of the original image, and find the way for restoring it to its past greatness. (37)

In short, Haykal is not concerned only with drawing individual images of saint-rulers, but also, and simultaneously an image of the rise of an empire. In comparing him with Husayn and al-'Aqqād we find that for this reason, his treatment of the biographies of Abū Bakr and 'Umar is far more elaborate and "historical" than the other two writers. He is interested in tribes, events, battles, conquests; all the fascinating events of an empire in the making. Being a politician as well as a scholar, the worldly and other worldly are not contradictory for him. At times they look like almost two different aspects of similar phenomena. In this respect the vision of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir (d. 1970) in his work, Falsafat al-Thawra (The Philosophy of Revolution), is not far removed from the vision of Haykal. (38) In

addition to this similarity in outlooks between Nāṣir and Haykal, we may add that both believed that Egypt occupied the centre in a number of circles, one of them being the Arab world, the other being the Islamic world. Nāṣir added the world of Africa.

Unlike Haykal, in discussing the early fathers of Islam, al-'Aqqād did not reveal an interest in treating the factors needed for the rise of states, but similarly to him, he was concerned about drawing images of saint-rulers. In his works, 'Abqariyyat al-Ṣiddīq and 'Abqariyyat 'Umar, for example, and in an attempt to describe these two caliphs, al-'Aqqād, introduces a new tool of analysis which he describes as the "key to the personality". This key is not a description of the personality, nor a drawing of its characteristics, but a mere tool which gives access to its depth. (39) The key is inherent in the biological make up of every person, which in turn produces certain psychological traits. (40) In our opinion, the concept is vague, confused and incapable of producing any results which were unknown before its application. It is too obviously self-contradictory and unscientific. Perhaps among other things this derives from the fact that, unlike the other Udabā' who obtained high degrees, he was a self-educated man. However that may be, justifying his vague concept of the key of the personality, al-'Aqqād claims that it surpasses science, and defies definitions. In short, it is an intuition which he applies to his heroes, and which, in our view, turns out to be not too intuitive, after all. In the case of Abū Bakr's personality, al-'Aqqād mentions that the key is to be found in his admiration, which led him to have complete and unquestioning faith in the Prophet, even when believing may have seemed to contradict the rational or the reasonable. (41)

In explaining the above, he gives us a rare insight

into his "methodology". He explains that the unquestioning belief of Abū Bakr rested on his faith in a "totality", which should surpass any seeming doubt on a point of detail. At the same time, to al-'Aqqād, conceding irrationality or unreasonableness on a point of detail, may lead to the destruction of a line of argument which is basically true. Abū Bakr accepted as true Muḥammad's assertion of al-Isrā' (The Prophet's ascension to heaven), not on rational grounds, but because Muḥammad's message was mainly one of faith in one God as against idolatry. To disbelieve him on al-Isrā' is tantamount to giving an advantage to idolaters over believers in God. Bringing the present situation into consideration, we must state that al-'Aqqād's above argument has a contemporary parallel. In point of fact, that parallel lies in the side issues and marginal arguments to which Islam was drawn, by missionaries, in the hope that by throwing doubt on these issues, the basic credibility of Islam itself will be undermined and a victory over Islam will be achieved without having to face its fundamental beliefs. (42) In short, he was refuting one of the favourite methods of missionaries. In his view, the seeming irrationality will be resolved over time, and the temporarily doubtful will gain a status of "true" retroactively, through new facts or new discoveries coming subsequently to light. (43)

Al-'Aqqād is fully aware of the potentials of manipulation latent in ideas and argument. Besides judgement which decides between truth and falsehood by the application of faith, or intellectual argument, or scientific discovery, there is "victory", which manipulates gaming skills. Truth cannot prevail by its content merely. Its content itself must be used to advantage in any game which inevitably takes place between any truth and any falsehood.

Apart from the above, in his biographies on Abū Bakr and 'Umar, al-'Aqqād tries to compare Abū Bakr and 'Umar, deducing from the comparison two "models". (44) By model is meant an abstract image drawn on the basis of a set of features to be used as a source of comparison, emulation and understanding. It is worth mentioning at this point, that the drawing of models has always fascinated the human mind, while the admiration of these models has always induced human thought and action. "Model" drawing produces a refinement over reality which brings the model nearer to the intellect, and at times even to the heart. A model is easier to comprehend, love and copy, and al-'Aqqād is fully aware of that.

Thus, while the key to Abū Bakr's personality is that he was a hero-admirer, the key to 'Umar's personality, al-'Aqqād believes, is that he was a "soldier", in the battle of truth and faith. A soldier has a law to observe, and for 'Umar, that law was the Qur'ān; he has a commanding superior, and that supreme commander was the Prophet. He may disagree with an order and ask for an explanation, but he never disobeys. And finally he takes action, if the commander cannot be reached and assumes personal responsibility, if he deems the action to be necessary. The personal traits of 'Umar are the traits of a good soldier: courage, firmness, frankness, roughness, honour, help, self-sacrifice, discipline, obedience, responsibility, faith, and love of achievement. (45)

Paraphrasing the above, al-'Aqqād apparently holds that Abū Bakr has an inclination towards "personal" behaviour, while 'Umar is inclined towards "institutional" behaviour. 'Umar believed in creating institutions and assigning to them specific jobs and functions. The interesting point about this "institutional" behaviour, is that it is not

bureaucratic, but ever alert, firm and flexible. It is further tied to faith and a number of moral virtues which simultaneously activate it and put it under control.

The two models are not contrasting, as they are often presented by scholars; one imitative, and the other innovative. To al-'Aqqād, they rather complement each other, as expressing two aspects of human life; the personal or individual, and the social or collective. (46) In our opinion, al-'Aqqād in drawing his most favourite character, 'Umar, may have missed much of this great man's qualities, including his dislike and mistrust of soldiers, best exemplified by his sacking and humiliating of Khālīd - one of the greatest soldiers of all time.

But al-'Aqqād may also have been expressing a secret wish for a society run by 'Umar-type soldiers. This has to do with his dissatisfaction with the situation in Egypt during his time. He seems to believe that the liberal system of government which Egypt applied, was heavily inclined towards the class of landowners. Landownership in Egypt was not only the key to status and prestige, but also to political power. (47) All parliamentary parties of the period were based on the land owning class. This fact led to a highly unsatisfactory system of government, and it is consequently natural to find early ideas of reform like those of al-'Aqqād. He called for a fairer distribution of agricultural land. It was specifically this reform - the first measure of reform - which was enacted by the Egyptian free officers after they assumed power under the leadership of Nāṣir, and it seems to have received al-'Aqqād's approval. (48) Yet, in spite of this, al-'Aqqād was not generally satisfied with Nāṣir's regime. He viewed the latter as a "dictator", for all final decision-making was left in



his hand and thus he was in full charge of the destiny of the nation. (49) On turning back to al-'Aqqād's perception of 'Umar, we must state that having seen a regime of soldiers in action, and having seen certain major negative aspects of it, we do not know whether he had changed his mind about describing 'Umar as a soldier. Can anyone really be an 'Umar and a soldier-ruler simultaneously?

In concluding this chapter, we should state that all the Udabā' who wrote biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad and his great companions started their endeavours explicitly, with the intention of defending Muḥammad, and his great companions and successors, and Islam itself, against unfair attacks, mainly by Christian missionaries. As the task unfolded, they found themselves involved in most of the issues which confronted the modern Islamic mind. Their original task may have been one of creating a sense of pride, identity, and belonging, but inevitably their works opened broad horizons which seemed to shine through old windows that had been closed for a long time. The scenes shown by the windows filled them with deep admiration, respect, and wonder. Unsurprisingly, they slowly turned from apology, to admiration, and thence to a kind of critical and brave analysis, of the early and modern periods of Islamic history. This analysis is best seen in the classic by Ḥusayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, to which the next chapter will turn. A study of this work is necessary, for it reflects on Ḥusayn's attempts to present the early history of Islam in such a way that lessons are derived for stimulating reform in Egypt. During Ḥusayn's time Egypt suffered from cultural decay mainly resulting from injustice and lack of faith.

Notes on Chapter IV

1. Amīn, Duhā al-Islām, Vol. II, pp. 206-217.
2. Ibid., pp. 206-217.  
  
For information on the utterances of the Prophet as reported by Mālik Ibn Anas, refer to Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Suyūtī, Muwata' al-Imām Mālik, Vol. I, II (Cairo: Muṣṭafa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādh, 1930), pp. 11-348; 2-263. Also see Yaḥyā Ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī, Muwata' al-Imām Mālik (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1971), pp. 13-708.
3. Amīn, Duhā al-Islām, Vol. II, pp. 176-206.
4. Yawm al-Islām, (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Khānjī, 1958), p. 202.
5. For example, Amīn greatly concentrates on the question of ijtihād in his writings, considering it as one of the foremost elements which should assist Muslims in ridding themselves from cultural decay. Ibid., pp. 189-209. Al-'Aqqād, also adopts such an outlook. Al-'Aqqād, al-Tafkīr Farīda Islāmiyya, pp. 142-158.
6. Ḥusayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, p. 202; 207-218.
7. Ibid., pp. 121-124; 168-202.
8. Ibid., pp. 170-201.
9. Ibid., pp. 67-79.
10. Ibid., p. 133.
11. Ibid., pp. 81-85. Also see Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Makram Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab, Vol. X (Beirut: Dār Sādir, n.d.), p. 359. Also see 'Abdullāh al-Bustānī, Fākihāt al-Bustān, Vol. II (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Amirikāniyya, 1930), p. 2475.
12. Ḥusayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, pp. 85-99.
13. Ibid., pp. 82-84.
14. Ibid., pp. 81-99.

15. Ibid., p. 84.
16. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 1-64.
17. Ibid., p. 45.
18. S. xxxiii/56. Ali, op.cit., pp. 1125-1126.
19. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, pp. 29-80.
20. It must be stated at this juncture that al-Ḥakīm and Sayyid Qutb believe that al-'Aqqād excelled in drawing a portrait of the Prophet in his work, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad. Al-Ḥakīm, "Abqariyyat Muḥammad, Kitāb lil-Ustādh 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād", al-Thaqāfa, Vol. IV No. 175 (May, 1942), p. 19. Sayyid Qutb, "Kutub wa Shakhṣiyyāt, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad lil-'Aqqād", al-Risāla, Vol. X, No. 469 (June, 1942), p. 666. However, in evaluating al-'Aqqād's work on Muḥammad, both writers do not seem to have noticed the vague and peculiar distinction which al-'Aqqād set down between Muḥammad's genius and his actions as explained above.
21. Regarding the question of turbulence, fluctuations of fortune in the Prophet's life, and oscillation between hope and despair, see Watt, Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 79-83.
22. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, p. 11.
23. ...., 'Abqariyyat 'Umar (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, n.d.), pp. 66-80. Also see his work, 'Abqariyyat Khālīd, pp. 172-180.
24. Ḥusayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 5-9.
25. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
26. Ibid., pp. 24-39.
27. Ibid., pp. 176-178.
28. Ibid., pp. 179-180.
29. It may be mentioned that between 1932-1952, Ḥusayn attached much concern to the weak, poor and all the down-trodden among the Egyptians. In 1946, 47, 48, Ḥusayn published a number of

articles in al-Kātib al-Misrī (the Egyptian Writer), entitled al-Mu' adhdhabun fī al-Ard (Those who are Tortured on Earth) in which he described the life of those who suffered from poverty, illness, illiteracy, exploitation, humiliation and suppression and in which he called for a modification of the social system in Egypt. "Al-Mu' adhdhabūn fī al-Ard", al-Kātib al-Misrī, Vol. I, No. 4 (January, 1946), pp. 449-465.

....., ..... , Vol. V, No. 20 (May, 1947), pp. 613-662.

....., ..... , Vol. VIII, No. 29 (February, 1948), pp. 9-26.

Furthermore in 1946, 47, Husayn published in al-Kātib al-Misrī a number of articles entitled, Mā Warā' al-Nahr (What is Behind the River). In these articles, he calls for social reform in Egypt and attracts attention to the need to stop the exploitation of the rich to the poor and of the influential to the non-influential; and to bring mercy and justice to all those groups of Egyptians who were relegated to an inferior position bereft of elementary civil rights and liberties as well. "Mā Warā' al-Nahr", al-Kātib al-Misrī, Vol. IV, No. 14 (November, 1946), pp. 213-223.

....., ..... , ..... , No. 15 (December, 1946), pp. 399-413.

....., ..... , ..... , No. 16 (January, 1947), pp. 575-583.

....., ..... , Vol. V, No. 17 (February, 1947), pp. 7-22.

Husayn's call for the maintenance of social justice in Egypt was based on a belief that justice is one of the basic principles of Islam. To him, Islam is a revolution against injustice, oppression and suppression. Al-Naqqāsh, Udabā' Mu'āsirūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Misriyya, 1968), pp. 45-46. Islam has advocated the need of founding a society that gives equal rights to all its members. Husayn, "Al-Adab al-Muḥlīm", al-Kātib al-Misrī, Vol. III No. 12 (September, 1946), pp. 574-576.

On turning to Islamic history, Ḥusayn believes that the caliph 'Umar made an endeavour to combat injustice by all means contributing, by this, in facilitating a happy life for Muslims in which basic rights and liberties were guaranteed to all members of the Islamic community.

....., "Bayna al-'Adl wa al-Ḥurriyya", al-Kātib al-Misrī, Vol. III No. 10 (July, 1946), pp. 203-204. However after 'Umar's death, Ḥusayn believes that justice was not observed as required, a factor which led to instability in the Islamic Empire. For example, Thawrat al-Zinj (The Negro's Revolution) which occurred in Baṣra in the third century after Hijra, under the leadership of 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad, was an expression for the need of the maintenance of social injustice. Ḥusayn, "Thawratān", al-Kātib al-Misrī, Vol. II, No. 8 (May, 1946), p. 555. For more information on Ḥusayn's outlook on justice and the need of its observation, see Ḥusayn's work, Kalimāt (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1982), pp. 124-127.

30. S. xxiv/55. Ali, op.cit., pp. 914-915.
31. S. xxviii/5-6, Ibid., pp. 1002-1003.
32. Ḥusayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 49-50; 126-130.
33. Ibid., pp. 97-103; 181-218.
34. Haykal, al-Fārūq 'Umar, pp. 11-12.
35. ...., al-Siddīq, Abū Bakr, pp. 18-21.
36. Ibid., p. 10.
37. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
38. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir, Falsafat al-Thawra (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), pp. 78-79.
39. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat al-Siddīq (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, n.d.), p. 49.
40. Ibid., pp. 48-49.
41. Ibid., pp. 49-51.
42. Ibid., pp. 53-55.

43. Ibid., pp. 55-57.
44. Ibid., pp. 62-72.
45. ...., 'Abqariyyat 'Umar, pp. 67-80.
46. ...., 'Abqariyyat al-Siddiq, pp. 62-66.
47. Issawi, Egypt an Economic and Social Analysis (Great Britain: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1947), pp. 149-150, 170.
48. Regarding land reform in Egypt, Robert Mabro states:

The revolutionary regime enacted a land reform in September 1952, six weeks after the coup d'etat. The decision should be construed first as a political act. The immediate purpose was to diminish the power of big landowners, the most representative and influential group of the ancien regime, and to remove a dangerous source of opposition to the young junta; hence the swift action, the priority given to this law over alternative measures for social and economic reform, and the determination shown in execution.

Robert Mabro, The Egyptian Economy 1952-1972 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 56. For more information on land reform in Egypt, refer to Gabriel S. Saab, The Egyptian Agrarian Reform 1952-1962 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 17-50. Patrick O'Brien, The Revolution in Egypt's Economic System (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 76. Anthony Nutting, Nasser (Great Britain: The Anchor Press Ltd., 1972), p. 53.

49. In an interview with Muḥammad Khalīfa al-Tūnisī - an Egyptian literary man who accompanied al-'Aqqād for thirty two years, namely, from 1932 - 1964 - on the 10th of March 1985 in Kuwait, he told me that al-'Aqqād was dissatisfied with Nāṣir's autocratic tendencies. On another plane, and in a section called "The Mind of a Dictator", Joachim Joesten states that "since May 1954, Nasser in effect had been Dictator of Egypt". Refer to his work,

Nasser the Rise to Power (London: Obhams Press Limited, 1960), p. 110. It remains to add that concerning Nāsir's internal policies and the decision-making process, see P.J. Vatikiotis, Egypt since the Revolution (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), pp. 100-104.

CHAPTER V

AL-FITNA AL-KUBRĀ:  
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

One of the most important contemporary issues which intensively preoccupied the mind of Ḥusayn is that of "justice". He depicts justice as a tool to bring about equality in society. According to him, powerful or weak, rich or poor, old or young, influential or ordinary person, must be treated equally before the law. This equality is established in the Qur'anic verse:

Mankind! We created  
You from a single (pair)  
Of a male and a female,  
And made you into  
Nations and tribes, that  
Ye may know each other  
(Not that ye may despise  
Each other). Verily  
The most honoured of you  
In the sight of God  
Is (he who is) the most  
Righteous of you.  
And God has full knowledge  
And is well acquainted  
(With all things). (1)

Ḥusayn's idea of justice as a tool to implement equality, stems from his sincere concern about protecting the weak against the oppression of men of power and wealth. After all, the weak form a part of society and, thus, their protection is absolutely necessary as it preserves their welfare and well being.



One may ask, at this point, about the reasons which motivated Ḥusayn to attach a considerable concern about justice and, in particular, about defending the rights of the weak against the tyranny of the strong and the greed of the rich. The motive behind such concern could be certainly found. To start with, Ḥusayn was a product of lower middle class upbringing. When he started his career, he must have realized that it was indeed difficult for one, however educated and ambitious, to compete with all those influential figures whose power reflected an unchallenged ability to make decisions. Finally, when after a long struggle in his life, Ḥusayn reached the level of the Establishment, he saw in his appointment as counsellor in the Ministry of Education in 1941, and later as minister, an opportunity to fulfil his long standing dream for all Egyptians in education. (2)

Ḥusayn's determination for defending the rights of the oppressed and the suppressed among the Egyptians, was reinforced by another motive which has to do with his extensive knowledge of Arabic literature and Islamic history and thought. From his readings on the era before 'Uthmān, Ḥusayn seems to have realized that civilizations flourish whenever justice is maintained. Maintenance of justice leads to satisfaction with the establishment and loyalty to leadership. He seems to be convinced that the period of the Prophet and his two successors Abū Bakr and 'Umar who followed his example was great and admirable because it was characterized by the restoration of human rights and imposition of sanctions for all breaches of justice, even against one's self. Putting the Prophet Muḥammad as a prime example, Ḥusayn reports that the Prophet gave judgement against himself and Muslims demanded the same from 'Uthmān when he started to depart from the principle of equal treatment, but he refused to comply. (3)

In addition, another manifestation of justice in early Islam is seen in the Prophet and the two early caliphs' refusal to fix material allowances for themselves from public funds, and when that became impossible, they took subsistence allowances only. Anything they may have taken in excess of that, they asked their heirs to return to the treasury. Husayn reports that the Prophet distributed a little gold he owned before his death, choosing to leave this world with nothing in hand and laid down the rule that as a prophet, he was not to be inherited. His daughter Fāṭima, was denied the little land tithe he possessed in Fadak and Khaybar. (4) In short, the Prophet and his two successors, who possessed the whole means to live luxuriously, preferred to lead a simple life like any ordinary person. Husayn seems to believe that this kind of leadership completely differs from that which prevailed in Egypt in his time. To him, Egyptian leaders enjoyed a luxurious life, and so as to accumulate wealth, they encroached on people's rights, oppressing and suppressing them. This created a society with two classes, the privileged one which represented the wealthy and the influential among the Egyptians, and the un-privileged class which included the remaining part of the population which formed its majority.

Members of the latter group occupied inferior positions in the state. Their salaries were extremely low, and what made things even worse was that they were forced to pay taxes. To Husayn, the upshot was that most employees had to borrow money from others and in order to be able to re-pay their debts, they had to resort to theft or to accept bribes, or even to ask for bribes, activities that created bad relations among people. (5) This, of course, was not to the advantage of Egyptian society. However that may be, apart from government employees, farmers were tremendously

exploited and oppressed by landowners, and treated like slaves. (6)

But the problem of the exploitation and the humiliation of the farmers and others was not the only problem. Alongside with it, went the problem of unemployment. Husayn reports that a good number of Egyptians were unemployed and these suffered from hunger, thirst, poor clothing, poor housing conditions and illness. Thousands of them lived as destitutes and, out of desperation they committed suicide. (7) In contrast with the miserable conditions of the masses, the landowners, the wealthy men of power lived a luxurious life in big houses, with expensive imported furniture, extravagant clothing, servants, etc. (8) To justify this, they took advantage of some Western theories which hold that Muslims are fatalists and declared that they are pre-destined to be rich while, contrary to them, the poor are pre-destined to be deprived of wealth and power. In view of this, Husayn severely criticized this group and described them as selfish, cruel, hypocrites, and thus deemed it imperative that their exploitation and humiliation of the weak and the poor be eradicated. (9) In his thought, exploitation leads to demoralization and ultimately reduction in productivity.

In view of the above, Husayn demanded an improvement of the conditions of the Egyptian masses by forcing the rich to pay more taxes to the government in order to help the poor, the weak and the destitute and to bridge the gap between them. (10) He called for a fair distribution of wealth among Egyptians. Casting his thoughts to early Islamic history, he related that this was realized at that time. Taking 'Umar as an example, Husayn stated that when state revenues increased as a result of conquests, 'Umar ultimately decided to lay down a system of fair

distribution for all Muslims, irrespective of age and sex. He declared revenues to be the "property" of all Muslims and not some of them only, and declared himself as duty-bound to be a trustee for the keeping and fair distribution of those funds. He ordered a "census" to be carried out, the first of its kind, and records to be kept, to ensure that no one is left out. The ṣadaqāt or progressive imposition of the zakāt (alms giving), probably the first progressive tax in history, was meant to establish social justice, and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. The Prophet was once asked by a bedouin: Is it God Who has ordered you to take this money from our rich and give it to our poor? And the Prophet replied, by God, Yes (Allāhumma Na'am). Nevertheless, ṣadaqāt collection was to be carried out justly, and money collected should first be put to the benefit of the poor of the place concerned, and then for other charitable purposes mentioned in the Qur'ān. (11)

According to Ḥusayn, 'Umar was neither socialist nor communist, because he confirmed private property and tolerated wealth, as the Qur'ān stipulated. (12) But he strove to establish social justice without outlawing either. His method was similar to modern social security plans in which the state guarantees for its citizens life, health, and a basic material income, to protect them from want and indignity without encouraging idleness. In short, the Prophet and his two companions strictly observed justice, applying it to all those aspects of life which attach importance to the welfare and the well-being of all citizens without any discrimination.

Thus far, we have mentioned that the reasons which motivated Ḥusayn to pay considerable concern to justice have to do with his background, education, and the socio-economic situation in Egypt. A fourth factor that

propelled him to struggle against injustice was based on the realization that he was acknowledged as a serious thinker, and a writer with a mission.

Among the Islamic works in which Husayn focused on the question of justice in its relation to the rise and fall of dynasties is al-Fitna al-Kubrā, The Great Civil War, which occurred during 'Uthmān's time. Husayn who was deeply involved in the cultural, political, social, economic and religious controversies in Egypt showed a distinguished ability in linking the modern era with that era in which al-Fitna al-Kubrā occurred. In both eras, Husayn found common features: deviation from the Islamic principles of equality and justice, lack of faith, exploiting religion for selfish ends, the absence of social peace and harmony as a result of political and religious divisions, and as a result of the huge gap between the rich and the poor. The chapter at hand offers an analysis of the above book and shows its importance in various fields.

It will be seen that one of the elements which gives importance to Husayn's work al-Fitna al-Kubrā is that it deals with a vital and crucial period of Islamic history in a "fresh" stimulating manner. Historical facts are introduced without exaggeration or bias in a novel approach which can be described as "scientific". Talking about this approach, Husayn mentions that he attempted to give his subject, regarding the events which took place during 'Uthmān and 'Alī's time, a purely objective consideration, through looking at it from the view of the historian who isolates himself completely from prejudices, emotions and interests. (13) One of the basic features of this approach is that it undoubtedly appealed to the minds of the new generation of Egyptians and it earned for Husayn approval by society. There is no need to repeat that through this, he

contributed to the re-establishment of confidence in Islam at a critical time of its history. It may be recalled here that Ḥusayn's endeavours in this respect were also displayed in his earlier writings. In 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, he stressed the "richness" and "power" of Arabic literature and history and their value as sources of pleasure and inspiration. Here he mentioned that the biography of the Prophet in addition to other works that focus on conquests, troubles, and civil wars had been favourite subjects for writers, poets and folklore storytellers, seeking to convey to generations of readers the lessons of events and lives. (14) Ḥusayn set for himself the task of writing about the Prophet and other historical subjects which, in his thoughts, occupy a similar position to the "Iliad" in Greek and Western literature. In his keenness to create pride in Arabic literature and history, he argues that like Greek culture, Arabic culture has a "fountainhead", a reference to go back to always, for gaining fresh insights of life, history, and human behaviour. This fountainhead which had been eclipsed for a long time, was not only to be re-discovered, re-described, and re-interpreted in 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, discussed earlier, but also in al-Fitna al-Kubrā, factors which add to the importance of these two great works.

Al-Fitna al-Kubrā focuses on a Great Civil War which raises many questions about human nature and motivation, and about man's thoughts and feelings, either in his private life, or in public life, and about man's relations with his fellow men and his tormenting split between the worldly and the sublime, i.e., between his love of this world, and his aspirations for attaining happiness in the other world. Set out briefly, al-Fitna al-Kubrā deals with a unique "human" experience which concerns man considerably. There is no doubt that all this points to the value of

this book. Alongside these points, the significance of al-Fitna al-Kubrā stems from the fact that it deals with a civil war which came on the heels of the victory of Islam over Arabian idolatry, and in the midst of its remarkable victories and conquests. As Ḥusayn puts it, all its leaders had been companions of the Prophet, some being among his most renowned circle of believers and supporters. What is still more important is that the drama does not lie in the contrast between a golden era and a dark one, but more perhaps in the contrast in behaviour of the same men in two eras.

Another point to be added regarding the value of al-Fitna al-Kubrā is that this book deals with a historical situation which, in certain aspects, is comparable to the contemporary one in Egypt. There are important aspects of resemblance between the two situations. In addition to points already mentioned, in both, a crisis exists as a result of dissensions in society, inclination towards materialism, and confusion in thought and behaviour. Due to this link between the past and the present, al-Fitna al-Kubrā then provides lessons for contemporary Muslims to follow. However, a word of caution should be delivered here. While it is true that we see a relevance of al-Fitna al-Kubrā to the contemporary crisis of Islam in Egypt, we should not exaggerate the extent of such a relevance. Whereas Ḥusayn highlights the problems that existed in Egypt when he wrote al-Fitna al-Kubrā in 1947/1953, and tries to find a solution for them within a historical context, he also provides a comprehensive analysis on such problems in his articles in al-Kātib al-Misrī, which were published between 1946 and 1948.

So far, it has been stated that the importance of al-Fitna al-Kubrā stems from historical, psychological, spiritual, socio-political and nationalistic considerations. A fundamental point to be mentioned

here is that Ḥusayn did not sufficiently stress the effect of the Great Civil War in enriching the intellectual horizons of the time with theological debates. We need not be surprised by that, for Ḥusayn had left this realm to Amīn, who extensively dealt with it in his Islamic works. (15) Keeping all these points in mind, we will now introduce an analysis of the above book, constantly emphasizing Ḥusayn's new interpretation of Islam's early history, and trying to establish a link between the past and the present whenever the need arises.

To begin with, we should state that apparently Ḥusayn's intention to establish literary and Islamic historical sources comparable to the Iliad, does not only reveal his knowledge of Greek literature, but also reflects an influence of that literature on him. One of the striking traits of al-Fitna al-Kubrā is that it shows signs of the Greek dramatic view of life and history as controlled by unseen forces and influences which lead and lure to a predestined fate. But, at the same time, it also reflects an Islamic view of the continuous struggle in the souls of men, between the forces of good and evil, and of the divergences and contrasts between God's judgement of men and men's judgement of each other. It goes without saying that Islam has raised another tier above the Greek view of life by replacing the multitude of Greek deities, engaged in petty jealousies and battles, by one supreme God, holding all power, and governing the universe in a supreme, though unknowable wisdom.

The scene described in al-Fitna al-Kubrā is entirely human. The persons involved in this drama are left to their own devices, without divine counsel. Previously, such persons had the Prophet among them, to convey to them the word of God, to give them his personal advice, and to help them to take their



collective decision, but the "news from heaven" was interrupted by his death. His two great successors Abū Bakr and 'Umar, seemed a natural continuation of the line he started, and were able to move on through the great momentum he created. The Great Civil War signals the lapse of that momentum, and the appearance of new forces, working to drive events in new diverse and largely conflicting directions.

It will be seen that the situation in the Great Civil War regarding such concepts as "good" and "evil", the struggle between them and the result of such a struggle, was different from any other situation faced earlier in the history of Islam. Before the Great Civil War, there had been two other incidents of civil strife. The first of these is represented in the struggle of Islam against the idolatry of Mecca, and the Prophet's war against the Meccans and their allies. When that phase came to an end, with the fall of Mecca to the Prophet, it was in retrospect, understood as a triumph of a new faith, a new vision and way of life and not a tribal victory. The nature of victory moderated or wiped out all scars, and a unity was established among the Meccans who fought that civil war.

When Ḥusayn wanted to draw a framework for his story of the rise of Islam in 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, in which he dealt with the problem of good and evil, he described it as a struggle between the devil "Iblīs" and the sublime. He personified the devil as an old man from Najd, handsome, dignified, and with an apparent stature. (16) This man, 'Amr Ibn Hishām, one of the most fierce opponents of Muḥammad, assumes the name of Abū Murra. (17) In revealing the contrast between good and evil powers, Ḥusayn reports that a council is held by Iblīs in space, to which devils ('Amr's followers from Mecca) are invited and many are assigned specific

tasks for undermining the new faith. (18) On the other hand, Ḥusayn reveals that even before Muḥammad became the messenger of God, signs of sublime attention and protectiveness towards him were shown. (19) God always protected the Prophet from dangers. In short, Ḥusayn made it clear that there was an issue, written in black and white, and the struggle ended in a victory of good over evil.

In another respect, the Wars of the Apostasy - Ridda - were the "second" civil war, but they were even more forcefully written in black and white. For now, Ḥusayn indicates that the good was no longer fighting to assert itself, it had been asserted. The Renegades no longer enjoyed the benefit of ignorance, al-Jāhiliyya, but had full knowledge of what they were doing. (20) However, when it comes to the Great Civil War, Ḥusayn depicts men as being no longer certain of the "right" and "wrong" of the entire situation. For example, he reports that Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqās (d. 55/674-75), one of the great companions of the Prophet, choosing not to take sides in the civil war, summed up his position by saying:

I shall not fight until you bring me  
a sword which tells me this man is a  
believer and that is an unbeliever.  
(21)

An important point which Ḥusayn attempts to make is that if people were no longer able to distinguish between good and evil, there was then no need to detect or identify a devil with dark motivations or to assign for him any function in instigating the Great Civil War. Apparently, he suggests that the scene had no place for a personified devil, though Islamic historians insist on involving such a devil. They attribute the role of a plotting devil or that of a

dark "mover" of events to 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba', a converted Jew. On Husayn's part, he dismisses the whole alleged sinister role of the man and his followers in instigating the Great Civil War, ascribing to their attitude the same universal motivations, namely, those motivations which are similar to all human beings, rather than unique motivations stemming from some secret source and having a mysterious target. (22) After all, according to him, the whole meaning of the war would be missed, if a personified devil were introduced. For the battles near Baṣra (The Battle of ~~the Camel~~) or at Siffīn, were not to decide between good and evil. Husayn seems to believe that the battle of faith and virtue was raging in the hearts of men, on both sides of the line and everywhere else, and the devil was now playing a more subtle role in every heart simultaneously, and not in some chosen hearts, as Abū Murra did, when he performed his mission by poisoning the heart of 'Amr Ibn Hishām through hate and envy against the Prophet Muḥammad. Dark emotions were now far more complex, and devastating. Husayn shows tremendous skill in describing battles objectively and realistically to fit the "new" human outlook. Needless to say, if the Angels had played any part in any of these battles, as they had done in the battle of Badr between Quraysh and Muḥammad, their role too must have been very discreet, leaving no signs or traces.

Having shown some differences between the first and the second civil wars on one hand, and the third on the other, especially with regard to the concepts of good and evil, we must add that there is another aspect which Husayn introduced to show more differences between these wars, and which reveals more about his perception of the above concepts. The first and the second civil wars, he suggests, were wars of heroes as each had one unquestionable leader, the Prophet Muḥammad in the first, and Abū Bakr in the second. As

for the Great Civil War, he does not see it as a war of heroes. The leaders felt that they had lost control of the situation. For instance, 'Uthmān only too obviously lost command towards the end of his days and found nothing left for him, but to retire to his home, and wait for an impending tragic end. (23) 'Alī, lost control from the moment of his election, to find himself at war with Ṭalḥa Ibn 'Ubaydullāh (d. 36/656) and al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwām (36/656), and in another conflict with Mu'āwiya. Later he was at war with his most loyal followers, al-Khawārij. His addresses to his soldiers which until this day are widely read, and even taught in schools as great examples of style and expressions, are most puzzling. They are the words of a leader out of tune with his men. 'Alī often accused his soldiers of cowardice, reluctance for fighting whenever urged to do that, and fear of death. (24) Mu'āwiya may have shown a better sense of command, and a better insight into men and human nature, but his victory was attributable in some large degree to the blunders of 'Alī. As mentioned by Ḥusayn, Mu'āwiya managed to induce some of these blunders. (25) All this happened while only three decades earlier, all the above mentioned men and many others who fought with them were crowned with renown, and some of them like Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr were assured of a place in heaven. It is necessary to state, at this point, that the Islamic tradition mentions ten men who had been personally assured by the Prophet on certain occasions in which they showed a high degree of devotion, valour or faith, that they would be admitted to paradise. Among these are the first four caliphs, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr and others. But to turn back to the issue of change in human nature, the following questions are posed: What brought this change in their fortunes, turning them down from a pedestal of glory, self-negation and self sacrifice to a state of ambition and violence? What were the causes of this

Great Civil War, which left behind great and everlasting damage?

Some of these causes may be attributed to the system of government that prevailed before 'Uthmān's reign. Husayn is tempted to believe that the failure of the first two caliphs to provide a "constitution" which presented a means of election, and duties and rights of both the ruler and the ruled, was among the important factors which contributed to the Great Civil War. This is in spite of the fact that he justifies the above failure by stating that the first two caliphs were busy with conquests, and in maintaining internal stability as well as in organizing the Islamic Empire. (26) Whatever his justification was, his concern about a constitution in the early period of Islam probably also reflects a great concern with the Egyptian constitution, which clearly sets down the objectives of society in justice and equality, and the mechanics of government which are required to achieve these objectives.

But to revert to the Great Civil War and its causes, another factor which may have contributed to it, lies in the struggle for power among various sub-clans. It is understood from Husayn's discussion on the above war that there were attempts by three sub-clans of Quraysh to establish dynastic rule. These were Banū Umayya, taking advantage of the shaky rule of 'Uthmān who himself was an Umayyad, Banū 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, under the leadership of 'Alī, and Banū Taym, under the leadership of Ṭalḥa Ibn 'Ubaydullāh, and with the support of 'Aisha, the wife of the Prophet. (27) These clans and their aspirations for leadership may reflect a parallel in modern Egypt when shortly before or following independence, different parties and blocks of power arose, competing for power and position instead of uniting in an attempt to

consolidate the new independence. Such competitions are bound to have disastrous effects. This is borne out by the events of the past and confirmed by the developments of Ḥusayn's day.

It should be stated that during Ḥusayn's time, different parties emerged in Egypt, the most important of which were the Wafd and the Liberal Constitutionalist Party. The two parties greatly competed for power so that their competition led, among other things, to the suspension of Parliamentary life in Egypt several times. This led to the consolidation of power in the hands of King Fu'ād (d. 1935) and his party al-Ittiḥād. The Egyptian Parliament was dissolved in 1928, during Muḥammad Maḥmūd's (d. 1941) premiership, by a royal decree. The same happened in 1930 during Ismā'īl Ṣidqī's (d. 1950) leadership, and thus Egypt was then living under a virtual dictatorship. (28)

Be all that as it may, to turn back to al-Fitna al-Kubrā and the question of struggle for power among the Qurayshis, Ḥusayn remarks that some of the companions of the Prophet who gave him full support and loyalty, and received his appreciation and an assurance of paradise, being tested by desires for power and wealth, became corrupt. For they fought, killed and suspected each other. He wonders if one has to endorse their actions ignoring all the tenets of religion, or if one has to condemn them ignoring the assurance of paradise they received. In treating this issue, Ḥusayn distinguishes between God's judgement of their souls, which belongs to God alone; and the temporal judgement of their actions, as these actions were related to the lives of men and the events of history. In connection with the latter, Ḥusayn adds, we are permitted to judge the consistency of these actions according to truth, justice, and right. Although such judgement may appear

as a great pretension, it should not be shunned or avoided. (29)

In this way, Ḥusayn maintains a clear distinction between the "temporal" and the "eternal". All that is temporal is subject to the judgement of men in the light of changing circumstances, though this judgement is open to error. Ḥusayn seems to believe that man's nature can be corrupted in the face of temptations, but God's judgement of men is different from men's judgement. Human beings must exercise their judgement on men and events. But to return for the time being to Islamic history, we may find a similarity of a sort between Ḥusayn's position and the "Murji'a". The latter made a distinction between the temporal and the divine as far as men's judgement is concerned. Unlike the Khawārij and the Shī'a who severely criticized certain companions of the Prophet charging some with unbelief, Kufr, the Murji'a abstained from giving such "extreme" judgements, leaving these to God, the knowing, the omnipotent Who directs everything with wisdom. All that the Murji'a did, however, was to give "mild" judgements on certain men and events of the early period of Islamic history. (30) These do not exceed pointing out certain errors committed by some leading personalities involved in the Great Civil War.

However that may be, in turning back to al-Fitna al-Kubrā and in focusing on Ḥusayn's outlook as regards the difference in the principles, ideas and nature of men between the era of Abū Bakr and 'Umar on one hand, and 'Uthmān's era on the other, we must state that he mentions that the Islamic caliphate as understood by the first two caliphs was a daring experiment, an experiment which was unique of its type. To him, humanity to this day has not been able to establish an order in which political and social justice are achieved in the manner which these two caliphs sought.

(31) These two caliphs treated all equally before the law and were able to restrain the human lust for power, wealth and fame through following the great example of faith and virtue set by the prophet. (32) As far as 'Uthmān is concerned, he could not observe justice in the same manner followed by Abū Bakr and 'Umar.

A deeply significant question which, in Ḥusayn's view, tormented early Muslims was related to the concept of "universal justice" and "equality" which Islam preached. The question arose when 'Ubaydullāh, the son of 'Umar, believed a story told by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakr which relates that on the preceding day to the assassination of 'Umar, he saw the assassin Abū Lu'lu'a conspiring with two others, al-Hurmuzān - a Persian - and Jufaina - a Christian Arab from Hīra. On hearing such a story, 'Ubaydullāh went and killed al-Hurmuzān and Abū Jufaina. He was subsequently arrested and disarmed, for fear of killing more Persians. When 'Uthmān came to power, he was asked by some Muslims to administer justice against 'Ubaydullāh, but he decided instead to release him as a matter of expediency. (33) In his eyes, 'Uthmān was later blamed for this decision, which proved to be one of a series of decisions which discriminated in the administration of justice, invited privilege and nepotism, and encouraged corruption. These failures seem to have taken on disproportionate dimensions, because they represented a great lapse from the high standards set by the Prophet Muḥammad and his two successors. The principles of justice and equality were never put in doubt in Islam. The question which arose was the extent to which departures from absolute justice and equality are tolerable, as a matter of expediency. (34) If the question of administering justice to the son of a caliph (Ubaydullāh) disturbed Muslims, the even more acute question of administering justice to the murderers of 'Uthmān tormented them,



especially as it was readily exploited by a new generation of ruthless and ambitious adventurers. In Ḥusayn's opinion, Mu'āwiya's use of the issue of 'Uthmān's murder may be understandable, especially if viewed within the tribal code of blood relationship. But the issue's ruthless exploitation by Ṭalḥa, who largely contributed to the discrediting of 'Uthmān and to the precipitation of his murder in the hope of being his successor, cannot be justified. (35) 'Alī who was elected to the caliphate after 'Uthmān, and who tried unsuccessfully to avert the tragedy and find a peaceful solution for the mutiny against 'Uthmān, found himself called upon to administer justice to the murderers of that caliph. Despite his faith, dedication and purity, he failed to do that. According to Ḥusayn, when Mu'āwiya wrote asking him to send the murderers of 'Uthmān for punishment, 'Alī convened his followers in the mosque, and had Mu'āwiya's letter read for them. The response was unbelievable, as men shouted in different parts of the mosque saying, "All of us killed 'Uthmān, and all of us had denounced his actions." (36) This meant that the murder of 'Uthmān was a collective act for which no one could be specifically held responsible, a point mentioned in 'Alī's reply to Mu'āwiya. Moreover, Ḥusayn reports that Mu'āwiya was informed that these murderers were ready to give him a lesson, if he did not desist from asking for their punishment. (37)

On the other hand, a messenger of 'Alī to Baṣra, al-Qa'qā' Ibn 'Amr, Ḥusayn adds, had to argue the issue of 'Uthmān's murder with the camp of Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr in the presence of 'Aisha Umm al-Mu'minīn. Al-Qa'qā' asked about the reform they were seeking and one of their spokesmen said that:

'Uthmān was unjustly murdered, and  
things will not be right until his

murderers are punished, to which al-Qa'qā' gave the following answer. You killed six hundred men in al-Baṣra, for taking part in 'Uthmān's murder. One man escaped, Ḥurqūs Ibn Zuhayr, to his tribe, which offered him refuge and support, and so he deserted. The tribes of those killed were angered, causing widespread desertion among Rabi'a and Muḍar (Northern Arabs). Relations with most people were spoilt. If things go on in this way in other places ... matters will be irrevocably spoilt. (38)

When 'Aisha, who must have been shaken by what had happened asked al-Qa'qā' for his opinion about the best way for dealing with the issue of 'Uthmān's murder, he answered that this matter must be treated by conciliation until things calm down, and confidence is restored. When order is restored, al-Qa'qā' added, the question of the mutineers can be brought up. But this looked remote and unlikely to al-Qa'qā' especially in the face of the great divisions already experienced. (39)

The question which Ḥusayn raises, at this point, is as follows: Was it possible before things got out of control to make some gesture of appeasement by punishing some of the leaders of the mutiny, rather than to ask or seek the punishment of the broad base of their rank and file? This seems to have been one of the questions posed by the fatal tragedy. For as stated by Ḥusayn, the "public opinion" of the day represented by the companions of the Prophet, Meccans (Muhājirūn) and Medinans (Anṣār), who were still alive in Medina believed that the murderers of 'Uthmān should be

punished for two reasons. First, the caliph was unjustly murdered, and second, his murder could be a dangerous precedent, tempting people to believe that they were free to kill a caliph whenever they disagreed with him. This position was later adopted by extreme Khawārij, and became a distinctive part of their doctrine. It seems that the common belief was that Muḥammad Ibn Abī Bakr was the leader of the mutiny, at least, during its final phase which culminated in the act of murder. He was the one who opened the gate of 'Uthmān's house, through which the murderers rushed. (40)

Husayn mentions that 'Alī, at this point, must have faced a dilemma of vast dimensions. The rebel, Muḥammad was not only the son of a former caliph, but was also a step-son of 'Alī himself, who had married the boy's mother after the death of Abū Bakr. Muḥammad was brought up in 'Alī's household. His execution would have alienated the mutineers by alarming them to the possibility of a similar fate to each and all of them. These mutineers were in de facto control of Medina, when 'Alī was elected to the caliphate, and could easily turn against him. 'Alī was also aware of the opposition of Banū Taym to his selection and may have wished to avoid an early test with them. 'Alī seemed to have had no option except to resist all calls for the punishment of Muḥammad or any other leader of the mutiny. (41) Nevertheless, this failure put him at the mercy of the mutineers whatever his opinion of them, and however honest his desire to restore to the Caliphate the sense of justice and equality, which it seems to have largely lost under 'Uthmān. The only escape open to 'Alī, under the circumstances, was that suggested by his wise elder son, al-Ḥasan (d. 49/669-670), who had advised him during the mutiny to leave Medina and the mess which 'Uthmān had caused and depart to Mecca or Yanbu', but he insisted on

remaining there. Then he advised him again after 'Uthmān's murder to withdraw anywhere until things calmed down, assuring him that people would then seek him for the caliphate, and find him even if he were hiding in a lizards hole. But he refused that advice too, only to find himself in a situation in which he was not a master, but a prisoner. (42)

In our view, like a Greek hero 'Alī seems to have moved onwards to his tragedy by taking the line which irreversibly led to it. He was indeed innocent of 'Uthmān's blood. He undoubtedly wanted to restore justice, but found himself accused of being the opposite. His decision made in full honesty brought the opposite of what he intended. No wonder that all Muslims alike have a great depth of sympathy for him, as a tragic hero, whose ill-fate is neither warranted by his great service to Islam during the days of the Prophet, nor by his pure and honest intentions.

However that may be, another point which al-Fitna al-Kubrā brings up, is the desperate need which Muslims felt to argue their differences. Revelation has now ceased, and God had left them with sets of principles, applicable for judging men and events, and with examples or models for understanding these events and the men involved in them. For much of the Qur'ān was revealed as a commentary on history and on human beings.

Among the issues to which Muslims attempted to apply reason, is that of leadership with all that it involves. Early Muslims had experimented on the proper methods for selecting leaders and running governments, and came near to discovering appropriate methods, but ultimately they failed. This failure was due to their inability to establish the precedents set by Abū Bakr and 'Umar, or develop them along this line. Instead

they let them be wiped out by civil war. Ḥusayn meditates extensively on this failure, pointing out the gaps in these experiments, which ultimately precipitated the failure. (43) We believe that his meditations are not mere retro-active thoughts about history, but rather positive pointers to a resumption of the attempt from the point of interruption, to discover a worthy, workable, and sustainable system of government. (44) For those early days of Islam will always look in the eyes of Muslims as a high example and source of inspiration, and will always influence their thoughts and motivations.

In the same manner, these early Muslims seem to have felt a desperate need to argue their differences of opinion about all matters and situations and about all interpretations of the faith. They also tried to find some device for converting these arguments to some sort of consensus - a kind of collective decision - and came very near to discovering it, but also met ultimate failures and lapses.

Historians described many scenes of angry or quiet debate, between opposite parties, or within the same party. One example brought by Ḥusayn, is that of the debate between 'Alī's governor of Baṣra ('Uthmān Ibn Ḥunaif) and the camp of al-Zubayr, Ṭalḥa, and 'Aisha, who had just stormed Baṣra. The two armies stood opposite each other, but a debate took place in the middle. Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr made speeches asking for the punishment of 'Uthmān's murderers, and for settling matters by consultation. Some people of Baṣra replied saying that they had received letters from Ṭalḥa urging the murder of 'Uthmān. Some people confirmed their declarations, while others said they were liars. There was a lot of shouting and cursing. 'Aisha was brought on her camel. She addressed them by saying:

We were angered for your sake when 'Uthmān raised his whip and stick, and now we are angered for 'Uthmān's sake when the sword was raised against him ... We opposed some of his actions and (when) we blamed him, he apologized and reformed. (45)

But his enemies, 'Aisha added, stormed his house and killed him. As far as the people were concerned they reacted as stated below:

People listened to her in utter silence, and as soon as she finished her speech, they shouted (again), agreeing and disagreeing. (46)

On the morning of the battle of al-Jamal, 'Alī advanced to a point between the two armies, and called for Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr. The three stood facing each other, and 'Alī asked:

Have you not sworn allegiance to me? Yes, they replied, but we were forced to do that, and you do not hold a better right than ours. And then 'Alī addressed Ṭalḥa saying: You left your wife in a safe place and brought the wife of the Prophet of God, exposing her to great danger. And he addressed al-Zubayr saying: We considered you one of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib's family, until your intriguing son ('Abdullāh, nephew of 'Aisha) separated us ... Don't you recall the day when the Prophet told you that you will fight me unjustly?

Al-Zubayr replied ... If I had remembered it, I would not have come here. By God I will never fight you.

(47)

Al-Zubayr, as reported by Husayn, went to 'Aisha to tell her that he can no longer see the right and wrong of it all and he decided to withdraw. He withdraws, but is followed and killed. (48) 'Alī went back to his military force. As far as Talḥa is concerned, he was soon killed. (49) The same scenes are repeated before the battle of Siffīn between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya with both sides meeting daily to argue and shout. (50) And at a critical point of the battle, the army of Mu'āwiya raised Qur'anic copies on their spears calling for a truce, and warning of external dangers. (51) We believe that all this shows the shock that Muslims must have felt in finding themselves engaged in a civil war, and their desperate attempt to find some means, other than fighting, for a settlement of their disputes. In Husayn's belief, they thought, for a moment, after Siffīn, that they had finally found it, and that was the resort to arbitration, (judicial decision). Arbitrators were to apply the Qur'ān and the Sunna in all matters that had to do with arbitration. Leaders of two camps and their men agreed to abide by the judgement of the arbiters. A truce was declared for a term which could be extended. A suitable venue for arbitration was provided for. Both parties had the right to bring witnesses, and arbiters deliberations were to be open only for those whom they allow. (52) Hearings and deliberations of arbiters were not held in closed sessions, but they were not open freely for anyone to attend. Anyone who wished to attend, had to obtain the prior permission of the arbiters. This seems to have been motivated by a desire to keep deliberations quiet and isolated from pressures and influences to assure an atmosphere of fair hearing.

In our belief, all the above points to a great wish for free discussion, rational debate, and judicial reference, as tools for the management of crisis and disputes, and for the settlement of issues. This great wish is a reflection of the spirit that had been kindled by Islam, but now faced the first storm of real life. Here again, we can say that the "vision" and "ideal" had come ahead of their time. Re-discovered, they must be taken into account in a contemporary Islamic revival. For indeed no society can have unanimous opinion on all questions, nor is it possible to maintain a complete harmony between different conflicting interests. The everlasting social question has always been how to resolve differences in opinions or interests peacefully. In the democratic states of our time, this is done by a mixture of representative rule and judicial decision. The case of arbitration between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya reflects a desire to use one of these two instruments for the settlement of disputes that have already erupted. But the failure of the attempt reflects the structural fault. For the Muslim society of the time did not have a forum like the parliaments of modern democracies to debate questions before they erupt into conflict. Judicial settlement is only effective when it can rely on a power to enforce its decision. But since power had been divided, it could not bring anything more than moral weight. Obviously, positions have been consolidated and it was not possible to change the existing balance by a mere judicial judgement, even if taken with great fairness and even if untainted by doubts about the integrity and honesty of arbiters.

All the questions posed during the critical period of early Islam contained a mixture of spiritual and practical considerations. As the civil war rolled on, however, the practical side of the situation started to assume greater significance. As for the spiritual



aspect, spiritual doubts were manifested in various ways, some of which we have already seen. According to Ḥusayn, in the case of some of the leading companions, they completely retreated from public affairs which must have appeared to them to have become inconsistent with the demands of the "conscience". When they saw 'Uthmān unwilling to reform his rule, or incapable of doing that, they quietly abandoned him and sat watching the disastrous march of events, acting minimally to avert it. Then, when 'Alī was elected to be caliph, they abstained from swearing allegiance, al-bay'a, to him. These leading companions included the illustrious Sa'd conqueror of Persia, the wise 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar (d. 73/693), Usāma, son of Zayd, once the adopted son of the Prophet Muḥammad, and a group of al-Anṣār. (53) Many of these took refuge in Mecca to make up a distinct group which abstained from taking sides in the civil war. In our terminology, they formed a kind of "silent opposition". We believe that by refraining from taking up arms, they implicitly put their faith in moral example and moral persuasion. Their weight seems to have been enhanced by the fact that none of them had opportunistic motivations. Their abstention must have cast doubts on many of the claims and counter-claims of the fighting camps, and may have contributed to the subsiding of the fighting spirit, and helped in precipitating the episode of arbitration, and ultimately the termination of the fight.

Some of these abstainers deeply influenced events. Chief among these was Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. 42/662), 'Alī's governor of Kūfa, who took a stand against the war even while he was still in office arguing that this war was between Muslims and not against infidels. He was forcefully sacked by 'Alī, and then retreated to Mecca to join other abstainees. It is significant that 'Alī was later forced to name him as his representative in the arbitration. (54) In that capacity, he agreed to

the dethronement of 'Alī and Mu'āwiya and called for a new election for the caliphate. (55) In this way, he apparently transformed abstention from silent opposition to forceful decision.

Even within the camp of 'Alī, there were grave doubts. Ḥusayn reports that on his march from Medina to Baṣra, some of the followers of the newly selected caliph posed their questions to him. What did he intend to do in Baṣra? He replied that he intended to call for peace, expound and argue the justice of his case:

What if his call for peace is not accepted? And 'Alī replied that he will not start a fight ... What if fighting is started by the other camp? ... We will then fight for justice until they admit it ... What happens to those who die in the fight ... they are martyrs ... Is it possible that Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr and 'Aisha meet on a false cause? ... One has to know justice and falsehood first and then judge men by them (and not vice versa). (56)

According to Ḥusayn, one man who was an abstainee at heart from the beginning but forced by circumstances to take sides, was al-Ḥasan. He was in disagreement with his father, but stayed loyal to him. (57) When 'Alī was assassinated, al-Ḥasan did not nominate himself for succession, but was nominated by Qais Ibn Sa'd Ibn 'Ubāda. Two months later, he maneuvered his army to peace, instead of war, and capitulated to Mu'āwiya, bringing this deadly civil war to an end. (58) When Mu'āwiya went to Kūfa, al-Ḥasan addressed the Muslims in his presence in these words:

This matter which I handed over to  
Mu'āwiyā is either his right  
restored to him or my right given up  
for the good of the Islamic nation,  
and for stopping the bloodshed.  
(59)

When he departed from Kūfa and returned to Medina, he  
replied to those who blamed him for his capitulation:

I hated to meet God "Most Gracious"  
in front of seventy thousand men or  
more bleeding, each one of them  
saying: "My Lord, for what have I  
been killed?" (60)

It is necessary to mention, at this point, that  
Ḥusayn's observations on the abstaining party seems to  
reflect that there will always be in any society people  
who prefer to stand outside games of power, when they  
believe that no true issues are involved, and that  
contest reflects only conflicting interests or  
ambitions. Such persons may not be effective in  
stopping a fight, but they can be helpful in laying the  
foundation for a shift in public opinion against the  
continuation of the conflict itself, and they may be  
called upon to play an active role in establishing  
peace, when the conflicting parties are tired of war,  
and feel a need for bona-fide leaders to discover the  
way for peace.

So far, we have focused on the most important  
issues discussed in al-Fitna al-Kubrā. In the  
following, we will offer a discussion on our remarks  
and observations on Ḥusayn's classic work of history  
and literature.

Ḥusayn writes continuous commentaries on events,

situations, actions and motivations, throughout his presentation of history expressing thereby a personal and contemporary involvement in the whole affair. He also uses the historical narration to meditate on some specific issues, notably, that of Islamic government which will be discussed in the following chapter. This is in addition to the issues of justice, equality, good and evil as already discussed. But he stops short of answering some of the very basic questions which he raises at the beginning, namely, those questions relating to the meaning, from an Islamic view point, of the whole episode. (61) At one point Ḥusayn asks if the great endeavours of the Prophet and his two successors suited a human nature inclined to selfishness, greed and immediate gain, and if their *model* was capable of survival to change man's nature and raise it to the high idealism envisioned by the Prophet and his two companions. It may have been easy to evade answering such questions for example, on the grounds that, like all the great questions of history, they are not answerable. History could be thought of as a narrative, and some of its events and sequences could be given partial explanations, as independent cases. But attributing a meaning to the whole flow of history may be a very risky matter. Ḥusayn however, justifies his evasion from answering the questions which he raised by saying that events were far bigger than the people involved in them, and that the events themselves should be blamed for what happened if, as he further states, this were reasonable or possible. (62) But, there is no doubt that such evasions are clearly unfit for treating such an important issue as the Great Civil War. This is because this war not only inspired the emergence of various theological schools and doctrines, but its political, doctrinal and emotional impacts are still alive today.

The party of 'Alī survives in Islam to the present

day in the various Shī'ī sects, but above all in the Ja'farī sect which is the official religion of Iran. When the Islamic Revolution of Iran took place, the whole Islamic world awaited with tense expectation the move this revolution might take, to bridge the historic split in Islam which was created by the civil war of 'Alī and Mu'āwīya and its aftermath. The constitution of Āyat Allāh al-Khumeini declared that sovereign power lies in wilāyat al-faqīh or the regency of the religious scholar. This assumes the continuation of the claim for the caliphate by the descendants of 'Alī to our day. According to the Ja'farī school or sect, there are twelve descendants of 'Alī who were entitled by divine right to the caliphate, but none of them succeeded in reaching it. The last one of them disappeared presumably by taking to hiding for personal security, and he is presumed to be still alive with the expectation of reappearance at a moment chosen by God. (63) Obviously, this is the same as the Messianic vision of later Judaism. According to Khumeini's doctrine, a clergyman must be appointed as regent for the vacant seat of sovereignty until the hidden Imām reappears. He himself (Khumeini) is the first such regent, and as things stand today, his successor to this post should be al-Imām al-Muntazirī, who has been elected to the post by a college of religious scholars.

But to turn back to our point on Ḥusayn's aversion to answering "basic" questions raised in his book, we must add that he, however, shed rays of light on many general and specific aspects of the drama. It is significant to note that he wrote his book al-Shaykhān on Abū Bakr and 'Umar after he completed his work on the civil war. (64) This indicates that he must have felt that the civil war cannot be properly understood except by proper reference to the preceding period. The two periods stand in sharp contrast, not only in the

personalities of the ruling caliphs, but in the whole climate. The days of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, treated by Husayn in a retrospective outlook, seemed days of great achievement and hope. The achievement was that of spreading the rule of Islam over a large part of the world and the foundation of a new empire, which was destined to become a new world civilization. The hope was that of establishing justice and equality for all men living in that empire, and to provide each and all with the basic faith in the one God, moral motivations for all human beings. Those were days of purity, when dream and reality seemed to be equally sublime, and made possible through two great gifts from heaven, the Qur'ān and the mission of the Prophet.

In the light of Husayn's thought, it seems that the period of the civil war was one in which men simply lost that sublime touch of purity, and reverted to the realistic motivations of human beings living their way through human life. Human beings are corruptible, and there seems to be no bottom for the baseness which they can reach. But, in our view, the dream of justice and equality, of faith and purity, is also real and moving. Islam had established this dream as a mark and measure. In Islamic history, the dream does not appear as a Utopian product of the human mind or imagination, but as a fact of life which happened once, if only for a very short period of time. Its principles are set down in the Qur'ān and the applications of these principles were performed by the Prophet and continued by Abū Bakr and 'Umar. The great problem of human life does not seem to be one of reaching a certain height, but one of maintaining it, once reached. In a very short period of history, a successful ascent was made, and swiftly followed by a great descent. Husayn's thought indicates that many gave up the ideals, motivations and targets which brought them to that success. For at the point of success, they found not

only the spiritual glory which guided their march, but also the treasures of the earth, in the form of wealth, power, and material pleasures and satisfactions. Instead of consolidating the old dream, they fought for the newly discovered prizes and rewards.

But we believe that the dream itself never faded. Throughout the period of the Great Civil War, it withdrew from outward activism to inward meditation. In political life itself, it took refuge among the large mass of abstainers, the silent majority of the day, and slowly activated that majority, until it succeeded in putting out the fire and re-establishing peace. The issue which had triggered the civil war, namely, the mutiny against 'Uthmān and his ultimate assassination lost all significance. Even the further issue of "consultation", or procedures of electing a caliph, became less urgent. Two new issues slowly assumed dominance. First was the stopping of the civil war itself. A very great man, little acknowledged by all parties, took the brave decision of stopping it, by abdicating his claim to the caliphate. That was al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī. He risked his life and came near to losing it while trying to implement his resolution, and may have lost his life because of it afterwards, although this is far from certain. The decision must have been made easier by the earlier judgement of arbitration, and the part played by Abū Mūsā, 'Alī's representative in arbitration, in reaching that decision. Both Abū Mūsā and al-Ḥasan seem to have opted for "abstention". In the minds of many Muslims, this abstention is often taken for defection. Unfortunately, the distinction which Ḥusayn makes between divine and historical judgements does not apply to these two men. Islamic history has not vindicated their judgement, nor has it classified them as "heroes". Actually, heroism remains a reward of success and not of denial and abdication. The hero of history is one-sided.

Husayn's distinction between the judgement of God and the judgement of history opens the way for a rational outlook towards worldly affairs, and this outlook will be treated in the next chapter. However, the issue which Husayn's work, al-Fitna al-Kubrā left unsolved on the theoretical level is that of "shūrā". This word, which literally means consultation, referred to the whole concept of government. When 'Alī's opposition insisted that there should be a return of shūrā to Muslims, they meant that the way in which he was selected for the caliphate was inadequate implying that he should abdicate and a new selection should be made. He consistently refused. On his death, his men prevailed on his son al-Ḥasan to succeed him, and he accepted only because he had already decided to relinquish the office. Consequently, his succession cannot be taken as the first "dynastic" precedent, although it does indicate a strong trend towards it. The principle of dynastic rule was established by Mu'āwiyā, when he chose his son Yazīd to be his successor. The third phase of the civil war, namely, the revolt of al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī against Yazīd represents a defiance to hereditary rule, but since this defiance was made by a hereditary contender, it may be looked upon as ushering a struggle among contending dynasties. The point of importance here is that it escaped Husayn's notice that the big victim was the principle of shūrā, or consensus choice of the caliph. In time, 'Alī's party doctrinized a dynastic claim of 'Alī's descendants and made it part of faith. In our time, the doctrine is still alive, but is moderated by the interruption in the line of succession after the twelfth Imām, or after the seventh. The Islamic caliphate, however, continued to be run by dynastic succession, until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

A crucial point which we should state here is that



the collapse of the rule of 'Alī did not usher in a collapse of Islam. Politically, the Islamic Empire survived the crisis. Culturally and spiritually, it learned its lessons. The Islamic vision did not end then, but took a new start. It gradually pervaded minds and souls and surpassed fluctuations of governments and historic fortunes. Did Ḥusayn have in mind a modern parallelism? Surely he did, for consciously and deliberately he tries to shift the emphasis from the realm of politics to the realm of faith, spirit, morality and culture.

Apparently, Ḥusayn's work al-Fitna al-Kubrā shows that he believes that faith is the most important principle upon which the foundation and the survival of civilizations depend. He explains this by mentioning that faith does not only invest men with ethics, but also motivates each person to assist his fellow. In this way, faith motivates the wealthy and men of influence, for example, to sympathize with the poor and the weak, to protect their rights, and to assist them on economic and moral levels. In this sense, faith becomes a tool for the maintenance of justice and equality in society, basic elements for stimulating change and progress. The question of faith throws crucial light on the whole concept of the continuity of Islam. Islam, which witnessed periods of rise and decline, did not end by the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Ḥusayn and other intellectuals emphatically insist that Islam will survive on political and spiritual levels if Muslims adhere to its ideals.

Notes on Chapter V

1. S. SL1X/13. Ali, op.cit., p. 1407.
2. Husayn, Mā Warā' al-Nahr (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1975), p. 6, 15. It should be stated here that Husayn's articles entitled Mā Warā' al-Nahr referred to in the previous chapter were compiled in the above mentioned book.
3. ...., al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 207-208.
4. Ibid., pp. 208-209. Also see Husayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 38-39.
5. Husayn, al-Mu'adhdhabūn fī al-Ard (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, n.d.), pp. 180-183. It should be stated, at this point, that Husayn's articles entitled al-Mu'adhdhabūn fī al-Ard referred to in Chapter IV were compiled in the above mentioned book.
6. ...., Mā warā' al-Nahr, pp. 32-33.
7. ...., al-Mu'adhdhabūn fī al-Ard, p. 56; 59; 112; 114; 116.
8. For more information on the luxurious life of some Egyptians, see Husayn, Mā Warā' al-Nahr, pp. 18-27.
9. Husayn, al-Mu'adhdhabūn fī al-Ard, pp. 94-96; 101; 110; 210.
10. Ibid., p. 184; 217.
11. ...., Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 213-214. Also see his work, al-Shaykhān, pp. 176-180.
12. ...., al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 214-215.
13. Ibid., pp. 199-200.
14. ...., Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 9-10.
15. Kurayyim, op.cit., pp. 41-42.
16. Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 337-356.
17. Ibid., p. 357; 430-442.
18. Ibid., pp. 362-363.

19. Ibid., pp. 303-319.
20. For more information on the Wars of Apostasy, refer to Husayn, al-Shaykhān, pp. 67-75.
21. Husayn, Al-Fitna al-Kubrā, p. 367.
22. Ibid., pp. 518-521.
23. Ibid., pp. 416-418.
24. Ibid., pp. 563-564.
25. Ibid., pp. 562-563.
26. Ibid., pp. 238-240.
27. It should be mentioned, at this point, that Abū Bakr, the first caliph of Islam had barred a dynasty of Banū Taym by appointing 'Umar - from Banū 'Adī - to be his successor. We must add that 'Umar, in turn, specifically barred Banū 'Adī from a voting seat in the consultative committee he appointed for nominating his successor. His son 'Abdullāh, was to be consulted if the need should arise, but no one from Banū 'Adī was to be nominated for the caliphate. Thanks to 'Umar's disposition and 'Abdullāh's wisdom, Banū 'Adī dropped out of the race of the caliphate forever. The advances made by Banū Umayya during the rule of 'Uthmān, must have played a part in precipitating the struggle among the above mentioned three clans.
28. It may be stated at this juncture, that regarding the parliamentary life in Egypt, Issawi states:  
  
Egyptian parliamentary life has been very stormy. Between 1923 (when the Constitution was promulgated) and 1942 there were no less than nineteen ministries ... No Parliament has so far lived out its appointed term, several Cabinets have governed without a Parliament  
....  
  
Issawi, Egypt: An Economical and Social Analysis, pp. 172-173.
29. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 235-236.

30. Amīn, Duhā al-Islām, Vol. III (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat 'al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1943), pp. 316-329.
31. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 200-201.
32. Following the Prophet's example, Abū Bakr and 'Umar never allowed the exploitation of the poor and the weak by the rich and the influential. These two caliphs always broke the monopolies of power and wealth. It is reported that 'Umar requested each governor to furnish him with a list of the properties he owned at the time of his appointment. Any extraordinary increase was confiscated.
33. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 190-191.
34. Ibid., pp. 260-273.
35. Ibid., pp. 435-438.
36. Ibid., p. 494.
37. Ibid., pp. 496-497.
38. Ibid., p. 470.
39. Ibid., p. 470.
40. Ibid., pp. 438-439.
41. Ibid., pp. 438-439.
42. Ibid., p. 458.
43. Ibid., pp. 236-244.
44. It may be stated, at this point, that Husayn was in favour of stimulating reform in the institutional set-up of the Egyptian system. He aspired for a constitution which really takes into consideration the masses welfare and well-being. It goes without saying that the shift from one constitution to another and the occasional suspension of the constitution and its legislative bodies, the tug of power between the throne, the British High Commissioner, and the mass al-Wafd party and others, caused a great deal of apprehension, as did the splintering of the Wafd itself, under the stress of internal contradictions and power games and

temptations. For more information on this topic see Issawi, Egypt: An Economic and Social Analysis, pp. 169-172.

45. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, p. 463.
46. Ibid., p. 463.
47. Ibid., pp. 472-473.
48. Ibid., p. 473.
49. Ibid., p. 475.
50. Ibid., p. 499.
51. Ibid., p. 502.
52. Ibid., pp. 511-512.
53. Ibid., p. 447.
54. Ibid., pp. 509-510.
55. Ibid., p. 528.
56. Ibid., p. 468.
57. Ibid., pp. 604-605.
58. Ibid., p. 607.
59. Ibid., p. 613.
60. Ibid., p. 614.
61. Ibid., pp. 199-216.
62. Ibid., p. 244.
63. For more information on the Ja'farī sect, see Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, pp. 272-274.
64. Husayn, al-Shaykhān, p. 5.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ISLAMIC REVIVAL: GOVERNMENT, DEMOCRACY, AND SOCIALISM

It has been mentioned in the foregoing chapter that Ḥusayn expressed a considerable concern about the problem of injustice in Egypt and called for the need to improve the conditions of the masses through the eradication of the exploitation, humiliation and the oppression by the rich of the poor and the weak. Al-'Aqqād too made such a demand. Like Ḥusayn, he believed that the lack of justice and freedom breeds demoralization and ultimately decreases human productivity. The implication is that an effective performance can only be achieved through voluntary participation. Participation is required not only in the context of work, but on the national level where integration of all classes is absolutely necessary if a country is to function properly, both politically and morally. (1) According to him, the alternative is perennial or constant internal conflict. The change which he thus deemed necessary has two objectives: a redistribution of power, wealth and ultimately decision-making; and as a result, social peace and harmony, because the antagonizing forces would have disappeared. The chasm between antagonistic social classes would have been, if not bridged, at least, considerably reduced. In demanding such a change, al-'Aqqād appears to be a radical thinker. This is not surprising for he belongs to a lower middle class who struggled in order to reach the level of the Establishment. When he became one of the main spokesmen of the Wafd in 1920 and then a deputy in the Egyptian Parliament in 1926 and 1930, he called for radical change in the social system of Egypt, which favoured the strong and allotted them all the privileges. (2)

Haykal, however, was not as radical as al-'Aqqād for he was the product of a higher social class. He sympathized with the Egyptian masses and called for the need for improving their conditions through means that will be discussed later on.

In spite of differences of outlooks with regard to the question of injustice and means of eliminating it, all the Egyptian Udabā' agree that this has to do with the political system that was then prevailing in Egypt. To concentrate on this system, we must state that this generation of the Egyptian intellectuals lived at a time when Egypt had been largely integrated into the Western political and economic system. The British succeeded in occupying Egypt in 1882 and in 1914 they proclaimed it as a protectorate and largely integrated it with their colonial system. (3) In 1919, the Egyptians revolted under the leadership of Zaghlūl, demanding political independence, and the institution of a national government that would attach a considerable concern to the people's welfare and wellbeing. (4) All the Egyptian Udabā' took part in this movement. (5)

When the British promised to give a sort of self-rule to the Egyptians and allowed the forming of a new constitution in which great powers were given to King Fu'ād, the three Udabā' as well as others expressed their ultimate dissatisfaction and fears from such an action. They seem to hold that this may lead to the establishment of a theocratic regime in Egypt especially, in view of the king's aspirations for the institution of a Caliphate in Egypt following the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate. (6) The Udabā', thus, called for a new constitution which would command consensus and which would define the responsibilities and the rights of the rulers and the ruled. Keeping these facts in mind, this chapter focuses on the

Udabā's views on theocracy, democracy, and socialism from an Islamic viewpoint, taking into consideration their vision of the early history of Islam.

To start with Ḥusayn's views on "theocracy", we find that he does not offer a definition of this term except after introducing a discussion on faith with its inward and outward manifestations. Ḥusayn makes a distinction between outward expressions of belief and inward faith and finds in this distinction an important key for understanding theocracy. In his thought, the outward expression of Islam lies in the declaration of al-shahādatayn (acknowledgement of faith). Any man who declares that God is one and that Muḥammad is His Prophet, gains admission to the Islamic Community of the Umma, and is claimed to have the basic legal rights of security to his person and belongings. This is conditioned by adherence to Islamic law and the judicial system. But this is not equivalent to faith.  
(7)

The desert Arabs say,  
"We believe". Say, "Ye  
Have no faith; but ye  
(Only) say, 'We have submitted  
Our wills to God',  
For not yet has Faith  
Entered your hearts.  
But if ye obey God  
And His Apostle, He  
Will not belittle aught  
Of your deeds: for God  
Is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (8)

According to Ḥusayn, the meaning of the above Qur'anic verse is that faith is a matter between the individual and God and cannot be acquired by any declaration of profession; but obedience to the law is



required while the rest lies in the hands of God's forgiveness. (9)

Displaying the difference between outward expressions of belief and inward faith, as set by Husayn, it is now possible to offer a definition of the term "theocracy". A theocracy is that state which does not stop at the outward symbols of admissions and belonging, but tries to penetrate forcibly to the inner and personal beliefs, the feelings and deep aspirations of the individual. In this, it seeks the unattainable, and succeeds only in establishing a rule of hypocrisy, and a society of hypocrites. (10) However, since Islam has gone a long way in exposing and discrediting hypocrisy, Husayn's thought indicates that any government which tries to force a rule which, by definition, can only lead to a "hypocritical" society, cannot be described as Islamic. An Islamic state is required to be a trustee of Islam, but this trusteeship should not involve any attempt at interference in the inward "faith" of individuals. An Islamic government is required and expected to enforce Islamic law, but it should accept as Muslim anyone who professes or declares al-shahadatayn without further meddling in his belief. In other words, Husayn calls for a leadership which provides the masses with freedom of expression and action. As freedom of expression was banned in Egypt for several times due to the continuous suspension of the Parliament, we can safely assume that Husayn had the Egyptian situation in mind when he introduced the above ideas regarding his opposition to theocratic leaderships.

Turning to Islamic history, Husayn tries hard to change a common misconception regarding early Islamic governments. Some people, he says, may think that early Islamic government was theocratic, entirely dependent on religion, drawing its power from God alone, denying

men any right or share in government. Such people argue that this state had been established by the Prophet, that God had revealed to the Prophet some general and some detailed rules of government, and that He ordered Muslims to obey God and His Prophet, and accept the Prophet's judgement in disputes which arose among them. They add that Abū Bakr was the successor of the Prophet, and 'Umar the successor of Abū Bakr, thus, a line of sovereignty established by God, passed to the two Caliphs. But this opinion is far from the truth. For, as Husayn states:

Islam is above all and after all a religion which has directed men to dispose their affairs and interests in this life and the hereafter, by adherence to rules and laws which relate to the unity of God (tawhīd) in the first place, to belief in the Prophet in the second, and to seek good in personal behaviour. But it did not however, deprive men of the right to express themselves freely or impose itself on all the affairs of men. (11)

Husayn further says that Islam actually left their freedom to them within certain "limits and boundaries it prescribed to them". Besides, Islam:

did not impose on them rules for every action and avoidance, but left them to their minds and hearts to see and remember, and gave them permission to seek the good, the right, and to work for public and private interests in the best manner they can. (12)

In Husayn's view, one of the evidences which asserts that the then government was not theocratic is that it was based on "consultation". The Prophet himself was ordered to consult Muslims. If rules and laws about government were revealed, this order would have been really meaningless. Husayn adds that Muḥammad had often consulted with his followers. He had, for example, accepted their opinions for the conduct of the battle of Badr and Uḥud, to his advantage in the first battle and to his disadvantage in the second. Revelation did not lay down political rules, and the Prophet did not appoint a successor during his fatal illness, but only appointed Abū Bakr to lead prayers. (13)

The Prophet Muḥammad in his lifetime did not envisage himself as a temporal leader although he had to assume all the functions of leadership which the rising Islamic society needed. He asserted that he was a prophet and not a king by saying nubūwa lā mulk, and consistently with this, he did not take any step to proclaim any kind of permanent government. At his deathbed, he firmly declined from appointing a successor to the function of leadership which he himself had assumed during his lifetime. Significantly, Husayn reports, he appointed his closest friend, Abū Bakr, as leader of prayer, a purely religious function, and saw to it that he assumed it, and that no one else would be allowed to assume it in his place. (14) It is reported that though ill and weak, he at one time heard 'Umar calling people for prayer because Abū Bakr was late in arrival, and rallied his failing strength, to cross over to the mosque and stop 'Umar from leading prayer. This at the time was taken to indicate a preference by the Prophet for Abū Bakr to be his successor and seems to have helped in nominating him as a caliph and swearing allegiance to him, but it is unanimously agreed that the Prophet did not make any

express wish or will to appoint anyone as temporal leader. (15) Consequently, this was taken to mean that the position of temporal leadership is not a matter for religious ruling and decision, and was left to their free decision. In Husayn's belief, the first hours following the death of the Prophet confirm this, as the Muslim community immediately started consultation about the position of leadership and a nominee by the Medinans was suggested, but the hasty arrival of 'Umar and Abū Bakr interrupted the process of proclaiming him as a leader. It was 'Umar who nominated Abū Bakr, and a consensus followed, confirming Abū Bakr as leader. (16) It is also significant to mention, at this point, that the title "Caliph" or Khalīfat Rasūl Allāh (successor of the messenger of God) was improvised and later it became apparent that a form or address had to be improvised also. The address of the "Commander of the Faithful" was also improvised to fill the gap. Apparently, what all this symbolized was that the early Muslims did not wish to use such titles as "King" or "Caesar" with which they were perfectly acquainted, because they did not approve of the haughty status that was assigned to them, or of the pomp surrounding them, or of attributing to them a divine source of power and legitimacy. The caliph was not going to be a God-king, for Muslim society believed in one supreme transcendental God before whom all men, including caliphs, are equal. (17) Nor was this temporal leader necessary for faith or for religious functions, but no society could go without government and, therefore, a temporal leader was necessary to preside over peace and order, internal and external.

The Shī'īs hold a different view as already noted. It is significant, however, that the Shī'ī imamate starts with the caliphate of 'Alī which was reached by the same process of nomination and oath of allegiance, al-bay'a. The previous chapter on al-Fitna al-Kubrā

shows how the controversy around the election of the caliph became a subject of civil war. Ḥusayn mentions that during that civil war, the legitimacy of 'Alī's title was questioned several times. First by Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, 'Aisha and their followers, second by Mu'āwiya and third by al-Khawārij. (18) It is probably due to the temporal nature of the caliphate that Islamic society submitted ultimately to dynastic caliphates which prevailed over dār al-Islām until the end of the First World War. It is probable also that Ḥusayn and the other Uḍabā's concept of government, which they firmly hold to be consistent with Islam, calls for a temporal leadership which is separated from any religious claim or function. It is also due to this early separation of religious and temporal functions that the Uḍabā' unanimously asserted that the problem of secularism never arose in Islam. The problem is peculiarly Christian because the church, at one stage of its development claimed for itself supreme religious and temporal sovereignty by right of God. (19)

On turning back to Ḥusayn's discussion on early Islamic leadership and its relation to the problem of theocracy, there is no question that he believes that the government of the Prophet and his two successors was not "divine", but "human". However, concerning the government of the first two caliphs, he holds that it was deeply influenced by religion in two ways: it was bound by laws prescribed by religion in the Qur'ān and the Sunna, and it was subject to a religious conscience, and therefore, it is bound to be influenced by the religious feelings of ruler and subject at any given time. (20) The success of such government depends on the agreement, cooperation, and solidarity between ruler and subject. They must have a common and mutual agreement on the principles of the system, and must share equally in the collective conscience which

prescribes justice, equality and charity. (21)

Husayn makes a penetrating remark on early Islamic government, which does not only reflect the basic shortcomings of that government, but which equally is an essential precondition of any Islamic government of our time. It is not sufficient, in his view, to leave government to conscience alone. Government needs a constitution which lays down principles and details of the exercise of power, showing what caliphs must do or abstain from doing, and where they have a right of authority. It must show the rights and duties of the people in detail, how a caliph is elected, checked, and even punished. He states:

Muslims were in need to establish  
for themselves, within the boundries  
of Qur'ân and Sunna, a written  
constitution. (22)

Apparently, Husayn is trying to use history as an example to follow. If early Muslims were in need of a constitution which lays down detailed rules regarding the exercise of power, modern Egyptians need a constitution which is accepted by all the people, and which commands respect. One of the main traits of the Egyptian constitution during Husayn's time, is that it invested King Fu'ād with great powers, a factor which, among other things, led to the dissolution of the Egyptian Parliament for several times as already pointed out. If the king's powers were limited, and if all Egyptians stood together, Egypt would then enjoy an effective representative government which can protect Egypt from the intrusion of foreign powers.

So far, we have discussed Husayn's views on theocracy and government. In moving to al-'Aqqād's concept of government, we must state that he seems to

hold similar views to Husayn in this respect. In his belief, sovereignty in the view of Islam, is composed of two contracts: one between God and men, and the other between rulers and subjects. (23) Thus, rulers and subjects are bound by divine law, but they are subject to their worldly agreement in all remaining matters.

On turning to Haykal's discussion on Islamic government, we must start by saying that he believes that any study of the Islamic system of government has to be put in two contexts: one historical and the other substantive. The substantive view includes the basic elements of the Islamic system of government. It goes beyond constitutional forms to include many matters related to government, such as the economic, moral, and social systems, war and peace, science and religion. This is the idea, al-fikra or main lines which Haykal sets down for any Islamic government. Once this is established, he moves to deal with the Islamic system of government within a historical context. In general terms, he says, such a system underwent great changes, and took many forms throughout Islamic history. (24) Starting with the early period of Islam which Haykal greatly appreciates, he mentions that the early caliphs were elected by a consultative system, which is, however, not similar to parliamentary or representative systems of today. The caliph was more like a president of a republic than a king. But as far as the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid Caliphates were concerned, Haykal adds, they were dynastic monarchies. This change in the form of government came as a result of foreign influences on Islam, including Roman and Persian ones. To Haykal, such a change must not, however, lead us to conclude that the first system was Islamic and the second un-Islamic. This is because both systems were accepted by Muslims.

On other points of importance regarding the Islamic system of government, Haykal seems to believe that the Qur'ān and the Prophet did not set down rules of government, yet they did set rules for society. Faith in one God calls for equality and brotherhood among the faithful, and for their freedom. (25) The simple government of early Islam prescribed the caliph's responsibility to the people to observe laws set down by the Qur'ān and the Prophet, and to provide good and just government. Failing to achieve the goal, people had a right to correct him; though the procedures for this correction were not specified. But an 'Abbāsīd caliph ruled by divine right, and the people were his subjects. This absolute government encroached upon many Islamic principles, and opened the door for decline. An attempt should be made now to derive and establish Islamic principles of government. These principles are: firstly, belief in the unity of God. According to him, there is only one thing which the Islamic faith will not tolerate and that is idolatry, al-shirk. The second principle is belief in law which governs organic as well as inorganic beings, and which governs societies and individuals as well. The third principle is equality in a framework of brotherhood rather than competition. The fourth principle is societal duty towards the individual to provide for things like free education and medical care. But these are only guiding principles, and any system which is based on them deserves to be regarded as Islamic. (26) This discussion on the Islamic principles of government reflects Haykal's aspirations for establishing an Egyptian government based on liberty, equality and justice. Reaching this point, Haykal together with the other two Udabā' penetrated into the realm of democracy.

Several attempts by the Udabā' have been made at defining democracy, tracing its historical origins and



showing its achievements, limitations and faults. According to Husayn, democracy is the rule of the people by the people, exercised by the people's free choice of its rulers, and by a system of control over them, to ensure that they rule in the people's interest. It also demands the possibility of removing these rulers peacefully if their rule does not meet with approval. The people's rights and powers are laid down and practised through laws and procedures. But democracy evolved through a historical process, in which the concept of "people" was gradually enlarged from a select few, until it came to include all citizens, male and female, above a certain age. (27)

Al-'Aqqād, on the other hand, explains that democracy has forms and contents. The substance of its content is the freedom of citizens to choose their rulers; while form is the constitution, electoral laws, ballot boxes and the like. Democracy is practised through the rule of the majority. But all thought and movements of reform had started with individuals and extended to the few, before they were accepted by the majority. (28)

Haykal, however, penetrates more deeply into democracy. It is true, he says, that democracy is the rule of the people by the people, but this rule extends beyond government to relations between individuals, and to their basic rights, and the basic rights of their organizations. It requires an adaptation of human ethics and thoughts. Democracy is a doctrine or rather doctrines, with a philosophy of life and ethics, and should become a basis for a whole culture which is acceptable and convincing. (29)

Having defined democracy, the Udabā' moved to discuss the relationship between democracy and Islam, raising the following question: can Islamic government

- however defined - be considered to be democratic, or, by an extension, is democracy consistent with Islam? But on a national level, they raised the more practical question of the suitability of democracy to "Egypt". This question in turn assumes two interrelated forms, namely, whether the conditions for a successful democracy exist in Egypt and whether democracy can cope with the need for a speedy reform.

It is significant to note that the three Udabā' seemed to have retained full faith in democracy and never opposed its principles. Thus, before treating the above questions, we need to recall that these writers wrote their major works during the inter-war period, which saw the rise of diverse forms of authoritarian government. Haykal notes that while before World War I, all European nations claimed and pretended that they were democratic, and glorified the virtues of democracy, the rise of Russian Bolshevism after the World War created a new situation. Authoritarian capitalist governments rose in Italy and Germany, and every one of these governments introduced new ideologies and cultures.

On the question of the "extent" of the consistency of democracy with Islam, the Udabā' turn back to early Islamic history to find an answer there. According to Husayn, for example, he holds that the early Islamic form of government was not a democracy in the technical sense. The people did not 'elect' Muḥammad to be a Prophet, nor did his followers elect him to be their ruler, in the manner observed by democratic convention. They had no means of control and checking over him. He consulted with them, or listened to their advice, but the final decision was in his hands. Abū Bakr and 'Umar were not elected by a broad base of electorate, but only by the influential Muhājirūn and Anṣār of Medina, despite initial disagreement. However, Husayn adds that

if we look at democracy from the angle of the need of the ruler to obtain the approval and confidence of his people, and his commitment to exercise authority on the people with justice and equality without coercion and arrogance, it is possible to describe early Islamic government as democratic in this vague and unmeasurable manner. (30)

Al-'Aqqād, unlike Ḥusayn, considers that the election of the first caliphs was democratic in the sense that it took place in two stages, the nomination of one man followed by general approval. The leaders who approved the election of early caliphs were men of integrity, wisdom and original insight. They got the support of the public at large and, in this way, al-'Aqqād says, they may be considered as representatives of the Islamic community. In the light of this, he adds that shūra was vital in the body politic of the time. The principle of shūra was not related to number of votes and weight, yet it was based on solidarity. No system of shūra can succeed unless it has been preceded by the solidarity and cooperation of the whole nation. In his opinion, the principle of shūra as applied to the early period of Islam functioned in a way far superior to the Parliamentary system of Egypt in its modern history. Al-'Aqqād quotes al-Afghānī as saying:

Your (parliamentary) deputy will be an image of Egypt of your time. He is that aristocrat who sucked the blood and work of the peasant; a coward who avoids rulers, who are worse than himself, one who thinks of bringing no argument to face a ruler, who considers any defence of the rights of his country bad manners and bad policy. (31)

Nevertheless, he notes that al-Afghānī demanded parliamentary government despite his knowledge of its initial faults. (32) Al-'Aqqād too made such a demand, yet he seems to believe that this was to be achieved at a later stage of Egyptian history. Apparently, al-'Aqqād thought that Egyptians were not ready to govern themselves during his time, but they would be capable to do that after extensive political experience through which they would develop a habit of working for the common welfare. Therefore, until that goal is realized, the political system which al-'Aqqād advocated seems to be an "oligarchy" of the few, who are described as men of excellence, muntāzūn, and men of learning, ahl al-Dhikr who rule society, through the function of organic consultation. A fundamental point which should be mentioned here is that although al-'Aqqād did not try to draw a constitutional and institutional plan of his political democracy, it is probably fair to say that Egypt during Nāṣir's time was in one way or another experimenting in government, along certain lines conceptually laid down by him. One man is nominated for the presidency, and later approved by a system of voting which leads to a foregone conclusion. Nāṣir devised the Socialist Union (al-Ittihād al-Ishtirākī) to be an institution of "organic" consultation, strongly denying all the time that it was a one party organization. Conceptually, the interests of all classes and groups are represented in the union. The formula of fifty per cent of representation for workers and peasants was probably intended to create a large body of non-vocal representatives who were inclined to side with a few men of "excellence", i.e. of power, and outnumber any vocal opposition. Nevertheless, opposition can be aired within the Socialist Union, and may, thus, find its way "organically" to the final consensus. But decisions are taken by a small leadership which is parallel to ahl al-dhikr. However, it should be mentioned, at this

point, that a main difference between such a small leadership and ahl al-dhikr exists. It seems that Nāṣir and his advisors did not observe justice within lines demanded by al-'Aqqād. In point of fact, al-'Aqqād firmly believes that leaders should strictly observe justice in exercising power, taking into consideration, the welfare and wellbeing of every person in the state by all means. They should further educate people politically in order to pave the way for a representative government in the future.

Be all that as it may, on turning back to al-'Aqqād's discussion on democracy in its relation to Islam, he asserts that the Islamic Sharī'a was the first system of law to establish what he terms as "humanistic" democracy. According to him, this rests on the following principles: individual responsibility, equality, and universality in human rights, the duty of rulers to consult with subjects, and solidarity of citizens irrespective of religious communities and classes. (33) These principles aim at the preservation of order, peace and cohesion in society. But, he seems to believe that there are notable differences between Islamic and European democracy. The latter arose, in his opinion, as a government device for avoiding an evil or solving a civil disturbance, or for facilitating obedience and peace among the work-force. This, he claims, makes the Islamic concept of democracy superior to the West on the point of source which is divine revelation, and on the point of function which is the positive achievement of good in the sense of equality and justice rather than the negative avoidance of civil disorder.

In any case, an important point which al-'Aqqād makes in his discussion on Islamic democracy is that freedom should never be separated from faith. He seems to meditate on the decline of faith and conventional

morality in the West as expressed by the substitution of material aspirations and physical satisfaction for the virtues of human relations and the ascetic life such as sacrifice, charity, self-denial and spiritual enjoyment. He seems to be meditating on the great psychological lessons to which modern industrial man is put, which encroach upon the normal balance of his life by various pressures, demands, and by a new pattern of relations which increase his sense of loneliness. Thus, he states that democracy needs stable and normal individuals. An individual who lacks faith is abnormal in his restlessness, suspicion and mistrust. A society of millions of such individuals is "abnormal" in its imbalance, confusion, and weakness of cohesive and integrating incentives, and its lack of inclination for morality in public behaviour. Democracy cannot be isolated from the universal and organic truth, made up of a multitude of components which include ethics, social cohesion, and forces of change and progress, over long periods of time. (34)

If we turn from al-'Aqqād to Haykal, we notice that the latter shows firm confidence in democracy. On a national level, Haykal relates that it is familiar to the Egyptian people and suitable to the Egyptian temperament. However, Islam has been crucial in creating this temperament, because its inheritance laws prevent the concentration of wealth over generations; and its teachings open the door for individual initiative, and establish the rights of individuals for freedom of thought, for education, and for enterprise. (35)

Having discussed the Uḍabā's thought mainly on "political" democracy, we will now move to present their views on another aspect of democracy, namely, the social one. But before doing that, we must state that the idea of social democracy was only beginning to

invade the Egyptian mind at the time of the Udabā'. It had not yet taken on a doctrinal form, or even a name. The term "socialism" arose in political usage before it found Islamic or even national justification. For this reason, it continued to be dubbed as an "imported doctrine" by traditionalist schools, and this insinuation was supposed to throw doubts on it, as an undermining influence on society. It gained respectability later, when it was adopted by Nāṣir. But this adoption itself was made in haste, before it was given time to adapt and gain common acceptance. As a matter of fact, Nāṣir believed in radical reform although at the time when he reached power, he had no concept of the content of that reform itself. He moved to that reform in successive steps: the first was the adoption of the law of land reform which aimed at the redistribution of political power and lands among a wider base of Egyptians. The second step was to change the political regime itself by abolishing the monarchy and by abolishing the parliamentary system together with all the institutions which thrived with this democracy, notably, freedom of expression and the rule of established law as administered by the judicial system. The legal system itself was put into doubt and the judicial system was made largely ineffective. These measures prepared the way for a "strong government" which was supposed to be capable of introducing urgent reform without procrastination. Henthforth, the government started to play a more active role in the economy, and this developed in 1961 into the introduction of socialist measures of reform for a better distribution of wealth. Nāṣir also believed that concentration of wealth necessarily meant government by the rich and, therefore, he considered that the measures he applied deprived them of the means which helped to perpetuate their government. (36)

But to concentrate now on the Udabā's discussions

on social democracy, we, as already mentioned, meet in Husayn's thought an awareness of the injustice and misery to which the masses of the Egyptian population were subjected. One of the appeals of Islam to him lay in the concept of equality which Islam preached, and in the attraction of Islam to the "downtrodden". He realizes that injustice and inequality breed revolution. But he advocated no reform programme. (37) He pins great hopes on the democratic parliamentary system of Egypt, and considers it a great and irreversible achievement. (38) Reform in his opinion lies in the adaptation of European systems of government, administration and law. (39) National defence, economic independence, political independence, scientific, artistic and literary independence, freedom - all of these can only be obtained and preserved by the proper means which Europeans invented and applied. In short, Egypt needs internal freedom, and this is achievable only through the democratic parliamentary system, and external freedom, or real independence, and that is achievable only through power obtained by Western technology.

Al-'Aqqād's social democracy is less definable. "Social democracy", he argues, must precede political democracy. This democracy is defined as national, intellectual and emotional cooperation for the fulfillment of social rights, and for ensuring that societal functions will not be dependent on the will of the ruler, or the system of government, and will never fall prey to any one person or community, but will be broadly distributed within the nation, each according to his ability. Although men of learning have a special duty in preaching solidarity and tolerance, this duty is common to all. Everyone has the right to speak and the duty to listen. In this way, every member of society becomes simultaneously ruler and ruled, commander and commanded. (40) In our opinion, this



seems to be no more than freedom of speech in a context of societal accord. This accord itself is one which gives a chance to thinkers to talk and be listened to. Presumably, this is a function assigned to men like al-'Aqqād himself.

On turning to Haykal, and his discussion on socialism, he asserts that socialism started as a protest against disparity in material wealth, yet it has been proved that the elimination of this disparity was neither possible nor desirable. Two principles must be recognized for the establishment of a good social system, the first being the need to preserve the individuality of the person, and the second the admission that perfect social justice is impossible. The system must therefore assure individual and collective good in accordance with "human" justice. This is consistent with Islamic ideals. (41) Because of its keenness to preserve the individuality of a person, Islam, according to Haykal, approves private property, but it has established measures which preclude the rise and continuation of large private property, and these are the ban on usury, the laws of inheritance which fragment estates, and the institution of zakāt which is a compulsory charity on all Muslims to take from the rich in order to give to the poor. The payment of zakāt is not a matter of legislative compulsion, like taxation, but a part of faith and an act of worship as explained below. (42)

In Haykal's belief, Islam elevates the spirit and gives it power over instincts. Spirit and reason are strengthened through education, which must strive to confirm the concept of duty, as prior to the material needs of man. Islam establishes two kinds of charity, one dutiful, and that is zakāt, and the other optional, and that is sadāqa. The first is extorted by the state, while the second is accounted for before God. In

addition, Islam refuses the concept of unearned income and this is why it banned usury. Money is a means for productive activity and not an independent factor which gives a right to an income. Companies are allowed by Islam, and Muslim jurists developed many of their forms. (43) Besides, Islamic laws of inheritance have precluded the establishment of big estates and aristocratic families. It looks upon work as the source of wealth. (44) Remarkable examples of a socialistic nature appear during the lives of the Prophet, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Despite great fluctuations in forms of government during Islamic history, Islamic life retained the same mixture of individualism and collectivism. (45)

This concurrence of Islam and socialism in Haykal's thought remains highly remote and theoretical, and at no point is it related to the actual conditions of life in Egypt, or given a concreteness in terms of measures required to implement this mild socialism. Did Haykal really assume that Muslim inheritance laws were sufficient to break the holdings and power of big landlords? Did he indeed assume that zakāt is sufficient to eliminate the feeling of "injustice" raised by the great disparity of wealth? There is no doubt that zakāt is not a sufficient tool to eliminate injustice in all its manifestations. Paying zakāt is not good enough to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in Egypt. But Haykal, as "conservative" as he was, seems to have believed in the solution to the problem of injustice by paying zakāt.

In view of the above, we can safely assume that Haykal's socialism is no more than a mild enlightened capitalism, which strives to alleviate hardships created by the market economy by taxing the rich (income tax) and extending free or low cost services to the poor. Nevertheless, his views on socialism must

have helped in drawing the line between an acceptable socialism and an unacceptable communism, and may have played a role in paving the way for the wave of "socialism" that broke in different parts of the Arab world in the nineteen fifties and sixties, spearheaded by the socialist measures of Nāṣir.

In the preceeding discussion, we attempted to show that the Uḍabā' interpreted ideas on government, democracy and socialism in terms of a "liberal" approach in which they revealed that Islam was not a petrified faith, and that it is suitable for stimulating change and progress, if properly explained. A point which caught the attention of Western scholarship about the liberal thought of the Uḍabā' and especially Husayn and Haykal amongst them, was whether they were to be regarded as "secular" thinkers. The point was raised probably with two objectives in mind. First, as a test of how far these thinkers went towards Kemalism, and second, as a possible key to understanding the motivation and meaning of their Islamic writing. It is natural that, since those two writers obviously stood at a crossroad of two civilizations Islamic and Western, scholars belonging to each tend to detect and emphasize points which show greater affinity to the intellectual norms and assumption of the viewer, and possibly, at the same time, they tend to downgrade or explain away other points. For example, while a Western scholar may label them as "secular writers", a Muslim scholar may not accept this evaluation, because he looks at matters differently as far as the Uḍabā' are concerned.

In any case, the two scholars often found themselves in the context of the wider game and the broader arena of their time. On their side, they both seemed to have struggled hard to stay outside this game, without giving away either their freedom of

expression or their true conviction. The struggle was hard and left scars and doubts behind. Some of their words were given different interpretations. These are concerned mainly with two points, secularism, which will be treated in the next paragraph and the crossbreeding of the Islamic and Western cultures.

Both believed that secularism is an issue that does not arise in Islam, a point which has been underscored several times in previous paragraphs. As mentioned earlier, both believed that Islam did not provide for a specific concept of state or government, but left the matter for the innovation of Muslims as a "worldly" matter, open for the free choice and judgement of Muslims. Therefore, even conceptually, the "state" of Muslims was temporal rather than theocratic and civil rather than religious. The limitation in this view of both writers lay only in the duty of such a state to observe laws laid down specifically by Islam, which were of a "limited" scope.

In point of historical fact, Islamic law developed through a world process, led by eminent jurists who extended its scope by al-qiyās, (logical derivation) al-ijmā', (consensus of opinion) and through precedents laid down in al-fatāwā, (formal legal opinions) and this development was organic, broad, and flexible. It borrowed heavily from the legal and judicial practices of other nations, especially the Byzantines (Roman law). It borrowed rules and laws which conform with Islam. We should also mention that a further extension of legal principles for meeting new social needs has been recently enhanced by following the principle of al-taysīr (selecting the most suitable from any madhhab, or school of fiqh). Since the variance of views between the schools of fiqh were accepted as genuine instruments of interpretation of Islamic law, any view was acceptable as Islamic which found support

in any madhhab or fatwā. In this way, a broad and developed system of law was established by al-madhāhib.

An important question which arises in our mind is as follows: does the existence of such a developed system of law preclude new legislation? In other words, is legal enactment to be only a matter of selection from al-madhāhib, and conciliation between their views, or is it allowed to initiate and innovate? On focusing on the Udabā's stand in this respect, we find that Haykal, for example, believes that the principle of al-ijmā' obviously accepts the right of the people to legislate. To him, the democracy of our day is nothing but an attempt to discover this consensus through representation. Haykal believes that temporal practices based on a purely civil basis fall within the scope of worldly matters which the Prophet had indeed left for the judgement of society and to their choice as well. This civil approach is described by Haykal as "worthy of admiration and respect". (46) Moreover, this civil view is consistent with the Islamic outlook towards reason, which gives it a prominent place. (47) Thus, to Haykal, Islam permits temporal innovation in a large sector of life. However, freedom for innovation within this sector has only two limitations: the general basic principles of Islam, and the few specific laws it set down.

The above is logical and well expressed. But we still have to face the question of those matters in the modern legal system of Egypt which obviously contravene Islamic law. Should laws which allow such matters as usury, for instance, be annulled and replaced by new laws consistent with Islamic law? The views of Haykal and even Husayn here are put in vague expressions which strive to accept un-Islamic legal innovations while trying, at the same time, not to outrage their readers.

On this matter, they are definitely at variance with views, which even by their own definitions, represent Islamic principles. Haykal states that it is impossible to ignore the development of the world during the last thirteen centuries. But, he adds, this does not mean that we cannot apply the Islamic system of government in modern times. This system must be kept in our minds for the achievement of the "general view and principles laid down by Islam". Haykal adds:

No one will (should) protest that the consideration which must be given to intellectual and scientific development, and its adaptation to the Islamic system of government, runs contrary to Islamic principles, so long as the system which emerges, strives to achieve these principles, and so long as the system itself, is consistent with these principles.

(48)

In short, it is apparent that, in Haykal's thought, rules of detail may be neglected as long as the emerging system allows for the achievement of the basic targets of Islam. Haykal's above endeavour to justify modern inconsistencies with Islamic law and practice is unique, and in our understanding, goes beyond the rules of interpretation acceptable to Islamic thought. For Islamic jurisprudence does not and cannot lay down distinctions between binding general principles and outlooks, and less binding details. Any rule laid down by a textual provision in the Qur'ān, or in an acceptable Hadīth is equally binding. Contravention of such rules can only be tolerated, by applying the doctrine of "necessity", which also prescribes the limits of contravention allowable. Necessity is to be regarded as a temporary state, and reverting to the

rules must take place as soon as necessity disappears. Attempts must also be made to minimise the departure from the rule, as long as necessity prevails. Flexibility here becomes a matter of treating "necessity" in a broader or narrower sense, either as a general state arising under certain conditions and applicable to all persons living in a certain state (e.g. like a state of emergency) or as a matter left to the judgement and innovation of every individual separately.

It may be added that one contradiction in the thoughts of both Husayn and Haykal worth noting, is their attitude towards usury. Indeed, of all Western innovations in economic and institutional legislation, usury and modern banking seem to be in marked conflict with Islam. For Islamic law is indeed firm on banning usury. (49) Husayn and Haykal emphasize the Islamic ban of usury as a great measure to establish social justice, to give a drive and motivation for work as a source of income by removing this form of unearned income, and to promote equality among social classes. Yet, at the same time, they both seem to consider modern banking and interest as "irreversible" social arrangements.

It may be mentioned, at this point, that only recently - mainly during the last decade - has Islamic thought taken up the usury challenge. A spreading network of Islamic banks may develop a new concept of banking which re-unites lending and investment, and establishes banks as owners or partners entitled to profit rather than usury.

Another issue which displays the Udabā's tolerance towards certain Islamic questions which traditionalists and fundamentalists do not allow, is shown in Husayn's argument in an article on the Egyptian constitution

which has to do with Islam and politics. In his book, Min Ba'īd, Ḥusayn wrote, that he noted a basic article of the Egyptian constitution which lays down that "Islam is the religion of the state". This article, he adds, caused a dispute between two categories of Muslims, the first of which is supportive of civil enlightenment while the second is the professors of al-Azhar and other religious scholars. The first category, liberal as they were, interpreted the article as meaning no more than that the Head of the Egyptian State must be a Muslim, and that religious practices, symbols, and holidays should be respected. But it did not demand from the state any new duties or the enactment of new laws. This is because persons belonging to this category call for the speedy Europeanization (modernization) of Egypt, and because they simultaneously believe that Islam possesses the resilience and flexibility which enables it to develop, adapt to different situations, avoid rigidity and immobility, and facilitate social and economic progress. They know that the Egyptian government was "obliged" by reason of modern life to apply matters which were not previously allowed by Islam. This group transacts with banks, permits usury, and tolerates some types of religious contravention. (50)

Contrary to the supporters of civil enlightenment, religious scholars understood the above article of the Egyptian constitution differently. To them, the article meant that the state is now required to protect Islam, to punish infidels, to eliminate freedom of expression in all matters relating to Islam, to ban any publication which contradicts their views of Islam like 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq's work, al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Hukm (Islam and the Principles of Government), and his (Ḥusayn's) book, Fī al-Shi'r al-Jāhili. (51) Religious scholars also looked forward to being accepted as a privileged group or party, which, to Ḥusayn, would



exploit religion for political ends. (52) In this framework of thought, Husayn seems to reject the foundation of such a party by religious scholars. However, he does not seem to be troubled by the possible contradiction between his parliamentary democracy and seeming denial of the right for a party with a fundamentalist platform.

Husayn's rejection of the right of the religious scholars to be accepted as a privileged group, his accusations of their exploitation of religion for political ends, and his censure of their support for banning freedom of expression, shows that Husayn did not accept their interpretation of the above article of the Egyptian constitution. However, liberal as he was, Husayn happily accepted the civil enlightenment interpretation of the article. In adopting such a stand, Husayn, like Haykal, appears to believe that certain modern legal social practices are irreversible, and by extension, all further practices which might emerge from them should be acceptable. The old traditional Islamic ideas seem to be viewed by them as being irrelevant to modern life. They apparently hold that the spirit of Islam should be preserved, but new forms should be tolerated as necessary for progress. However, in our understanding, none of these writers seems inclined to draw a new vision of society as "utopian". Haykal meditated on socialism in a very preliminary manner. Husayn and Haykal together preached generally the same capitalism which Protestantism had preached earlier, and they appear to have seen no option for Islamic society other than adapting to it.

Notes on Chapter VI

1. 'Abd al-Hayy Diyāb, Al-'Aqqād wa Tatawwuruhu al-Fikrī (Cairo: al-Mu'assasa 'al-'Amma lil-Ṣahāfa wa al-Tibā'a, 1969), p. 173.
2. It must be mentioned, at this point, that according to al-'Aqqād, the influential and wealthy groups occupied sensitive positions in the government. Less important jobs were filled by other Egyptians. Working in this sector was not pleasant according to al-'Aqqād. It was unpleasant because junior employees were exploited. They were obliged to accomplish in one day what may indeed have needed much more time. Al-'Aqqād, Anā, p. 79. In other words, they were exploited and humiliated.
3. For information on the British occupation of Egypt following the failure of the 'Urabi Revolt, in 1882, and for information on this revolt and the factors which led to it, see Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 126-161. Also see Issawi, Egypt at Mid-Century, pp. 29-30. Ahmad 'Urabi, The Defense statement of Ahmad 'Urabi, the Egyptian (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1982), pp. 18-51. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rāfi'ī, al-Thawra al-'Urābiyya (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya lil-Tibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1966), pp. 5-528. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, Egypt and Cromer (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 1-35. Christina Phelps Harris, Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt (Westport: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1981), pp. 39-55. Evelyn Baring Cromer, Modern Egypt (London: The Macmillan Company, 1916), pp. 214-330.
4. For more information on the rising in 1919 in Egypt, refer to al-Rāfi'ī, Thawrat Sanat 1919, Vol. II (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Nahḍa al-Misriyya, 1946), pp. 4-55. George Young, Egypt (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927), pp. 229-261. John Marlowe, Anglo Egyptian Relations, 1800-1956 (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1965), pp. 212-248. Tom Little, Egypt (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1958), pp. 130-140. George Ambrose Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, Vol. I (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1933), pp. 296-313. Jacques Berque, Egypt, Imperialism and Revolution (New York: Prager Publishers, 1972),

pp. 304-324. Peter Mansfield, The British in Egypt (U.S.A.: Holt: Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. 220-236. Mahmūd Zayid, Egypt's Struggle for Independence (Beirut: Khayat, 1965), p. 68.

5. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sharaf, Tāhā Husayn wa Zawāl al-Mujtama' al-Taqlīdī (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma lil-Kitāb, 1977), pp. 190-193. Kurayyim, Ma'ārik Tāhā Husayn al-Adabiyya wa al-Fikriyya (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1977), pp. 44-48. Also see Diyāb, op.cit., pp. 127-128.

6. It may be mentioned that the question of the caliphate was a central issue in Egyptian political life during the time of King Fu'ād and even later on. It is mentioned that:

The official Azhar journal Nūr al-Islām carried in the early 1930s, much propaganda for an Egyptian caliph.

Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt, p. 300.

7. Husayn, Mir'āt-Islām, pp. 177-178.
8. S. XLIX/14. Ali, op.cit., p. 1407.
9. Husayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, pp. 176-177.
10. ...., al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 217-222.
11. Ibid., pp. 217-218.
12. Ibid., p. 218.
13. Ibid., pp. 218-220.
14. ...., Mir'āt al-Islām, p. 112.
15. It should be mentioned that al-'Aqqād and Haykal hold a similar belief.
16. Husayn, Mir'āt-Islām, pp. 113-114.
17. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 520-521.
18. Husayn, Mir'āt-Islām, pp. 218-228.

19. Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, p. 520.
20. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 227-228.
21. Ibid., p. 233.
22. Ibid., p. 236.
23. Al-'Aqqād, al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya fī al-Islām, (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, n.d.), p. 41.
24. Haykal, al-Imbarātūriyya al-Islāmiyya wa al-Amākin al-Muqaddasa (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, n.d.), pp. 29-34.
25. Ibid., pp. 16-21.
26. Ibid., pp. 29-35.
27. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 222-223.
28. Al-'Aqqād, al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya fī al-Islām, pp. 52-58.
29. It may be mentioned, at this juncture, that Haykal aspired for establishing a society in Egypt that is based on justice, freedom and equality ... a society in which all its members love and assist each other whenever the need arises and; in which the rights and the wellbeing of its inhabitants are preserved. To him, these are basic principles usually followed in democratic societies.
30. Husayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, p. 224.
31. Al-'Aqqād, al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya fī al-Islām, p. 58.
32. Ibid., pp. 58-59.
33. Ibid., p. 32.
34. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
35. For more information on Islamic ethics which Haykal seems to label as democratic, refer to his work, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 519-520; 531-533; 535-538.
36. Issawi, Egypt in Revolution, pp. 48-168.

37. In spite of the fact that Husayn did not advocate a reform plan, yet he provided for broad outlines to be taken into consideration in any plan for reform in the future.
38. Husayn, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, pp. 44-45.
39. Ibid., pp. 45-46.
40. Al-'Aqqād, al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya fī al-Islām, pp. 68-70.
41. Haykal, al-Imbarātūriyya al-Islāmiyya, pp. 38-40.
42. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
43. Ibid., pp. 43-47.
44. Ibid., p. 47.
45. Ibid., p. 55.
46. Ibid., p. 58.
47. Ibid., p. 58.
48. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
49. Although Islamic law bans usury, jurists under great pressures of necessity, innovated bay' al-wafā' and bay' al-salam, as two forms of contracts usable to conceal monetary debt transactions.
50. Husayn, Min Ba'id (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1967), pp. 239-241.
51. Ibid., pp. 242-243.
52. Ibid., pp. 246-247.

## CHAPTER VII

### ISLAM AND WESTERN CULTURE

To defend Islam against attacks of the missionaries and to discuss socio-political issues which, in their view, might stimulate change and progress in Egypt, was only one side of the problem that confronted the Udabā'. The other side was the relationship between Western culture and Islam in the light of world realities and rational outlooks. There was no question of the material superiority of the Western world over the world of Islam. The Islamic world, therefore, had to think deeply about the causes of this superiority, especially, in view of the fact that the West had contributed a vast heritage of philosophy, literature and art which commanded respect and admiration. Behind this heritage, there lay a great wealth of ideas. The world of the West could not be ignored or neglected, especially, as its ideas also affected human life and started to lay plans and induced trends for introducing vast changes in social structures to suit both the new concepts of men - human dignity, freedom, equality, justice - and to suit the needs of changing economic patterns of production and industrial relations. The world of Islam could not isolate itself, even if it wished, from the call for a new distribution of wealth, for a humane treatment of the unprivileged, for a new order in the state, for the reorganization of political power and government. Such trends and progressive ideas were bound to reach and cut across cultural differences.

On focusing on the Udabā' now, we must state that they called for a progressive Islam. In such a call, they advocated the need for re-linking this faith with Western civilization. As far as the latter is

concerned, they made an endeavour to maintain a sane and rational attitude towards it, which actually called for assimilating it without fears or complexes. In his work, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, Husayn brings many arguments to support this view. In the first place, Egypt has already assimilated Western culture in dress, furniture, in systems of administration and education, in forms of government and laws, in systems and means of production and in patterns of consumption. Any pretence at rejecting this is an act of hypocrisy. Without Western technologies, operational systems, skills and equipments, it is not possible to preserve political freedom and independence, or to achieve economic independence, and without assimilating Western literature and art, it is not possible to achieve literary and artistic independence. Egyptians need to understand Europeans and be understood by them, to make them feel that they see things, evaluate and judge them in the same manner, accepting and rejecting the same things. They want to be their partners and not their servants. (1) Europeans differ among themselves in many respects. Their Christianity is not the same, but they are in agreement on the causes and effects of civilization. (2) This is not an appeal to become a copy of Europe, for that is absurd and unachievable. Husayn states:

Europeans are Christians, and we do not propose to make Christianity our religion, but we propose that European means of civilization should become Egyptian means of civilization, because we cannot live otherwise, nor progress, nor become masters. (3)

If we proceed to Haykal, we find that in his work al-Sharq al-Jadīd (The New Orient), he holds similar

views to Ḥusayn. Like the latter, he brings to attention the fields which Muslims took from Europe in modern times, emphasizing the urgent need of Western technologies, managerial and organizatorial techniques for the Islamic world. (4) However, he somehow seems to give more attention to the spiritual aspect than Ḥusayn in this connection. Haykal set out to show that the "absolute" happiness of humanity is not practically linked with its material prosperity, al-rakhā' al-māddī, rather, it is associated with its moral or spiritual power, al-quwwa al-rūhiyya. This moral power, as he conceives it, should overcome materialism in some way or other. According to him, history, in its ancient and contemporary periods, provides us with examples which support such a view. (5) Taking the modern era into consideration, he mentions that the resistance of Mahatma Ghandi to the British occupation is an example of this hypothesis. Turning to the ancient period of history, however, he maintained that the victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire after a fierce struggle is another example. Once these facts are recognized, he sets out to show that the best example for the victory of spiritual power over materialism is seen in Islam. Through the Islamic principles of unity of God, equality, justice and freedom, and through the courage and sacrifice of Muslims under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad, they were able to establish Islam in the Arabian Peninsula. (6)

In our understanding, Haykal seems to be very largely concerned with the question of the preservation of Islam as a spiritual power which should be taken into consideration, in any endeavour to stimulate change and progress in Egypt in particular, and the Islamic world in general. He is determined to prove to all those who call for complete assimilation of Western culture, that material gains alone are not sufficient, for there is a power over materialism, namely, the



spiritual power. He attempts to show that the real happiness, to which Muslims aspire, cannot be attained except through the preservation of their faith, and their history. It goes without saying that Haykal is, once again, criticizing Atatürk for cutting all links with tradition as already pointed out. At the same time, he is trying to convince those Egyptians who called for complete secularization of the state, to change their views, for their survival is inevitably linked with the survival of Islam as a great spiritual power.

Al-'Aqqād, in the third place, pointed to the fields of knowledge which Arabs or Muslims have taken from Europe adopting, by this, a similar position to Haykal and Ḥusayn. He, however, went one step beyond these two scholars to declare that, in assimilating European sciences and arts, Arabs and Muslims are regaining a part of their debts <sup>owed</sup> by Europe. For in his work, Athar al-'Arab fī al-Ḥadāra al-Awrubīyya (The Contribution of Arabs to European Civilization), he made an attempt to specify the fields of Islamic knowledge from which European scholars benefited. These fields, in al-'Aqqād's account of the matter, include: medicine, physics, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, literature, music, drawing and sculpture. Al-'Aqqād then concentrates on the specific points which European scholars borrowed from Muslims through the translation of the works of the latter to Latin. (7) The theory of gravity, the concept of the circularity of earth, and other principles, al-'Aqqād argues, are based on Islamic knowledge. (8) In so doing, he was trying to create pride in Islamic culture and knowledge, and to show that each new civilization is based on previous ones. Al-'Aqqād here holds a position which is similar to that of all the other Egyptian intellectual writers and especially Amīn. This is in spite of the fact that Amīn's discussion on the above

mentioned topics is far more comprehensive in nature for, after all, this was the field of Islamic knowledge which was mainly focused upon by him.

But to move to other areas regarding the issue of Egyptian and Islamic culture and the West, we, to start with, find that Ḥusayn offers a discussion on the cultural affinity of Egypt with Western civilization. In dealing with such a topic, he took into consideration the ancient and Islamic history of Egypt, emphasizing relations with the West in both eras. Thus, he maintains that Egyptian civilization is part of the Mediterranean, al-Bahr al Abyad al-Mutawassit and the Eastern Mediterranean's, Bahr al-Rūm civilizations and was in turn influenced by it. It derives from parallel sources to those of European civilizations. This latter has its sources in Greek philosophy, art and literature, Roman jurisprudence and administration, and Christian faith and values. Egypt replaced Christianity by Islam, which is a continuation of Christianity. Islamic civilization borrowed from Persian Heathenism, Byzantine Christianity and all cultures it contacted without fear, and integrated all these borrowings into its outlook. The breakdown of European Roman civilization in the Middle Ages was due to the breakdown of Europe's links with the Eastern Mediterranean. (9) The breakdown of Arab Islamic civilization in modern times was due to the breakdown with the Western Mediterranean caused by the Turkish invasion and isolation. (10)

Ḥusayn believes that Egypt twice played a role as the guardian of civilization. First, when Greek civilization was driven off the Greek mainland, and took refuge in Alexandria, and second when Islamic civilization was destroyed by Mongols and Turks and took refuge in Egypt where it was preserved by the Mamluks. (11) Despite historic fluctuations, Egypt

never lost its identity or personality, and cannot lose that personality by assimilating Western culture. Its characteristics are obvious. It has its geographical position which it can only defend by a Westernized system of defence. It has its religion and it needs to preserve and adapt it to the requirements of modern life as its forefathers had done. It has its language and must enlarge it to embody all the achievements of the Western heritage, so that it will become second to no other language or heritage. Assimilation is a source of strength and not a source of danger. (12)

In line with his belief in the cultural affinity of Egypt with Western culture, whose sources are Mediterranean, Ḥusayn builds a strong argument for teaching Greek and Latin in the state school system, along the same lines applied in European countries. His main target is probably to spread among Egyptians patterns and habits of thought similar to those of Europeans, by exposing them to the same intellectual influences. As a matter of fact, there was no problem about teaching science and mathematics, but strong resistance was encountered to the teaching of Greek and Latin. According to Ḥusayn, the two languages are indispensable for the study of law and humanities, and needed for understanding the history of Egypt which lived for hundreds of years under Greek and Roman rule. They are indispensable for archeological research, which some day must be taken over by Egyptians. (13) The two languages are not to be made compulsory for all high school students. High school teaching must branch off - from its inception - into three channels: the first, depends on modern living languages and includes mathematics and sciences; the second depends on Greek and Latin and includes literary studies; and the third depends on the Arabic Language and includes pure Arabic studies. (14)

In our opinion, it is superfluous to say that this particular way of connecting Arabic (Egyptian) and European cultures found no great appeal in Egypt or the rest of the Arab world. It stands more as an assertion of a need for a deep form of connection. Obviously, if Egypt and Europe cannot meet on a plane of Christianity or Islam, they may find great similarities in the depth of their common historical backgrounds. But the question which seems to have been posed to Ḥusayn was whether Greek and Latin were the most effective link for such a purpose. Obviously, his admiration of the French (and European) systems of education enhanced his enthusiasm for the idea. But few have ever shared that enthusiasm. Many opposed the idea, and Ḥusayn gave an account of this matter. He presented an account of the opposition of an English colleague and the debate he had with him on the subject.

It must be stated, at this point, that Ḥusayn's interest in Greek language and literature was not only expressed in his demand for teaching Greek and Latin in Egyptian schools, and in his proposal for introducing classical studies at the secondary and university levels of Egyptian education, but also in some works which he himself wrote about Greek literature. He himself translated Sophocles' dramas, notably "Oedipus the King". An important point which should be made, in this connection, is that interest in Greek literature was somehow manifested in Egypt prior to Ḥusayn. For example, Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (d. 1963) translated Aristotle's work, Nicomachean Ethics. As reported by Haykal, when al-Sayyid started to translate this work, many Egyptians criticized him for devoting most of his time to philosophy. Such a criticism stems from the inability to comprehend the value of Greek philosophy on the part of all those who criticized him. Thus, Haykal praised the efforts of al-Sayyid and even went further to praise Ḥusayn's endeavours in Greek

literature, describing such attempts as lofty and helpful in introducing a high moral note into the intellectual life in Egypt. (15)

Likewise, interest in classical Greek literature was also professed by al-Ḥakīm who wrote his versions of "Pygmalion" and "Oedipus". In addition, there was great interest in classical Greek philosophy on the part of scholars, notably, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī. A point of importance in this connection, is that limited interest kindled in classical Greek literature and philosophy was short lived, and that it failed to produce anything like the impact which Greek philosophy had on Islamic thought in the middle ages or on modern European culture. This is probably due to the general shift of interest from the "classical" to the "scientific" outlook and from ancient to modern literary classics of the various countries of the Western world.

We hope that the above discussion conveys an adequate description of the interest in Greek philosophy and literature on the part of some Egyptian scholars. But to turn back to our discussion on Ḥusayn's enthusiasm for Greek and Latin languages in addition to classical literature, we may suggest that, in so doing, he strove to exclude a polarization of Islamic and Western cultures. To him, if such a polarization existed at all, it was between Far Eastern and Western cultures. (16) Indeed, Ḥusayn adds that it is wrong to speak of Islamic culture as Eastern, or Oriental. It has almost nothing in common with the cultures of China and Japan, which deserve to be called Oriental, (17) but has a close affinity to Middle Eastern cultures. (18) The Islamic mind has a close similarity to the European mind. (19) What Egypt needs most is motivation for achievement and excellence. (20) All peoples are equal in endowment, and no people or

individuals are pre-destined to superiority or inferiority. (21)

We must state, at this point, that the intellectual message of Husayn is clear. It is one of confidence in the great intrinsic value of the Egyptian Islamic heritage, in its openness, flexibility and resilience, and its enlightened growth, and its ability to borrow from other cultures, without giving away its identity, and to give to other cultures, without a feeling of superiority, and in a spirit of basic human equality. Contrary to the spirit of polarization spread in certain Western circles, it is an assertion of a great similarity between the Islamic and Christian cultures. According to Husayn, these Western circles often take absurd or contradictory views in matters relating to Islamic culture. They read the Bible and find it acceptable and Western, but when they read the Qur'ān, Husayn states, they find it purely Oriental, while the Qur'ān itself says openly, directly and frankly, that it was revealed to complete and affirm the Bible. They say that Christianity has not distorted the Western mind or removed it from its Greek origins, but deny this to Islam. Yet they must admit that the spread of Islam in the Far East amounts to a spread of the Greek mind to these places. The essence and source of Islam and Christianity are the same, so why should they claim differences in their effects on the mind of peoples here and there?

In Husayn's belief, when Greaco-Roman Europe was invaded by the Barbarians and its mind was defeated, Islam was assimilating Greek philosophy and science and transmitting them to Europe through Latin translations from Arabic. If this is established, Husayn wonders how it is that European direct contact with the Greek mind during the renaissance is considered a constituent of the European mind, while their twelfth century contact

through Islam is not. How is it that the Eastern Mediterranean culture, which is the source of European culture, can produce an excellent superior mind in the West, and leave no effect on the mind of Eastern Mediterranean peoples? (22)

A new perspective is thus introduced by Ḥusayn. His confidence precludes any apologetic attitude, and his mastery of the essential values of Islamic culture enable him to shed a subtle light on Western culture. He does not engage in either defence or counter-attack. He simply removes the whole matter from the context of a game to the context of a dialogue, asserting, thereby, as he clearly remarks, a fundamental Islamic view of other religions, which in a broad human sense towers far above pettiness.

Thus, an attempt was made to reveal Ḥusayn's and the other Uḍabā's advocacy of a broad scope of an assimilation of Western sciences and arts. This assimilation is needed for creating an enlightened Islamic society. One of the main essential elements of enlightenment on which Ḥusayn focused, is "education". In point of fact, beside practising teaching at the Egyptian University, Ḥusayn worked in the Ministry of Education as previously noted, and, in this capacity, he was directly involved in all the Egyptian public education systems. He gave a great deal of thought to reforming, improving and expanding the system to adapt it to the needs of modern education, and to the increasing demands for education in Egyptian society. His thoughts on this reform were put forward in his book, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr which will be discussed below. Al-'Aqqād and Haykal, however, showed no particular interest in the educational system as such, but were mainly concerned with the basic culture of society.

In any case, before dealing with Husayn's views on education and in particular "religious education", as portrayed in the above mentioned work, we must state that the subject of religious education in schools is one of the main expressions of religious life and attitudes in society, and one of the main political instruments in suppressing or tolerating, or even encouraging religious life and motivation. Even those states which espoused secularism as an ideology, often found themselves in the midst of protestations or even confrontations on this issue. In the Islamic world, the issue was raised by the ban which the Kemalist Regime imposed on Islamic religious education. Earlier it was raised in a different form. Missionary schools which had infiltrated the Islamic world since the middle of the sixteenth century followed the practice of giving classes on their own religions to all their students irrespective of their religious convictions. This meant that Muslim students attending these schools could not avoid exposure to some form of Christian religious education as part of the curricula of the missionary schools in which they were being educated, a situation which was not accepted by many Muslims. Lastly, the question of religious education was raised in the light of the failure of the traditional schools headed by al-Azhar, which provide the network of religious education, to create a progressive system of education that is suitable for this age.

Those three issues, i.e. the ban imposed on Islamic religious education, exposure to Christian religious education, and the failure of traditional centres of learning to provide a developed system of education, attracted the attention of Husayn. Indeed, he meditated extensively on these issues even before Egypt or any other Islamic state reached political decisions about them as will be explained soon. His thoughts on the subject, reflecting an "intellectual" point of view,



largely free from political bias or disposition, deserve special attention, not merely as matters of educational policies and school curricula; but as a practical embodiment of the whole question of inter-religious attitudes and relations. The question has other implications of course. One of these is the effect of multi-religious education on national unity, and the other is its effect on cultural independence and national loyalty.

Husayn observes that there are two conflicting opinions regarding religious education, one asserting that education should be completely civil, that religion should not be given a place in school curricula, that religious education should be left to families and homes, and that the state should not show any further hostility towards such religious education. (23) The opposite view is that religious education, like language and national history, should be part of compulsory education, because it is a constituent of national personality. It is only too obvious, says Husayn, that Egyptians are of this opinion, and it is therefore, impossible to establish Egyptian education now on a purely civil basis, leaving religious education to families and homes. (24) And "I am a firm believer in this, in the depth of my heart". (25) He also adds:

Egypt had been a haven of Islamic religious teaching, when this teaching disappeared from many Muslim countries, and it had been a bastion of Islam when many Islamic countries failed to protect it. This is a matter of pride to Egypt which it should not underestimate ... but should preserve and develop, to become as it had been in earlier

times, the homeland of belief and the source of light to all Islamic countries. (26)

On the sector of foreign schools, Husayn suggests that they should be preserved, because they are "windows opened to Egypt on various European cultures", and because they are superior to Egyptian schools. But they should be kept under firm supervision to keep them in line with patriotic needs. (27) This means that they should be compelled to teach the Arabic language, national history and geography. On religion, Husayn says, it is necessary to ensure that these schools are not used to "distract students from the religion of their families" by avoiding religious preaching. (28) Students studying in these schools must be exposed to the same Islamic religious education given in state schools. (29) This is a necessary consequence of refusing complete secularization in education and a national need for preserving patriotic unity.

As far as al-Azhar is concerned, Husayn adds that al-Azhar's educational network must be preserved, but it has to be brought closer to the prevailing system of national education, to serve the needs of national unity, democratization, and preservation of Egyptian independence. But al-Azhar should not become a "state within the state". Al-Azhar's primary and secondary educational system should be subjected to government control. (30) But at the higher education level, al-Azhar should really preserve its complete independence. (31) While al-Azhar is understandable in calling for an Islamic nationalism as this fits with its intellectual priorities, al-Azhar's youth must understand that nationalism has another focus, namely the focus of a patriotism "limited by the geographical boundaries of the homeland". (32)

It is necessary to mention, at this point, that in Egypt there has always been an intersection between Egyptian nationalism and the various outward aspirations of the Egyptian people. We believe that this intersection is highly marked in Egypt due to two reasons: first, Egypt has always been an open country on an important juncture or crossroads of three continents. Egyptian society has always been tolerant and receptive to outside influences and even outside migrations. Second, there is among the Egyptian people a feeling of pride in their rich heritage stretching back to one of the first great civilizations of man. This deep sense of pride and deep roots in history has another aspect of an outward look of a messianic nature. The Egyptians, in modern times, have aspired to a special mission towards the "Orient" or "East" or towards Islam, or the Arab world or Africa. This messianic spirit has taken various forms like sending missions of teachers, or even opening Egyptian schools abroad. There is now an Egyptian university in Beirut linked to the University of Alexandria and Ḥusayn relates how he tried to persuade Egyptian officials to open Egyptian schools in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine alongside the missionary schools. But his proposal was turned down on the grounds that the ruling power of the area would not permit it.

On turning back to Ḥusayn's discussion on al-Azhar, he adds, that it holds a unique position in the educational and spiritual life of Egypt and the Islamic world. It should not take a hostile attitude to modern life, but should temper it, by preaching what is good and charitable and opposing evil. This requires a knowledge of life, which can be obtained through modern education and broad scholarship, in addition to specialized religious education. Its graduates must talk in and understand the modern idiom, which is becoming increasingly Westernized. Islam is above all

the "religion of freedom, science, and learning" as these are understood by all generations and not by one generation specifically. (33)

Al-Azhar, however, Ḥusayn adds, is still closed and self-contained. Instead of sharing in cultural and practical life, it tries to compete with it. (34) It should be possible for al-Azhar's students to enrol in courses of modern universities and vice versa, in order to eliminate the duality in training and outlooks which exists between the graduates of the two systems. Al-Azhar scholars should be able to excel in all sciences. (35)

In our belief, Ḥusayn's ideas on missionary schools, on the teaching of religion, on al-Azhar's system of primary and secondary education, and al-Azhar's role as a centre of Islamic education and thought had an impact not only in Egypt, but elsewhere in the Arab world and most of the Islamic world. To start with, regarding missionary schools and foreign universities, certain policies were applied in order to ban many educational institutions from preaching to Muslim students, and to provide religious education for their Muslims students. In addition, some of these educational centres were put under strict control. For example, this legislation was applied to the American University of Cairo during Nāṣir's time. On the other hand, some missionary educational centres were nationalized. This, for example, happened to al-Jāmi'a al-Yasū'iyya in Baghdad. An important point which should be mentioned, in this connection, is that an educational loss may have been incurred in the disappearance of some schools of excellence, losing windows on some significant cultures, as well as chances of effective proficiency in important foreign languages, and the future may bring new ideas to compensate for these losses. But missionary work was

decisively denied a most important medium for affecting the minds of the youth in Islamic countries.

Be that as it may, apart from Ḥusayn's influence regarding the application of certain policies towards missionary schools, his influence is also seen in linguistic matters. In putting his weight against the "civil school", Ḥusayn contributed to the affirmation of the classical Arabic language as the medium of expression. In addition, the impact of Ḥusayn's ideas in the field of education is seen in attempts made to reform al-Azhar. Reform of al-Azhar during the rule of Nāṣir went further than Ḥusayn had anticipated, and the gap between al-Azhar and the public systems of education was narrowed. At the primary and secondary levels, al-Azhar students are taught mathematics and sciences and they can receive higher education in the modern al-Azhar university, which includes faculties for all branches of higher education, at the same level as other Egyptian universities. They are exposed to religious courses while studying any specialization. A system similar to that of Catholic universities is applied. This system is still confined to al-Azhar University, but there are pressures to use it as a model for all university education. Should fundamentalists' pressure succeed, this may become one of their "reforms".

We must state here that the traditional al-Azhar University is now confined to three faculties only, namely, that of theology, Kullīyat Usūl al Dīn, that of Islamic jurisprudence Kullīyat al-Sharī'a al-Islāmiyya and that of the Arabic language, Kullīyat al-Lughā al-'Arabiyya. It is still headed by Shaykh al-Azhar, who once enjoyed great influence as a high religious authority. His influence, together with that of al-Azhar scholars, extended far beyond Egypt. However, the wholesale extension of the public sector in Egypt

under socialism deprived al-Azhar of its financial independence, and consequently of most of its overall independence. The new brand of Shaykh al-Azhar is one of a tamed public functionary who is usually ready to certify government policies. This situation is far removed from Husayn's view of preserving al-Azhar's independence. The subordination of al-Azhar to the public sector may have done Egypt's intellectual standing and esteem more damage than is normally recognized. Al-Azhar awaits perhaps a more serious "reform" that may restore it as a great spiritual and intellectual centre of Islam.

Be that as it may, on turning back to Husayn's concern for the preservation of the independence and integrity of al-Azhar, we find that it stems from his being a graduate of this educational centre. It is worth mentioning that in spite of the vicissitudes of feeling in the course of his troubled career, Husayn maintained a great esteem often amounting to homage to that great institution, a fact which is overlooked by many scholars. As a matter of fact, towards the end of his active life, his attitude was one of dignified concern, and he wished to induce al-Azhar to play a more active intellectual role in the service of Islam. He felt now that he had established himself as a solid Muslim thinker, to the extent of questioning al-Azhar's activity from an Islamic standpoint. Consequently, he criticized al-Azhar for failing to translate the Qur'ān into foreign languages. For Husayn, as already noted, had consistently maintained, in the face of non-Islamic misunderstanding or disregard, that it is the Qur'ān which occupies the focal point in Islam. This seems to have embarrassed the Shaykh of al-Azhar, who timidly suggested instead, the preparation of books on various aspects of Islam by Muslim scholars from al-Azhar and outside it, and the translation of these books to various languages as an authentic presentation of

Islam. He praised Husayn highly and prayed for his blessing, intimating that he will be called to assist in this task. (36) Husayn expressed appreciation and promised cooperation. (37) But he must have felt that he was now beyond the pleasure or displeasure of al-Azhar, and repeated his insistence on translating the Qur'ān. He says:

I do not wish to convey in foreign languages the miraculous splendour of the Qur'ān's stylistic beauty, but wish to convey to foreigners a true picture of its meaning, though this picture may fall short of conveying the splendour of structure, the beauty of words, and the greatness of style. (38)

He ends up by remarking that scholars of al-Azhar used to call on non-Azharis to avoid treating religious subjects, for they considered these subjects to be their exclusive domain. Husayn, thus, adds that it is pleasant that this position is now over, and that al-Azhar has now returned to its original liberalism in doing good and asking others to share in it. (39)

The crucial point here is that al-Azhar had finally put a stamp of acceptance and recognition on Husayn's contribution to Islam and Islamic thought. It may be recalled, at this point, that al-'Aqqād had already been given recognition by al-Bāqūrī. This is very important for the latter is one of the most prominent religious figures in Egypt. As a Minister of Endowments, he was the spokesman for religious institutions. In addition, Haykal's contributions towards Islam were also recognized by al-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafa al-Marāghī, one of the liberal heads of al-Azhar. Al-Marāghī went as far as to introduce

Haykal's work Ḥayāt Muḥammad in 1935. Here, he praised Haykal's fresh approach to history on the one hand, and his efforts to reaffirm Islam, and to create pride in this great faith and in its Prophet on the other. (40) In this way, al-Azhar confirmed the old Islamic position of rejecting any distinction between a clergyman and a layman. Al-Azhar thus affirmed that all Islamic scholars are equal in deserving Islamic recognition.



Notes on Chapter VII

1. Husayn, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, pp. 54-58.
2. Ibid., p. 63.
3. Ibid., p. 63.
4. Haykal, al-Sharq al-Jadīd, p. 249; 255-256.
5. Ibid., p. 217.
6. Ibid., pp. 217-219.
7. Al-'Aqqād, Athar al-'Arab fī al-Haḍāra al-Awruپیya (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1946), pp. 32-93.
8. Ibid., pp. 39-40; 47-50.
9. Husayn, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, pp. 22-36.
10. Ibid., p. 37.
11. Ibid., p. 38.
12. Ibid., pp. 72-74.
13. Ibid., pp. 279-280.
14. Ibid., p. 283-284.
15. Haykal, Fī Awqāt al-Farāgh, pp. 157-159; 162-163; 182-190. It may be mentioned, at this point, that al-'Aqqād did not attach such concern to classical Greek literature as was the case with Husayn. However, al-'Aqqād revealed some admiration towards the Greek mode of thought. In his work, Ibn al-Rūmī, Hayātuh min Shi'rih (Ibn al-Rūmī, his Life as Derived from his Poetry), al-'Aqqād attributed Ibn al-Rūmī's power of imagination, descriptive skill, depth of meanings, concern with the organic unity of poetry and so on, to what he terms, al-'abqariyya al-yūnāniyya (The Greek genius). Ibn al-Rūmī, Hayātuh min Shi'rih (Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, n.d.), pp. 263-328.
16. Husayn, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, p. 17.

17. Ibid., p. 17; 23; 25.
18. Ibid., pp. 18-21.
19. Ibid., pp. 37-39.
20. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
21. Ibid., pp. 52-53.
22. Ibid., pp. 31-35.
23. Ibid., p. 90.
24. Ibid., p. 91.
25. Ibid., p. 93.
26. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
27. Ibid., p. 88.
28. Ibid., p. 90. For more information on missionary schools, their system of education and their policies towards Muslims, refer to Muṣṭafa al-Khālidi and 'Umar Farrūkh. al-Tabshīr wa al-Isti'mār fī al-Bilād al-'Arabiyya (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, 1970), pp. 65-74.
29. Ḥusayn, Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr, p. 92.
30. Ibid., pp. 95-96.
31. Ibid., p. 97.
32. Ibid., p. 99.
33. Ibid., pp. 437-439.
34. Ibid., p. 439.
35. Ibid., p. 443.
36. Ḥusayn, Naqd wa Islāh, pp. 212-217.
37. Ibid., p. 218.
38. Ibid., pp. 220-221.
39. Ibid., p. 222.
40. Haykal, Ḥayāt Muḥammad, preface.

## CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters, we have tried to show that the intellectual climate at the time of the Udabā' concentrated on Islamic and literary Arabic topics not so much out of historical curiosity or nostalgia, but also as a way to confront and solve certain pressing problems which faced Egypt in particular, and the Islamic world in general. The most prominent problem lay in the concentration of attacks by missionary writers and other Western scholars against Islam, its Holy Book, its Prophet and his companions and immediate successors, and against the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'ān. For some decades, these groups had strong hopes to shake the Muslims confidence in their faith, history and culture. But the Udabā' responded vigorously to these attacks, undertaking the responsibility to defend Islam against misinterpretations and distortions by all means. Ḥusayn, in particular, started with the Qur'ān, asserting its intrinsic value and centrality in the Islamic doctrine. Moreover, all the Udabā' made an attempt to confirm the importance of Muḥammad as a great man in his own right, as a messenger of God, as the "last" and the "seal" of prophets, and as a real human being. They further went on to show that his greatness was not that of withdrawal and self-denial, rather it was the greatness of faith, knowledge, inward tranquility and action. At the same time, they all set out to display the greatness of the first four caliphs of Islam, emphasizing a peculiar blend of the spiritual and temporal in each of them. As great leaders of their time, they generally faced the problem of governing without, in any way, contradicting the faith in whose name they were governing. In addition, they were not monarchs by divine right. As such, they deserved a "special" position that called

for a special understanding. But 'Umar, in particular, may be as great a conqueror as Julius Caesar, yet he was no Caesar. It is, however, essential to mention here that these ideas represent the Sunnī outlook on Islam, and its great personages. Finally, as regards the crucial question of the Arabic language, the Udabā' emphasized the importance of "classical" Arabic and its adaptability to modern developments, and displayed its stylistic beauty.

So far, much has been said about the Udabā's defence of Islam. On the whole, this aspect of their thought attracted great attention by Western scholarship. Their work was generally labelled as "apologetic", a term which seemed to insinuate some vague doubt about its credibility or substantive value. (1) It may be noted, however, that the labelling itself produced an impact only in the circles of Western scholarship which invented it. But for the Arab Islamic readership, it generally sounded hollow, for here it was recognized that an "extraordinary" attack against Islam had in fact been taking place, that it did call for a defence, and that this defence was not going to be forsaken merely because it was given a vaguely pejorative title. (2)

But we should say, in fairness to the Egyptian Udabā', that the defence of Islam against these attacks was not their only preoccupation. In point of fact, it seems that they believed that Islam could not be pinned down to positions fixed by its opponents, so that its intellectual battle would be fought on the grounds and conditions of their choice. It needed to be explained for what it is, irrespective of argument and counter-argument. In the light of this belief, each of these intellectual writers set out to draw an image of Islam as he saw it. As pointed out previously, these images were based on aspects of Islam, which impressed

each one of them individually. As a result, the images were by no means identical, but they did show certain affinities because the Udabā' drew on the same Islamic sources, and seem to have read the same books of Western scholarship. In any case, in their endeavour to draw images of Islam, they all looked at this faith in a very broad manner, by studying Islam's belief, practice, history and personalities, law and government, rise and fall, purity and corruption, prospects and failures. In this way, they contributed towards providing a "comprehensive" image of Islam, vitalized through the Qur'ān.

So far, it has been mentioned that although the Udabā' first entered into the intellectual life of Islam as defenders of this faith and its great personages, they gradually became more and more assertive in their views of Islam. It further remains to add that they became critical of the views of the fundamentalists. (3) Actually, they gradually became a generation of non-specialized religious scholars. They were all laymen, and none of them wore the dress which marked and identified religious scholars and functionaries. Naturally, this gives them a great importance in the field of Islamic studies. In addition, they wrote on a wide variety of literary and intellectual subjects. Al-'Aqqād, for example, wrote poetry, and a novel. (4) Haykal, on the other hand, was a novelist and wrote short stories. (5) As a whole, all the Udabā' made a remarkable effort to affirm the great value of the traditional Arabic Islamic heritage and the benefit of gaining access to it. As a result of this, they paved the way towards renewed interest in Islam, marked by the re-publication of Islamic classics which have become the main stay in all literatures of educated Arabs.

However, an important point which should be

stressed is that as non-specialized religious scholars, their main interests lie in matters of faith and moral behaviour, rather than in rituals and jurisprudence, unlike the fundamentalists in general. This shows that the areas which attracted the Udabā's attention generally differ from those of the fundamentalists, yet they do not necessarily contradict them. As regards the burning issue of Islamic government, the Udabā' were able to clarify many points to which the fundamentalists did not seem to pay sufficient attention. Among these are the dangers and the abuses of theocracy. The importance of this point is that the Udabā' attempted to show that the idea of theocracy does not exist in Islamic dogma. But they seem to hold that it has its roots in Christianity. For they believed that the idea is linked with the struggle between the Church and State in Christendom, which lay at the root of many violent political and intellectual upheavals in European history. Due to the great interference of religious men in temporal affairs, and in an attempt to limit their power which they claim to possess by divine right, Haykal suggests, that certain European leaders declared themselves monarchs by divine right. (6) However, as these intellectual writers were part of the world of Sunnī Islam as already mentioned, they apparently showed little awareness of the Shī'ī views on government, which introduced a political theory into the body of belief itself, and eventually seem to have established a church-like political organization. (7)

As previously mentioned, their concern with the concept of theocracy is linked with the political situation in Egypt at their time. The Udabā' rejected King Fu'ād's ambitions towards establishing a theocratic rule in Egypt. At this point, there are further remarks that should be made regarding the Udabā' and the Egyptian situation. In their Islamic

writings, they pointed out certain social ills in their country including such problems as poverty, ignorance and disease. Out of their concern to rid Egypt of social decay, they tried to provide solutions to these problems, while, however, keeping the early period of Islam in their minds, for it represented a golden era of Islamic history. But in their endeavour to achieve this goal, they somehow offered easy solutions. The reforms they suggested were based on the provision of jobs, schools and hospitals. In the light of this, it is possible to say that such problems were not sufficiently treated as subjects of intellectual analysis as far as the modern era is concerned. Perhaps this partly stems from their concern to defend Islam and its history in the first place. Secondly, as far as Husayn and Haykal are concerned, it may relate to their conservative outlook on reform in Egypt. These two scholars seem to have implicitly believed that the socio-political system of their time was practically capable of handling reform. They probably believed that more dedicated ministers, and prime ministers could do the job. But al-'Aqqād seems to have contemplated a more radical reform. However that may be, among the issues which the Udabā' dealt with in connection with Egypt and the question of reform is that of usury. As already pointed out, whereas they showed a great admiration for the law of prohibiting usury in Islam, they seem to have accepted modern monetary practices which are based on usury, i.e., interest, without however making any attempt at innovation and finding new forms of monetary organization. This is probably because the matter lay outside their expertise. As a matter of fact, preachers of "Islamic banking" have appeared after the careers of the Udabā' have come to an end.

We have so far revealed that the Udabā' faced two major problems in their time. The first and most

pressing, was that of the reassertion of Islam. The second, and the less important in their eyes was the problem of social reform. In other words, they were confronted with problems on both Islamic and national planes. But to focus on the national aspects, we believe that all the Udabā' expressed their dedication to Egypt, either on a "theoretical" level, namely, by formulating views concerning reform, or on a "practical" level. One of the outstanding facts about them is that they all not only took part in the nationalist awakening of Egypt expressed by the movement for independence, but they also took part in public life and rose to high positions. (8) In the midst of an Egyptian national movement, they faced the question of the "distinctiveness" of Egypt. At the height of their intellectual careers, the problem was still a matter of lively debate. It was then argued that the Arabisation of Egypt came from outside when looked upon from a geographical and historical point of view. The Udabā', who held this view, proclaimed pride in the ancient Egyptians and in being the physical and cultural descendants of their heritage. (9) To Haykal, for example, this heritage is still visibly alive in art and handicrafts, and may be extolled and used as a source of inspiration and a subject for writing and comment. (10) In this way, he and the other Udabā' were able to show the importance and greatness of ancient Egypt. But they, as Muslim scholars, also naturally revealed their pride in Islamic Egypt and tried to bring its importance to light. In achieving this, they focused first on the Prophet and found a connection between him and the Egyptians. Maria, the ex-coptic wife of the Prophet is pictured as a sort of saint-connection between the Egyptian people and the Prophet. She gave Muḥammad his only live son, Ibrāhīm, who did not survive. Symbolically, this half Egyptian son, whose early death broke the heart of the Prophet, formed a common sorrow. Symbolically, it meant that if



God had willed a successor son to the Prophet, that son would have been half Coptic-Egyptian. (11) But God's wisdom chose to deny Muḥammad any male descendant.

In addition, in their endeavour to show the importance of Egypt, they remarked upon its important role in medieval Islamic history: in political, intellectual, artistic and even in military life. As pointed out earlier, Ḥusayn believed that Egypt "preserved" Islam and its culture during the middle ages. However, believing in the need for a greater contribution to Islam in the "modern" era, he, as a graduate of al-Azhar, called upon that institution to play a more active and progressive role in the spiritual life of Islam. (12) In this way, he and the other Uḍabā' attempted to put Egypt at the intellectual centre of the Islamic world, and this is one of their remarkable contributions. It may be noted from the above that the Uḍabā' identified themselves with the history of Islam and its great men. Haykal further stresses the Islamic nature of Egypt by identifying with Muslims and Muslim sites. In his work, Fī Manzil al-Wahy, he states that the holy places of the Ḥijāz marking the early history of Islam, the Ka'ba in Mecca, and its surroundings, focus on the pilgrimage for all Muslims. This shrine and the mosque of Medina, which roof the tomb of the Prophet, and all similar holy sites belong to all Muslims and form cohesive forces of unity and solidarity. (13)

It seems that without theorizing about history, they conceived Egyptian history as having a double significance, one commonly shared with all Muslim peoples, and one peculiar to Egypt. Both were equally Egyptian. One question which, naturally enough, puzzled the Egyptian mind at the time was that of reconciling unity and diversity, i.e. reconciling Islam as a faith

which should unite all Islamic countries under "one community" whose loyalty is given to the "one" supreme God of the universe, and Egypt as an independent, "national" state. Haykal discovers a symbolic reply to this as he, an Egyptian Muslim, circles around the Ka'ba during his pilgrimage. The four sides of the rectangular building symbolize different aspects united in one truth. (14) Haykal's view does not only reconcile unity and diversity as far as national and religious realms are concerned, but it actually goes beyond that. An interesting point about such an idea is that it naturally rejects any attempt at a narrow and regimented view of Islam and allows for differences in outlooks so long as they do not depart from the views of the community of Islam or deviate from looking towards the Ka'ba. This symbolization, though not taken to the full extent, allows for a liberal but "principled" outlook on religious matters, an outlook in which modern developments and scientific discoveries are taken into consideration. Apparently, Haykal calls for a liberal but disciplined outlook on religion, especially, in the face of the too literal, and rigid formality of fundamentalism and traditionalism, a view which is also shared by the other Udabā'. Actually, fundamentalists and traditionalists stood ready to reject and deny any scientific knowledge which they viewed as being contradictory to traditional views about the universe or to particular interpretations of text. (15) Al-'Aqqād mentions that the theory which relates to the earth as a moving planet, as being circular in shape, was rejected by some people belonging to the above groups. He goes on to severely criticize the position of such people, and to show that it is out of date. (16) A point of particular importance, in this connection, is that in adopting such a stand, al-'Aqqād and other Udabā' succeeded in establishing the intellectual background for an "Islamic school of thought" which is liberal, tolerant

and democratic, confident yet modest, open yet firm, and this is one of their remarkable contributions to modern Islam.

In point of fact, this school looks upon Islam as a totality of ideas and practices which had been organically integrated into the lives of generations of Muslims, a process of continuous adaptation which never deviated away from any of the basic tenets of faith or ritual. Equally, this school does not deny any idea merely because it had already been discovered or proposed by others, but it is ever ready to accept any idea as long as it does not contradict Islam, for, such a school actively seeks learning. In addition, this school has complete faith in reason and science, believing that this is part of the Islamic faith itself and that faith and reason cannot contradict each other. (17) In point of fact, the Udabā' believed that Islam was capable of embracing and integrating all the discoveries of science and the revelations of the human intellect. It is even possible to sense among them a confidence which exceeds that of medieval scholastic theologians like the Mu'tazila and Ash'ariyya. However, their analytical methods were unlike those of these schools. Instead of attempting to match the diverse complications of Aristotelian, Platonic, and neo-Platonic logic, dialectic, intuitive mysticism, and speculation, with a similar complexity of religious thinking, they stood for "purity" and "simplicity" of belief, in the conviction that such simplicity alone can stand in the face of the growing body of scientific knowledge. (18)

As we have already seen, when the Udabā' wrote their biographies on Muḥammad, they made an attempt to give a realistic picture about him. They all emphasized the "humanity" of the Prophet, and set a line of demarcation between him and the supreme God. According

to them, Muḥammad is not or should not be glorified. Eventually, and probably under the influence of the Christian models of perfection, he is glorified in poetry and song, but the purity of Islam regards this as an impurity which is tolerable only if it does not exceed a certain limit that keeps Muḥammad within human bounds. It is important to mention, at this point, that in Sufi literature, the glorification by Sufis of Muḥammad exceeds the required limits set in Islam. It is reported that certain Sufi writers exaggerated in showing the capabilities of the Prophet. They, for example, claimed that Muḥammad was able to communicate or talk to birds, animals, trees, clouds and stars. These and other similar beliefs were used by missionary writers and other Western scholars to give a distorted picture about Muḥammad, and about the message that was revealed to him. (19) In the light of this, it is clear that the Udabā's attempts to purify Islam and to stress its simplicity and rationality are extremely important. In point of fact, through asserting the purity of Islam, its rationality, its conformity with science, and its suitability to modern development, if properly understood, the Udabā' won the battle against missionaries. In all, they succeeded not simply by refuting their arguments, but ultimately by transforming the battle to a field of "dialogue". They brought to attention the fact that Islam has indeed never considered itself an adversary of Christianity in spite of certain differences previously discussed. In their eyes, Islam has always believed in a common human pool of values, attitudes, discoveries and felt entitled to choose from it whatever was consistent with its principles. Thus, it had assimilated the Christian heritage of Byzantium, and the Heathen cultures of Greece, Persia and India. It is now called upon to extend its understanding to the science and culture of the Western world. By expounding such views, the Egyptian intellectuals cleared the way for a better

understanding between Christians and Muslims, and between Western and Islamic scholarships. It is not far-fetched, perhaps, to suggest that Western Islamicists did in fact, take notice of the efforts of the Udabā', at first, with a great deal of condescension, but gradually with serious consideration. It may also have had some effect on the approach of some of them to Islam, which now seems to be more tolerant, fairer and less directed to fault-hunting, and which seeks to reach sound and rational conclusions. Actually, Islam is recently being looked upon as a whole, a complete system, and treatments seem to be more inclined to relate details to that system instead of treating them out of context. The point is that the endeavours of that generation of Egyptian intellectuals have indeed been fruitful.

So far, an attempt has been made to show the remarkable contributions of a bright generation of Egyptian intellectual writers to the world of Islam. Among the points which we stressed is that they made an effort to purify Islam from certain tainted beliefs and superstitions which characterized the literature of popular Sufism. We have also mentioned that they presented a realistic picture of the Prophet, a picture which had been drawn previously by Ibn Ishāq and other Muslim historians, yet this picture was introduced within a novel approach which appealed to the minds of the new generation of Egyptians and Arabs provided with modern education. It remains to add that in so doing, the Udabā' revived the scholarly type of biography writing. (20) This adds to their contribution to modern Islamic thought. However that may be, in their approach, the Udabā' offered an interesting image of the Prophet and his successors. Taking al-'Aqqād for example, he followed an approach which does not rest on "glorification" in the presentation of facts, but rather the "elevation" of this factual picture itself

through commentary, interpretation and defence. There is no halo around Muḥammad and his successors. They are not abstracted, but seen for what they are. The faults or blemishes that appear in the presentation of their character are explained as being neither faults, nor blemishes, but rather a part of the greatness of such remarkable Islamic personages. In his work, 'Abqariyyat al-Siddīq, al-'Aqqād describes his approach as follows:

We are careful that the picture be honestly and completely truthful in aggregate and detail. We are not after glorification which removes the picture from its truth, nor is it our intention to present the reader with a picture which he cannot recognize, nor know "Abū Bakr" through it. But the glorification of the picture is one thing, and the regard (tawqīr) for the man it reflects is another. For if you draw Abū Bakr (as he is) and then elevate this drawing to a high place, you will not have added to this glory or psychological features .... (21)

In all, al-'Aqqād's approach implicitly implies a denial of a prior model of perfection, and even accepts human frailties of great men as part of their glory. This approach, together with the imaginative one of Ḥusayn, and even the reflective approach of Haykal did not only appeal to the minds of the new generation of Egyptians and Arabs, but it also appealed to their "hearts". It is worth mentioning, at this point, that Ḥusayn's story Dhū al-Janāḥayn, which was translated and analysed represents the best example of concern

about the emotional aspect of Islam on the part of the Egyptian Udabā'. This story represents the personal crisis of Ḥusayn who, oscillating between secularism and spiritualism, Westernization and Islamism, materialism and religious values, finally finds a secure position in Islam. Ḥusayn's crisis is resolved by a "mystical" experience which resulted in his return to the world of Islam. Sufi terminology is used in this respect. Islamic values as applied to early figures of Islam, such as courage, sacrifice, patience, truthfulness, sincerity and righteousness are brought to attention through an appealing novel style. In this way, Ḥusayn together with Haykal and al-'Aqqād was able to kindle a fire of love for God, His Prophet and other great personages who sacrificed so much for the cause of truth and righteousness. They filled the emotions of Muslims with deep admiration and respect for their history and culture. It is perhaps from this angle that they were able to fill the "emotional gap" left by popular Sufism. It is necessary to state, at this juncture, that starting with the Wahhābī movement which was influenced by Ibn Taymiyya, up to al-Afghānī, 'Abduh and Riḍā, popular Sufism with all its impure beliefs and superstitions was rejected, a fact which, in one way or another, led to its temporal weakening. (22)

In any case, with the increasing decline of Sufi brotherhoods, there was a need to find "concrete" means to fill the emotions of the people and to turn their attitudes, once again, to the world of Islam. As mentioned earlier, this task was accomplished by the Udabā' through their new mode of literary expression, which they hoped would evoke the same kind of feelings that the Sufi aspired to evoke. It goes without saying, that this mode of expression is more suitable to modern man and his scientific outlooks than some of the practices of Sufi brotherhoods and, as we understand

it, the Egyptian Udabā' gained much credibility in this respect. However, it seems that this remarkable contribution on their part has been overlooked by modern scholars. For when such scholars discuss the emotional gap left by Sufis, and advocate the need to attach concern to the inner path of "intellectual" Sufism, they overlook the role of the Udabā' in this respect. Of those scholars who hold such a position, the most remarkable is Fazlur Rahman. In emphasizing the inner path of intellectual Sufism, and in showing its importance, he states:

The genuine inner life of the "heart"  
- the basic élan of Sufism - must be  
reintegrated into the Shari'a and can be  
neglected only on pain, in the long run,  
of succumbing to the devastating  
onslaughts of modern secularism. (23)

An important point which should be made here is that probably, due to the fact that the Egyptian Udabā' were mainly looked upon as secular scholars, their efforts in stressing "the genuine inner life of the "heart" was overlooked.

Be all that as it may, we have thus far presented a discussion on some remarkable contributions of the Udabā' to Islam in various fields. In addition to these, it should be stated that one of their great contributions towards this faith lies in their serious attempts to protect it from Marxism. As pointed out earlier, al-'Aqqād, in particular, made a remarkable effort in this respect. A major point to which he drew attention is that Marxists are basically concerned with the problem of the distribution of wealth and power, and the mechanisms needed for achieving such a goal. Following this trend of thought, he argues, their concentration is directed towards economic matters and



accordingly, a religion like Islam has no place in such a philosophy. In his attempt to motivate Muslims to keep away from Marxism, al-'Aqqād made an effort to show that their theories are not based on scientific methodology. Marxists, he maintains, try to manipulate science by claiming that the theories which they propagate, and which have not been derived through scientific methodology, are scientific. The intention here, he argues, is to claim for them a universality, and certainty which might help rally people behind them in the belief that they are inevitable and therefore represent the winning side, calling everyone who wants to be on that side to stand behind them. Al-'Aqqād warns Muslims from listening to such propaganda. Furthermore, he sets out to remind those Muslims with Marxist inclinations that there are major differences between Islam and Marxism. These differences lie in the Muslim belief in one God versus atheism, and non-material versus material values. (24) He then urged Muslims to adhere to Islam and in this way, he, together with Ḥusayn and Haykal won the battle against Marxism.

As regards further contributions of the Udabā', it should be mentioned that one of the lasting achievements of this bright generation of Egyptian intellectual writers is seen in the enlightenment of al-Azhar. This is reflected in the ultimate recognition of the Udabā' by al-Azhar as previously discussed, and even more importantly, in its "emulation" of their example. Al-Azhar has sent many of its scholars for study-fellowships abroad, especially to the Sorbonne, and more than one of these assumed the position of Shaykh al-Azhar. Gradually, the prevailing outlook of al-Azhar came very close to that of the Udabā'. Al-Azhar scholars of today speak in an idiom very close to that of Ḥusayn, Haykal and al-'Aqqād. (25) These scholars are now holding the line against the

erratic and the archaic in Islamic life, reasserting tolerance, openness, liberalism and democracy. They are waging war against certain attempts by persons or groups - belonging to the traditional and fundamentalist schools of thought - to force the application of some narrow dogma, or call for a denial of life or reason, or preach violence and so on.

Finally, one point remains to be added as regards the Udabā's efforts to reaffirm the Islamic faith in modern times. As already pointed out, there is no doubt that the confiscation of mind and soul in the Islamic world, including Turkey, has been carried out during the twentieth century, by secular revolutionaries. In our estimation, with time, the Islam of the generation of the Egyptian Udabā', may become a platform for the restoration of freedom, individual and social, and faith in God, and in the entire world of Islam.

Notes on the Conclusion

1. It may be mentioned, at this point, that Nadav Safran, for example, labelled the works of Haykal and al-'Aqqād as "apologetic". Regarding Haykal, he states:

With Haykal ...., the attempt to reconcile reason and revelation ended up as an apology for Islam which ... damaged the integrity of reason ....

Egypt in Search of Political Community (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961) pp. 173-174. In connection with Safran's thought on what he believes as al-'Aqqād's apologetics, refer to, Ibid., pp. 212-215.

2. Sharaf, op.cit., pp. 222-242. 'Abd al-Fattāh al-Dīdī, al-Falsafa al-Ijtima'iyya 'ind al-'Aqqād (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣriyya, 1969), pp. 46-60. Also see al-Tūnisi, op.cit., pp. 83-99.
3. For example, in his work, Fī Awqāt al-Farāgh, Haykal criticized Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī on several grounds. In writing his work, Da'irat al-Ma'ārif fī al-Qarn al-Ishrīn (The Encyclopedia of the Twentieth Century), Wajdī did not adhere to scientific methodology. Besides, instead of concentrating on important subjects, needed for modern readers and, instead of focusing on important scholars who contributed to human knowledge by all means; he laid emphasis on unimportant issues and personalities. Fī Awqāt al-Farāgh, pp. 177-178.
4. Al-'Aqqād wrote eleven books on poetry among which one can mention, Yaqzat al-Sabāh (The Wakefulness of the Morning) published in 1916; Wahj al-Zahira (Midday Heat) published in 1917; Ashbāh al-Aṣil (The Late Afternoon Phantoms) published in 1921; Ashjān al-Layl (The Nightly Troubles) published in 1928; Wahy al-Arba'in (The Inspiration of the Forties) published in 1933; Hadiyyat al-Karawān (The Gift of the ~~Phoenix~~) published in 1933 and 'Ābir Sabīl (Wayfarer) published in 1937.

Regarding al-'Aqqād's novel, it is called Sāra

published in 1938. This book focuses on a love affair between Ḥamīnām (representing al-'Aqqād himself) and Sara. Sara, a beautiful woman deserted her lover after being involved with him for a time, a factor which brought sorrow to Ḥamīnām. Sara (Cairo: Maṭba'at Hijāzī, 1938). For more information about the novel, refer to Diyāb, al-Mar'a fī Hayat al-'Aqqād (Cairo: Dar al-Sha'b, 1969), pp. 100-120.

5. As mentioned in Chapter I, Haykal wrote Zaynab. The story stresses the agony of an Egyptian country girl who was not provided with the chance to marry her lover. Instead, she was forced to marry another person. Thus, she was the victim of old traditions. Zaynab (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥadīd, 1929).

Haykal also wrote a collection of stories in Majallat al-Muṣawwar (The Illustrated Magazine) in 1955. This collection was compiled in a book called, Qisaṣ Miṣriyya. (Egyptian Short Stories). In these stories, Haykal concentrates on the need to stimulate change and progress in Egypt in various fields. Qisaṣ Miṣriyya (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1969/1970).

6. Haykal, al-Sharq al-Jadīd, pp. 30-46.
7. For example, in his work Hayāt Muḥammad, Haykal states that Islam has never established a church-like political organization in its history. No caliph among the entire Islamic world was allowed to impose any order in the name of religion upon Muslims. Besides, no caliph was permitted to introduce any rule or principle which contradicts Qur'anic laws. Hayāt Muḥammad, p. 520. However that may be, it should be added, at this juncture, that as Sunni Muslims, the Udabā' perceived history as a human and not a divine phenomenon. The evil in it is to be understood in the context of the universal presence of evil and not as a special or central case of that presence. Refer to Ḥusayn, al-Fitna al-Kubrā, pp. 274-345; 395-405. Also see al-'Aqqād, Dhū al-Nūrayn 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-'Urūba, n.d.), pp. 23-27.
8. Ḥusayn joined the "Wafd government of 1950-1952 as Minister of Education". During the reign of 'Abd al-Nāṣir, he served "in the General

Directorate of Culture in the Ministry of Education". Safran, op.cit., p. 131. On the other hand, Haykal was among the founders of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party and then became the chief editor of al-Siyāsa al-Usbū'iyya. In addition:

Haykal's services to his party, together with the prestige he gained by his writings, brought him to the posts of Minister of State and Minister of Education. When the leader of the party, Muḥammad Maḥmūd pasha, died in 1941, Haykal succeeded him. He led the Liberal Constitutionalists into the coalition government that ruled Egypt in the crucial years, 1944-1949. His position during that time was President of the Senate.

Ibid., p. 133.

Also, al-'Aqqād joined the Wafd Party under the leadership of Zaghlūl who:

made him one of the ideological spokesmen of the Wafd. Using the party's daily organ, al-Balāgh, and its weekly supplement, which the Wafd issued later to compete with the al-Siyāsah supplement, al-'Aqqād discussed literature, raised basic intellectual questions, and propounded his ideas on philosophy, society, religion, history, and aesthetics and a variety of other subjects, all of which he had culled from his vast reading.

Ibid., p. 136. In 1926 and 1930, al-'Aqqād worked as a deputy in the Egyptian parliament.

9. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ālūsī Tāhā Husayn Bayna Anṣāriḥ wa Khusūmih (Baghdād: Maṭba'at al-Īrshād, 1973), pp. 173-189. Al-'Aqqād, Sa'd Zaghlūl, Sīra wa Taḥiyya, pp. 18-36. Also see Haykal, "al-Fann al-Miṣrī, Juhūd Jamā'at al-Khayāl fī sīla", al-Siyāsa al-Usbū'iyya, Vol. II, No. 93 (December, 1927), p. 23 ...., "Hal min Khaṭwa Jadīda fī Sabīl al-Fann al-Miṣrī", al-Siyāsa al-Usbū'iyya, Vol. II, No. 96 (January, 1928), p. 10.

It must be mentioned, at this point, that in proclaiming pride in ancient Egypt, the Udabā's identification with Egypt appeared to be stronger than their identification with the Arab nation. Some of their remarks on Egypt in its relation with the Arabs aroused criticism among Arabs and even among some Egyptians.

For example, in his commentary on the Egyptian history in which he takes pride, Husayn mentioned that Egypt was subdued by several nations among which were the "Arabs".

Al-Ālūsī mentions that in 1933, such writers as Muḥhib al-Dīn al-Khatīb, 'Abd al-Qādir Ḥamza, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Azzām, al-Mazinī, and Ṣati' al-Ḥusari severely attacked Ḥusayn for his statement claiming that it is far from truth. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. pp. 173-189.

10. Haykal, Hal min Khatwa Jadīda fī Sabīl al-Fann al-Misrī, p. 10.
11. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat Muḥammad, pp. 124-127.
12. Sharaf, op.cit., p. 231.
13. Haykal, Fī Manzil al-Wahy (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1967), pp. 176-218; 469-499.
14. Ibid., pp. 200-205.
15. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit., pp. 32-33. It may be mentioned, at this juncture, that Haykal criticized the fundamentalists and the traditionalists for using religion for attacking modern concepts (based on scientific methodology); and for accusing their proponents by heresy. To Haykal, there is no justification for this erroneous stance of the above groups of Muslims. Fundamentalists and traditionalists aimed at creating severe troubles for modernists. Sharaf, op.cit., p. 170.
16. Al-'Aqqād, al-Islām Da'wa 'Ālamiyya, (Ṣayda: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, n.d.), p. 206.
17. Haykal, al-Īmān wa al-Ma'rifa wa al-Falsafa (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1964), pp. 6-7.

18. It may be mentioned, at this point, that the Uḍabā' maintained that belief should stand as a crown to all knowledge and not as a subservient vassal. Refer to al-'Aqqād, al-Qarn al-'Ishrūn, mā Kana wa mā Sayakun (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, n.d.), pp. 154-155 ..., 'Aqā'id al-Mufakkirīn fī al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣriyya, 1960), pp. 161-162. Also see Haykal, Hayāt Muḥammad, pp. 522-524. Besides, refer to Ḥusayn, Mir'āt al-Islām, pp. 265-267.
19. Kurayyim, Islāmiyyāt, pp. 194-195.
20. Ibid., pp. 197-198.
21. Al-'Aqqād, 'Abqariyyat al-Ṣiddīq, p. 9.
22. Before that, however, it is reported that Sufi brotherhoods flourished in Egypt and other parts of the Islamic world. For more information on this topic, refer to Tawfīq al-Tawīl, al-Taṣawwuf fī Miṣr Ibbān al-'Asr al-'Uṭhmānī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-I'timād, 1946), pp. 193-207.
23. Fazlur Rahman, Islam (New York Chicago San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p.254.
24. Al-'Aqqād, Afyūn al-Shu'ūb, al-Madhāhib al-Haddāma, pp. 22-47.
25. Considering al-'Aqqād in particular, it is necessary to mention here that his influence exceeded the 'Ulamā' of al-Azhar to include some literary men in Egypt. In my interview with al-Tūnisī, he told me that such writers as 'Abd al-Ḥayy Diyāb, 'Abd al-Fattāh al-Dīdī, Ḥamdī Imām, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī, Nazmī Luḡā and others, were influenced by al-'Aqqād's methodology and thought.

APPENDIX

The Episode of Dhū al-Janāhayin

Translation

"Slowly, slowly, she came like a weary breeze, her steps not touching earth, for she is like a spirit floating in space. The night covered her with its wing, and kept her a secret in the bosom of darkness. She bestowed on flowers some of her aroma, and they reciprocated with thanks, spreading the perfume that awakens hidden emotions. The river showed its ecstasy, and disclosed a love that had been wrapped by time. Memories brought back to the river an old sadness, and passion kindled its craving. At time it is pale from an old love that made it lean. It had accompanied the days telling them of its love, hoping to relieve its soul. At time it is noisy, as though overtaken by the madness of love. It rose until it filled the earth with mirth, echoed by land, pleasant to the eye, and by hearts of lovers alternating between despair and hope, like the cycle of time, alternating between the darkness of the night and light of the day.

The old man was bent, his sorrowful soul singing with sad thoughts, wishing to smile, but unable to. His heart beats with moving thoughts which struggle to appear, but no sooner do they approach the light, than a thin curtain of darkness is thrown over them, showing and hiding, tempting and preventing. He did not know about whom these thoughts of his troubled soul were speaking, and he did not know to whom these dark thoughts of his sick heart were referring. He only spent a hateful and hectic day in which troubles succeeded, sorrows converged, and life narrowed. In one of those days which envelope the soul with thick



darkness even though the weather be clear and cool and the light of the sun bright, bringing to the untroubled pleasure, joy, and beauty. In one of those days in which the face of nature beams, the mouth of life smiles, and the free soul is called by hope and work, if it had not been for a secret shadow cast by some cunning and plotting souls, changing the light of nature into darkness and sordidness, and pushing back the smile of life to a grim frown. For God has tested the good among men by the bad and the learned by the ignorant, and has thrown on the sincerity of the sincere the hypocrisy of hypocrites, on the seriousness of the serious the plotting of the plotters and the impotent, to purify by these tests their hearts, and to clean by this trouble their souls, and to measure by this experience their ability for patience, for steadfastness in calamity, for escape from disaster, and readiness to sacrifice for the opinion they believe, the good they seek, and the reform they call for.

The old man had started his day filled with enthusiasm, wishing to work as he was accustomed to work, in the various lines of productive effort of which he was capable. No sooner had midday arrived, than news came from left and right speaking of clouds above clouds, gathering in the sky, not far off, and thickening, brought and driven by a rash and reckless wind, directing it towards him, and threatening him with their evil. He did not care for all this, nor did he pay it attention, and he wanted to continue the work he was doing, but news reached him that some other clouds are gathering and thickening, that a plot is being prepared, and an evil designed, that types of cunning are being woven, some in secret and some in public. Visitors start to arrive, some warning him, some pitying him, others consoling him, until he gets fed up with them all, and with their talk and gossip.

He withdraws to himself feeling exasperated. He withdrew to his family circle, but felt estranged. He withdrew to his books but felt depressed. He left the city, seeking refuge in a far place, in a remote country place, from which arose green trees with winding branches, around a stream pure of surface, gently caressed by a playful breeze, stirring in it small bubbling waves.

There the old man sat around sunset, and there he forgot himself, men, and city and city dwellers, enemies and their plots, friends and their support, giving all his thoughts to the green trees, the pure stream, the gentle and weary breeze caressing the leaves of trees and the surface of the stream, the rays of a sad and exhausted sun following it, sad and exhausted, towards its setting; the multitude of birds, resting on branches, patiently and quietly, singing sorrowful songs as though unwilling to bid farewell to a departing day, to receive an unwelcome night.

The soul of the old man mingles with the green trees, the pure stream, the weary breeze, the pale light, and the miserable and despairing birds, and he feels the sad thoughts overpowering him, knocking in his heart, and reaching to his tongue almost moving it to speak, had it not been for a disgust he feels for the talk of other people, and for his own talk too. He listens to these thoughts addressing themselves to his soul, and reaching it bypassing the medium of the ear. He spends in this state some time, not knowing whether it was long or short, forgetting everything, escaping from everything, forlorn with nothingness, if it is possible for men to be forlorn with nothingness.

And here, he is now waking up from a state that was neither one of sleep nor wake, neither an absence nor a presence; not knowing how he was driven to it or how he

emerged from it. Probably, the continued silence around him recalled him to himself, or recalled himself to him, thus, he returned to himself or recovered it. Probably, it was these sad thoughts that lingered long in his soul and heart, and sang long in his inward conscience, which brought to him a strange and beautiful apparition (ṣūra) that he saw standing before him at the opposite bank of the stream above a thin layer of moonlight which danced on the surface of the stream. For the moon had now risen to its place in the sky, shedding its confident rays patiently and slowly on earth, as though wishing to play with the earth and all that is on it, a sarcastic and cunning game, without consideration for anyone or anything.

The strange thing is that the old man neither denied the apparition that stood before him, nor recognized it, nor did it displease or please him. He simply looked at it for a long time, as if he had expected its visit and presence. He looked without addressing it, as if he expected it to speak first. And it did; for a voice seductive, sweet and soft, reached the old man, mixed with the murmur of the stream, whose waves were now clapping as if to convey to the breeze a secret for delivery to the night. This sweet seductive voice touches the soul of the old man, like a cool drink of water to one desperately thirsty restoring to him life and vigour, and recalling the dark day and the beaming night.

He hears the apparition asking him: "what is this silence in which you are enveloped? You have called and urged me to come to you and here I come to you visiting, and I stand near, while you express no welcome, and pay no attention, neither talking to me nor asking me about anything. Why did you call me then? And why did I endeavour to come to you, risking the darkness of the night?"

The old man said quietly and gently: "did I call you, my child, and who are you?"

She said: "who is she that came to you slowly, slowly like a weary breeze?"

The old man said: "I do not know, my child. I called no one, and talked to no one. I only had thoughts that troubled my soul, and meanings that caused my heart to beat."

The apparition replied: "say that I invited myself to you, or that I brought myself to you, or that your presence here amidst these green trees, this pure stream, these sleeping birds, and this quiet light descending from the moon, has appealed to me, and lead me to come to share this seclusion ('uzla) with you and talk to you about some matters of importance."

The old man said: "but who are your?" The apparition replied: "do you insist on knowing me? Then say I am the seclusion in which the troubled find refuge when oppressed by the living and the non-living. Say I am the loneliness to which a man takes flight from himself, his next of kin, from enemies and friends, from good and evil. And say I am the freedom which the individual finds when he takes flight from community in order to be able to think safely, content in soul, and clear in mind. Say I am seclusion, loneliness and freedom together, conciliated in one person, forming one soul. Say - if you want - I am the migration (hijra) which men take to when they fear for their convictions, and when they lose patience with the hypocrisy of hypocrites and the plotting of plotters, and when they are fed up with staying in this place or that, and take flight to another. I am the (hijra), which is called to take care of good people when they lose patience with bad ones, to console them while in

trouble, divert them from the pain of persecution, accompanying them when they leave their homes to other lands, reassuring them on the way, protecting them from the hardships of travel, receiving them in their new destinations, instilling in them a love for their new homes and a consolation about old ones, opening for them the doors of hope, helping in work, and leading them to a success which they deserve. Say I am the (hijra) which your ancient poet praised when he said:

I turn away from a country in which,  
my tongue is tied and my heart is  
locked. The best advice for a man,  
when overtaken by sun, is to firmly  
move on."

The old man said: "you remind me of these verses of Abū Tammām, my child, which I had neither forgotten nor ignored. But I do not want to migrate, and I find no way for migration even if I wanted to."

She said: "you want nothing but migration, and you find no way out of it. Have you not migrated to this place this very night? Do you not migrate to yourself every now and then, when you feel oppressed by the environment in which you live and suffer? I console your estrangement when you migrate to yourself in the city, just as I console your estrangement now, when you migrate to these green trees, this clear stream, this melted silver that vibrates between earth and heaven, as if to carry to your rebellious soul a message of peace, reassurance, quietness, forgiveness to the guilty, and ignoring to the ignorant. Listen to me and understand me. How often I accompanied good men who lost patience with a life which was oppressive to them. I consoled their estrangement, relieved their trouble, and accompanied them with understanding until they reached safe ground. I know stories and memories about

them - some of which, if I tell you - will clear your trouble, relieve your sorrow, protect you from doubt, keep you firm on certainty, and take you to the course which God has set to you, until you depart from this life, content with your conscience and your conscience content with you, whatever people's opinion about you were.

I accompanied a young man from Quraysh in days long past, and I never forgot his company. I wanted to console him, but he consoled me. I wanted him to forget his troubles, but I found no troubles in his soul worth forgetting. He came to me loving, fond, and preferring me to everything. I took him for a long voyage, keeping him long away, but he was not afraid of an endless travel, nor was he oppressed by an endless estrangement. He migrated ~~out of~~ love for migration, preferring it to persecution, great or small.

His soul was sweet and quiet, thus it refused to mix the sweetness of faith with the bitterness of persecution, or to mix the quietness of certainty with the violence of polemics. He was one of the first to take to Islam. He saw his cousin (Ibn 'Ammih) calling for it and he responded in love, truth, and certainty. He continued to be loyal to his commitment to this new religion, raising the fear of God and quite assured faith, above everything else. When things around him became troubled and he witnessed the persecution of Muslims by Quraysh, the steadfastness in which Muslims faced persecution, and persistence of Quraysh, he endured as Muslims endured, suffered as they suffered, and faced whatever they faced for the cause of God, until God permitted them to depart with their faith to where safety and peace lie - if they wish - where upon he migrated from Mecca, leaving behind a homeland he loved, a community he liked, and a life whose ups and downs he enjoyed. He migrated with other companions of

his cousin to a far off land.

I accompanied him on that voyage of his, and saw him enduring dangers on land and sea, departing with his faith from persecution, preferring to worship God in peace, and to spread his religion quietly and peacefully. He stayed long, and became or nearly became adjusted to estrangement. But I kept close to him, to help him over the hardships of a strange land. And when God permitted His Prophet to migrate, and Islam settled in Medina, triumphant over many environments of polytheism (al-shirk) and disbelief (al-kufr), I started tempting my friend to move from one strange land to another, to take refuge in a new homeland; I got his consent only when he was assured that he will never depart or be taken away from me, but will always remain a migrant. He will move on from one migration in Ethiopia to another in Medina, where he can worship God with satisfaction and assurance, in the company of his cousin and among friends and relatives, and where he can struggle for Islam like other Muslims, and suffer, like them, the burdens of the struggle.

I accompanied him when he went to Ethiopia and found in him a man of faith, departing with his faith to safety, with deep regret. And I accompanied him in his return to Medina, to find a man of faith returning with his faith, to the home of righteousness and the dawn of light, with a kindle of a fire of love for his cousin, and an ambition to assume a share in the burdens of the struggle (al-jihād)."

The quiet sweet voice then stopped a little, while the stream went on singing its lingering sadness, and the breeze went on caressing the stream gently, and moving the branches lightly, echoing, kissing and whispering sounds which join the sadness of the stream, to produce tunes that sound like a sweet prayer

lamenting the soul of that honoured migrant.

The voice then resumed slowly saying: "I saw him when he reached Medina while his cousin was returning from the victory which God gave him in storming the fortress of Khybar, to consolidate his position, and raise his cause. His cousin embracing him, kissing him between the eyes and saying: "I do not know whether my joy is greater for the storming of Khybar or for the return of Ja'far."

But my friendship to him did not come to an end. I stayed with him in his new abode, and felt happy like the rest of people for what I saw of his charity to the weak, his gentleness to the poor, his mercy to the miserable, and his preference to the needy over himself and his family in whatever God provided him, little or great, which caused his cousin to give him the tender name, "father of the poor."

Then I accompanied him on his great voyage, when the Prophet sent his army to Mu'ta and when he felt pained because his cousin appointed Zayd Ibn Hāritha to be his superior. He raised the matter with the Prophet, who answered in a voice full of love, tenderness, and concern: "proceed, for you do not know which is better."

I knew the depth of his soul and heard the echo of his conscience after this talk, revealing that his desire for a courageous fight, and his readiness to endure the burdens of the battle were his motives for complaining to the Prophet about advancing Zayd above him. He preferred Zayd and other Muslims, and wanted to advance himself to danger. When the Prophet denied his request, he was pained for fear of being taken for selfish when he only wanted to be charitable. His soul was filled with a desire to face, for the cause of God,



what Zayd and his companions faced. And when Zayd advanced and fought until he was killed, and his turn came to carry the banner, I saw him dismount from his mare and slay it, to become the first soldier in Islam to kill his mare, and advance with the banner, until both his hands were cut and he was riddled with swords, spears and arrows, to fall down as he wished, a martyr. Had it not been for what the Prophet said about the grace of God that fell on him, I would have never found solace for the sorrow which I felt for his death. But how can I grieve for martyrs who, as soon as they die, are returned to life, alive and provided for with their God! How can I grieve for a martyr, who, as soon as he died was lifted to heaven, and the Prophet told that God had compensated him for his two lost hands with blood stained wings in which he can fly in heaven, reaching any point he wished.

Oh! how many stories there are about those few companions of Muḥammad who migrated before him, with or after him, which if I tell you old man, I shall clear your soul from every bitterness, and purify your heart from every hatred, and convince you that I deserve your love and confidence!"

The old man replied: "enough, for you have achieved what you wanted."

She said: "then call me whenever you feel pain or oppression, and you will never find a friend or companion like me."

The turmoil of the stream starts to rise a little, and with it, the hissing of the wind and whispering of the branches. A faint intermittent sound comes from the bosoms of sleeping birds, and a rosy lean arrow pierces the darkness narrowly, and broadens little by little as it advances, until night retreats in front of it,

confused and terrified. The apparition greets the old man in a low hushed voice, which withdraws further and further until it vanishes. Noises arise, echoing each other, from many villages dispersed in the country. The old man looks at the visual miracle of the day trying hard to obliterate the dark miracle of the night. He rises wearily, the night having cleaned his soul from the blemishes of the city to start life as if he was newly born. He proceeds to the city quiet and composed, his soul singing "slowly, slowly, she came like a weary breeze." Husayn, 'Alā Hāmish al-Sīra, pp. 466-475.

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