

# TOWARDS REORIENTATION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

(A FRESH EXAMINATION OF THE HADITH LITERATURE)

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**REORIENTATION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT**

( A FRESH EXAMINATION OF THE HADITH LITERATURE )

A critical Resume of views advanced by  
Scholars on the Memorandum of  
the Academy suggesting the  
need for a fresh examination  
of the Hadith literature.

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**THE ACADEMY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES**  
**HYDERABAD-DN., INDIA.**

**1954.**

# Toward Reorientation of Islamic Thought

## A Fresh Examination of the Hadith Literature

**I**N January and February early this year, I had, on behalf of the Council of the Academy of Islamic Studies, the privilege of inviting the attention of leading Muslim scholars, publicists, legislators and administrators in the different parts of the world to a note adopted by the Council, suggesting the need for a fresh approach on scientific lines to the study of the Hadith literature and the codification by a body of competent scholars, representative of the entire Islamic world, of a single authorized corpus of authentic traditions of the Prophet as an aid to the study of the Quranic Muhkamat in the context of the present-day world. The primary aim underlying the proposal was stated to be the clearing of the Quranic ideology of all accretions, and thereby paving the way to a reorientation of Islamic thought on a basis agreeable to the entire Ummat, particularly in the domain of law. The note had suggested the different issues arising out of the proposal, and on which opinion was invited. The following were the issues suggested:

1. The need for enquiry and research in the Hadith literature and codification of a single authorized corpus of the traditions of the Prophet;
2. The method of approach;
3. The agency under whose auspices the proposed Board of Research is to be constituted;
4. The composition of the Board;
5. The terms of reference to the Board;
6. The provision of finance for organizing research and publishing its results.

### I

The response to the memorandum has not been extensive, but this was anticipated. The vast majority of those addressed evidently

**Note:**—In the transliteration of Arabic terms and names, the diacritical type has not been used for lack of it at the moment.

must have felt hesitant to pronounce any views on a subject which for ages has been the special preserve of the professional 'Ulama. The address to them was primarily educative and informative in character, and that purpose has been served. Indeed, the message of the memorandum has been carried to a much wider circle of our intelligentsia by the voluntary reproduction of it in such widely read journals as the *Islamic Review* of London, the *Tulu-e-Islam* of Karachi, the *Tajdid-e-Ahad* of Lahore, the *Madina* of Bijnor, the *Message* of Delhi and *Notes on Islam*, Calcutta. The response needed, however, was from those, who in one way or another, delved in the Hadith; and I am glad to observe that to the extent it has come forth, it must be regarded as satisfying. Even from unexpected quarters has come the reply that a fresh examination of the Hadith literature is necessary.

Of the replies, received so far, the largest number in order is from India, Pakistan and Egypt. The response from the rest of the Islamic world, though limited, is representative in character, and offers very suggestive clues to the student of Islam interested particularly in the religious crisis facing the Islamic world at the present moment.

A critical resume of the views so far advanced is hereby afforded to friends such as have replied to the Academy's memorandum. A classified list of these friends including non-Muslim European Scholars who have evinced a kindly interest in the proposal and desire to be posted with developments, is given with their addresses at the end of this Note.

A large majority of the replies received are in favour of the proposition. But before we deal with them, it will be well to have a look into the rest, chiefly because they reveal the trends at work at this moment in the body of Islam, both reactionary and revolutionary, trends which in fact supplied the motif for the proposition advanced by the Academy.

**Firstly:** There are those who do not wish to disturb the *status-quo*, the out-and-out traditionists, who even prefer a return to a stricter form of traditional Islam;

**Secondly:** There is the group which rejects the entire gamut of Hadith or traditions as apocryphal and of no consequence to Islam. The Qur'an is enough for them;

**Thirdly:** There is a school of thought which is out to discard the entire frame-work of the traditional Islam as built in the course of history by the inter-action of the Qur'an and Hadith, and rest

content with the 'spirit or essence' of Islam. This is by no means a negligible trend. It has already taken a concrete form in Turkey and begun to extend its influence in other parts of the Muslim world. It is part of a wider intellectual movement which aims to separate law from religion and secularize social life.

Those under the second and third categories represent a powerful re-action to the Islam dominated by the Hadith and stand poles apart from those coming under the first category.

*Fourthly:* There is a body of thought which oscillates between its sentimental regard for the traditional Islam and its intellectual fascination for Westernism. Those who find themselves in this uncomfortable position wish to 'combine modernity with a maintenance of internal tradition'.

The above analysis of trends, it may be observed in passing, is to some extent reinforced by the proceedings of the Colloquium of Islamic Culture held in U.S.A. in September, 1953, under the joint auspices of Princeton University and the Library of the Congress, Washington, to which I may incidentally refer wherever necessary in the course of this analysis.

It was as a corrective to these several trends that the proposition was mooted by the Academy to clear the Hadith literature of all that is alien to the Qur'an with a view to establishing a harmonious inter-relation between the two as preliminary to a reorientation of Islamic thought in the context of the present day world, particularly in the domain of law.

Let me deal with these trends seriatim, before I pass on to the question at issue which may be regarded as a definite trend in itself.

## II

### THE FIRST GROUP

Those who are satisfied with the *status-quo* or are against instituting investigation into the Hadith literature are represented on our list by four correspondents, viz., Dr. Omar A. Farrukh, member of the Arab Academy, Damascus, Professor M. A. Ghamrawi, former Head of the Department of Chemistry, School of Pharmacy, Cairo University, Dr. M. Hamidullah, sometime Reader in International law at the Osmania University and author of the *Muslim Conduct of State*, at present settled down in Paris, and Mr. Mohammad Rahimuddin, a former Principal of the Arts College, Warangal, Hyderabad State, and translator into English of 'al-Muwatta' (not yet published).

DR. FARRUKH says, "I think that any work along such a line would be only a loss of effort and time. Every single point you have suggested had been treated with the utmost scholarship by some great authors of our glorious past; sifting, evaluation, arrangement of all possible methods and necessities, as well as, indices". He however adds "Certainly, re-edition of Hadith literature according to modern *external* criticism is quite a different subject."

Professor M. A. GHAMRAWY has taken special pains to treat the subject referred to him, but much of what he has written in his lengthy note, however interesting, falls outside the scope of the issue that really called for consideration. At best he has no objection to slight mechanical re-arrangement or re-classification of the Hadith. Professor Ghamrawy thinks:

- (a) that the Riwayat which are called 'Mutawatir' may be grouped together; and
- (b) that contradictory Hadith should be listed and referred to 'Hadith Scientists' to explain them away.

A few minor suggestions have also been made but they all revolve round the above two leading suggestions.

Prof. Ghamrawy is of opinion that if this process is followed in respect of the collections of each sect, "it would be time to make a comparative study of results and judge how close Muslim Community really is and how far it could be brought closer together through one or more collections of already accepted Hadith common to all sections within each denomination or to all sects of the whole nation".

DR. M. HAMIDULLAH thinks that "there is little chance of getting a set of scholars acceptable to the entire Muslim world, and less chances of these scholars arriving at unanimous conclusions, not to speak of the future generations, when equally honest and learned scholars may find fault with the decisions of the present-day scholars, even as we are finding fault with savants of Bukhari and Muslim's stature".

"Therefore", says Dr. Hamidullah, "I propose something else to wit: Publishing a consolidated *corpus* of Hadith. In spite of great efforts in this respect by our predecessors, there is still room and even need of a great *corpus corporum* of the traditions emanating from the Prophet. I mean a *corpus* which not only cites all the sources of the same Hadith, but also notes the variants, together with an *exhaustive index*". He adds: "Individual Hadith should be chronologically arranged, that is, according to the age of the Muhaddith who relates them". He thinks

that with the avoidance of repetitions of one and the same Hadith, "the 1,00,000 or so extant Hadith will be reduced to the proportions of the present *Sahih* of Bukhari".

The proposal of Dr. Hamidullah, viz., the bringing together in one place of "all the extant Hadith" properly indexed and with repetitions dropped is intelligible enough, and may very likely form the very first step which any board of research will take before they apply to the entire range of Hadith so arranged the process of excision or of eliminating therefrom everything repugnant or alien to the ideology of the Qur'an or which clouds or compromises the character of the Prophet as presented therein. It is this very process on which opinion was invited, and it is on this that Dr. Hamidullah is not sufficiently communicative. He feels that if excision is resorted to by this generation, those who come after will be tempted to do likewise. Let them: they have every right to. Every step taken to bring the Hadith nearer the Qur'an will be a step forward on the road to Islam. Else, to shield the compilers of Hadith out of any inherited veneration for them is to forsake the Prophet wilfully, as has been done till now. How else are we then to meet the ever growing challenge of the critics of the Prophet and his system who pick out mud from the very 'Sihah' or 'The authentic traditions of the Prophet', and fling it at him at every turn? Unless excision is applied, the consolidated corpus corporum recommended by Dr. Hamidullah, systematically or scientifically indexed, will be a very welcome present to the critics of Islam; for here they will have every thing properly docketed for their entertainment and ready handling.

MR. M. RAHIMUDDIN may be clubbed together with Dr. Hamidullah. Indeed, he desires to go even beyond him. He would like to collect and index not only the extant Riwayat which Dr. Hamidullah would include in his corpus corporum, but all the Hadith, "*extant and defunct, rejected and approved*". He advises us strongly not to employ ourselves 'on lifting imaginary veils over Qur'an and Hadith'.

### III THE SECOND GROUP

As against the above group which favours the preservation of every extant riwayat, whatever its quality, there is the group which rejects the entire gamut of riwayat as untrustworthy and of no consequence to Islam. The Qur'an is enough for them. The 'Nadwat Ansar El-Koraan' of Cairo, which among others hold this view, have favoured us through their president with two lengthy letters, as also printed literature in

support of their stand-point. This is a clear swing of the pendulum from one end to the other—a reaction to the Islam of the Riwayat which is stated to have thwarted progressive urges and created in certain earnest minds the sense of frustration and the impelling counter urge to seek refuge in the Qur'an alone.

Standing at the moment outside of the Nadwah but powerfully inclined to its view, there is Prof. Dr. Abdel Aziz El-Arousy of the Ibrahimiyah University, Cairo. He thinks that the Qur'an should be sufficient. To make sure of this, he suggests that an attempt should be made on certain lines indicated by him to catch the meaning of the *Muhkamat* and *Mutashabihat* and gather all principal laws, rules and instructions, and then see if there is anything missing to complete the picture. If there is nothing missing, his considered view is that there should be "no need to give ourselves the trouble of testing this enormous number of Hadith for no use or purpose". Evidently the notion at work here is that the Qur'an is intended to function merely as a code of social ethics or a code of law and that its ideology does not touch anything beyond the social aspects of human life.

The attitude of the Nadwah is in essential respects upheld in India and Pakistan by Mawlana Muhammad Aslam Jairajpuri, Jami'a-i-Milliyah, Mr. Ghulam Ahmad Parvez, Karachi, Prof. Muhammad Ajmal Khan, at present Private Secretary to the Education Minister in the Government of India, Mawlana Ataullah Palwi, Chapra, and Mawlana Muhammad Yasin of Karachi.

Mawlana Muhammad Aslam Jairajpuri is a well-known scholar devoted to Islamic historiography. He regards all Hadith as apocryphal and of no concern to the Muhkamat of the Qur'an. He is willing to concede only historical significance to them, without, however, defining the specific character of the significance so attached. A like attitude is observed by Mawlana Ataullah Palwi. Mr. Ghulam Ahmad Parvez is the author of a monumental work, 'The Ma'arif al-Qur'an', in four volumes and the force behind the *Tulu-e-Islam* of Karachi. His views are akin to those of Mawlana Muhammad Aslam Jairajpuri, although he admits the desirability of sifting the Hadith literature with a view to getting a picture of "the period in which the Prophet of Islam and his companions lived". In his view the Hadith constitute the history of *Din* and not *Din* itself which "has been given in its complete form in the Qur'an". Prof. Ajmal Khan is the author of several Quranic studies including an important treatise on the chronological order of the Qur'an. A retesting of the Hadith literature is considered by him as

absolutely unnecessary. He invites prior concentration on the study of the Qur'an, and, as an aid to it, of the earlier sacred books as also of what he styles as the 'Kutub-i-Shaitaniyyah' set against them. His aim in this is to effect a rearrangement of the contents of the Qur'an in the chronological order, and then, on the basis of this order, to frame a biographical sketch of the Prophet. It is only when this stage is reached that he would go to the Hadith or Riwayat for the requisite biographical material. The question which needs to be considered is whether a chronological arrangement of the Qur'an is ever possible without a prior study of the biographical details of the Prophet's life. These four scholars emphatically assert that the Qur'an is self-sufficient, an attitude similar to, though not so rigid as that assumed by Nadwat Ansar-El-Koraan. Mowlana Muhammad Yasin's attitude, however, is rigid enough to classify him with the Nadwah. He regards the Hadith literature as a 'bee-hive' and warns us not to make a venture to touch it.

As this matter was going to the press, a letter was received from M. Claude Renaviny, Moulins (allier) France. He says: "Hadith, even authentic, is completely outside the pale of revelation. Revelation is contained only in the Book of God, the Qur'an. God, the Most High, knows the least of our needs, and He would not have given us an incomplete book standing in need of additions from a human being even though he be the Prophet himself. It is to be admitted that the Qur'an is sufficient unto itself, and covers all that man requires to lead a life agreeable to God. **This opinion, of course is not mine only. It is that of the great Omar and of the Prophet himself**".

As a protest in favour of the Qur'an, the attitude of these scholars **certainly calls for respect and sympathy**. But the fact cannot be overlooked that it creates a lacuna in our knowledge of the working of the Prophet's mind. As a plan of life, or as a code of principles and directives, the Qur'an is certainly sufficient. But the question forces itself on our attention: should not the personality of the Prophet count in our appreciation of the Quranic principles? A principle enhances its value, if it proves workable or works out satisfactorily in action. The Quranic plan was but revealed piecemeal or disclosed in the context of the circumstances of the Prophet's life as they developed from time to time. It was meant to be followed by him in the first instance. How the Qur'an was actually lived in the life of the Prophet should therefore have significance for us; for he is meant by the Qur'an to be a pattern for us. Surely, a knowledge of how the Prophet implemented the 'word' of the Qur'an in the circumstances of his personal life and of

the community which he raised round him, cannot be willingly or deliberately kept out of sight. Even as we are keen on knowing the meaning of the word of the Qur'an, so also should we be intent on knowing the Prophet himself who indeed was the *Qur'an in action*. True, an outline of the Prophet's personality and activity is afforded in the Qur'an itself. But should we deny ourselves a fuller knowledge of him, if that were possible, as an aid to a possibly fuller appreciation of the word of the Qur'an? For this, we cannot avoid going to the Riwayat which, as things stand, are the only source of our knowledge of the history of the Prophet outside the Qur'an. True also, that these Riwayat are mostly apocryphal and have gone to shroud the picture of the Prophet. But that does not argue that we should not attempt to lift the shroud. Attempts have been made in the past to sift the fact from the fable. Since they have proved to be inadequate, fresh attempts and on fresh lines need to be made in the same direction, and the process continued even after us, if found necessary, till the picture is fully resuscitated. If that were done, the ultimate gain will clearly be that of the Qur'an itself. This is a standpoint which I trust our friends of the Nadwat Ansar El-Koraan and those who think alike with them everywhere will not miss to reconsider.

Some of the scholars of this group, as pointed out above, do favour a re-examination of the Hadith literature with a view to affording a correct picture of the period in which the Prophet lived and worked. Indeed, Mr. Ghulam Ahmad Parvez would regard such a picture as "a boon to mankind". But none of these scholars is prepared to let this material serve as an index to the *Din* of Islam or as an aid to the study of the Quranic Mahkamat. The attitude is not easy to appreciate. The age in which a prophet lives and works cannot be treated as something unrelated to his mission. It has a meaning for him, for he meets its call. He takes it up and reshapes it by impressing his personality thereon. Every biographical detail of his fits into his mission, and one cannot discard it as of no value to it. The issue grows serious when it is earnestly put forward that we have no need to enquire of the Prophet how he implemented even the injunctions of the Qur'an expressed but in general terms, since such injunctions call for fresh details in every age. This proposition is advanced by Mr. Ghulam Ahmad Parvez.

Answering the contention of certain schools of thought that the details fixed by the Prophet in such cases are immutable or are to be in force for all times, says Mr. Parvez:

"The presumption cannot stand scrutiny. If the details were to remain immutable for ever, they should have been incorporated either in the Qur'an or the Prophet would have given an authenticated collection of his traditions to the Ummat. As neither course was adopted, the intention apparently was that the details should not remain immutable for ever. The intention in giving only broader principles in the Qur'an was that every generation should formulate details to suit the requirements of their age. Thus *Din* has to become an embodiment of "permanence and change", eternal laws given in the Qur'an plus varying details determined from age to age in the light of these laws. There is thus no point in finding out today the details formulated in the time of the Prophet. Even if they are ascertained correctly, something which, as stated above, is impracticable, the only purpose they can serve will be that during such and such period, the requirements of the time necessitated such and such details. In other words, they will constitute the history of *Din* and not *Din* itself which has been given in its complete form in the Qur'an".

The thesis is ominous. Had it been confined to the *Mu'amilat* or the laws of transactions, the proposition might have seemed as of a piece with the modernist tendencies at work in the Middle East, dealt with in the next section of this note, aiming at the separation of law from religion, and examined it on its own merits. But if it is to invade the domain of *'Ibadat* or the devotional part of Islam and other fields of life as well, or applied to them in logical sequence, the consequences to Islam might prove tragic. The rational step is to ascertain first by investigation what actually were the details fixed by the Prophet under each general regulation prescribed by the Qur'an, and also his principle of fixing details, and then decide in what manner they might be applied to our times. It is never a healthy exercise to pit oneself against professional reactionaries and answer them, word for word, and develop in the process counter extremism. If the professionals should say that every little detail advanced in the *Riwayat* is immutable and binding for all times, the answer to it is not just the opposite of it. If the Prophet had no time in his crowded life formally to codify details under the Quranic injunctions expressed but in general terms, the conclusion is certainly not warranted that he meant them to be replaced by fresh ones altogether the moment he was off the scene. The details were, after all, matters of routine practice, and would have been known to every one around him, and would have adjusted themselves normally to the

requirements of changing time under the guiding light of the Quranic ideology but for the tragic disturbances which beset them in the first centuries of Islam. The record of the Prophet's life and work that has come down to us is therefore, as observed by Mr. Parvez, "an admixture of truth and untruth". But it is certainly not impossible to extract the truth out of it and relate it to the Qur'an.

I may now pass on to the next group.

#### IV

### THE THIRD GROUP

Standing aside from either of the two groups referred to above—the out-and-out traditionists, and the out-and-out Quranists—we meet a third group of scholars to whom the 'spirit or essence of Islam' alone matters. This group may be divided into two sets—one represented by Prof. A. A. A. Fyze, a member of the Union Public Service Commission, New Delhi, and the other by Mr. Ahmed Emin Yalman, Editor of 'Vatan', Istanbul, once a close associate of the late Ata-Turk. The two display two different facets of one and the same attitude. While Prof. Fyze is keen on separating religion from law and subjecting the latter to "the highest norms fixed by modern juristic thinking", and the former including its dogma to the "principles of higher criticism", Mr. Yalman is out to discard the entire frame-work of Islam in its relation both to law and religion, and rely on the 'real spirit of Islam' for a 'virtuous honest life'.

The two scholars are not averse to, indeed they do severally express satisfaction at the idea of a retesting of the Hadith literature as a scholarly attempt. But this is to be noted that the purposes to which they would refer the results of investigation are fundamentally different from the purposes kept in view by the Academy. While our main objective is to reorientate Islamic thought for the world of today in the light of the Quranic ideology, the aim of Prof. Fyze and Mr. Yalman in particular is to refashion it in the light of modern Westernism, leaving Islam to be a matter of the spirit only. Says Mr. Yalman, for instance:

"Sifting the true gold out of the masses of Hurafat and Riwayat is certainly a laudable undertaking. The work projected regarding Hadith literature is a long term and useful scholarly work. But in case the purposes are not clearly determined beforehand, a reorientation of Islamic thought will not be attained and unique opportunities which the present general religious crisis offers to Islam to take a radical line on a strictly secular and ra-

tional basis will be wasted. With courage and enthusiasm a great deal can be attained and unfavourable outlook in the Islamic World may experience a metamorphosis and complete reversal."

Let us look into the stand-point of this group a little closely.

In his paper entitled, 'Islamic Law and Theology in India' a copy of which was by him kindly furnished to me, Prof. Fyzee discloses what he calls a tentative scheme for a modern re-interpretation of the *Shari'ah*. He divides his scheme into two parts—Fundamental Principles, and Applied Principles—and suggests under them an elaborate list of angles from which the *Shari'ah* might be re-examined. Says he:

"If the complete fabric of *Shari'ah* is examined in this critical manner, it is clear that in addition to the orthodox and stable pattern of religion, new forms will arise, perhaps differing widely in different countries, some of them full of defects and short-comings; but gradually a substantial body of clearly thought-out doctrine will emerge which will be the basis of a scientific re-interpretation of Islam. Such re-statement will give strength and solace to the many who have lost faith in the orthodox interpretation but retain their loyalty to the essence of Islam. To them we may be able to repeat with Aristotle, 'The one remains, the many change and pass'".

This is admittedly adding to the confusion already prevailing in the body of Islam. To provoke confusion in the hope of evolving a stable order is certainly not a procedure which will inspire confidence. It may even look like courting disaster. What may however call for rational consideration is his leading principle of separating law from religion and on which his entire plan rests. Says he:

"The first task is to separate logically the dogmas and doctrines of religion from the principles and rules of law. To me it is an axiom that the essential faith of man is something different from the outward observance of rules; that moral rules apply to the conscience, but that legal rules can be enforced only by the state. Ethical norms are subjective; legal rules are objective. The inner life of the spirit, the 'Idea of the Holy', must to some extent be separated from the outward forms of social behaviour. The separation is not simple; it will even be considered un-Islamic. But the attempt at a re-thinking of the *Shari'ah* can only begin with the acceptance of this principle'

In pursuance of this principle, he poses, among other questions, the following:

“What is the present state of the law? How far does it fall short of the highest norms fixed by modern juristic thinking? In what way can the rules be amended, repealed, or sustained so as to conform to modern concepts of social justice and to promote the social well-being of the Muslim community as an integral part of society in general”.

Prof. Fyzee is evidently influenced by the modernist movements in the Middle East where, as pointed out by Prof. Majid Khadduri, Prof. of Middle Eastern studies, Johns Hopkins University in his paper “Secularization and Islamic Law” presented at the Princeton University colloquium and which he has kindly permitted me to make use of here, “the introduction of Western Civil Codes operating side by side with Islamic law has raised the problem of reconciling the two systems in order to avoid conflict”. A movement is already afoot there to secularize Islamic law, particularly through the contribution in the field of law made by Dr. Sanhuri, who is stated to have prepared a new civil code for Egypt, Syria and Iraq. This is considered to be an advance on the late Shaik Muhammad Abduh’s modernisation movement which aimed at “combining the best of Islam and modernism by his arguing that essentially there was no conflict between Islam and Western civilization”. Dr. Sanhuri’s purpose is to separate the devotional part of the *Shari’ah* from the penal and civil parts, and over-haul the latter on the following lines:

- (1) “The adoption of Western rules and principles which are not covered by Islamic law, that is, where the *Shari’ah* is silent about matters dealt with in Western law”.
- (2) “The adoption of Western law which in principle is in conformity with Islamic law, but is not dealt with in such details as would fit the conditions of modern life as influenced by the West. Western law may be adopted to cover such new phases of modern life as are not in conflict with Islamic law”
- (3) “The adoption of Western law which may take the place of certain *Shari’ah* rules that have become obsolete”.

While this move aims at only partial replacement of the Islamic law by the Western, Mr. Ahmed Emin Yalman’s attitude is to side-track the entire frame-work of Islam and entertain only the ‘spirit of Islam’. He says:

“Every country with a preponderance of Moslem population will insist like Turkey to have secular government, to keep religion

out of discussions from politics, law and science, to give equal opportunities to all its citizens and feel free to follow a policy dictated by its own environmental conditions and by considerations of its own security. We have no need to go through the phases of conflict in the West between Authority and Reason. We should stand for Reason in scientific matters and not to attempt to make a compromise with religious thought".

"We should prepare a purely spiritual field for Islam: A constant struggle to improve ourselves to be worthy of ourselves, exercise altruism, charity. Religion should not mean mechanical prayers as a running account with God against sins, but a virtuous honest life. How far and how we pray for purposes of self-discipline should be a matter of our personal concern of which we don't owe any account to any body, but directly to God, considering self-styled intermediaries as impostors acting for their own benefit. Islam does not allow a Moslem to judge the acts of other Moslems. It orders that requirements of changing times should be followed. With these basic elements, it is possible to erect a wonderful and most up to date religious conception, remaining true to *real spirit of Islam*".

It may be observed here that neither Prof. Fyze nor Mr. Yalman has tried to explain what actually is meant by the 'the essence of Islam', or 'the real spirit of Islam', or show how and out of what material it can be raised up for our view, or how it differs or is distinguished from what is, now-a-days, comfortably termed 'natural morality'.

Mr. Yalman has in reality given expression to the mind which characterized the leaders of the Turkish Revolution of Nineteen-twenties when, apparently tired of the medieval reactionarism dwelling in their midst, they chose to go completely West.

This Revolution, undoubtedly, was a great event in the history of Turkey. But it would have been an equally great event in the history of Islam as well, had it taken a form different from what it actually assumed. In so far as the leaders adopted the principle of democracy, they did what the Qur'an could always approve. The task was imperative and well done. As the general elections of 1950 and 1954 have proved, democracy has taken root in the Turkish soil and brought glory to the Turk. But the wholesale rejection of the *Shari'ah* and the simultaneous adoption in its stead of Western law, was it equally imperative? Could not the question have been put off for consideration in calmer

moments till democracy could function in full dress, and find itself in a position to express the real voice of the Turkish people? True, as Prof. Hifzi Timur of the Istanbul University points out, the revolutionary authorities did appoint a committee to "prepare out of the existing religious codes an over-all code such as might efficaciously regulate legal relationships throughout the country". True also, that discussions by the representatives of the different schools of Muslim Jurisprudence lasting over a year were "marked by frequent impasses resulting ultimately in an absolute dead end". But was that a sufficient reason to rush headlong to make an abject surrender to Swiss Code, Italian Criminal Code, German and Italian laws of land and sea trade, the Neufchatel Procedural law, and the rest? A revolutionary government which had the power to take such a violently radical step, had also the power to appoint another committee, this time composed of 'Jurists specifically directed to rise superior to the rivalries between the traditional schools of Muslim Jurisprudence and to refer the entire problem to the principles or ideology of the Qur'an, the one unerring source of Islamic inspiration, and prepare a code of public law which, while preserving out of the old all that deserved preserving, absorbed from Western law also all that was agreeable to it, and thus stamp on its visage the distinctive impress or hall-mark of the Quranic way of life. Had this been done, Turkey would have led a revolutionary movement of Ijtihad throughout the Muslim world, resulting in a happy reorientation of Islamic thought and life in the context of the present-day world. For, Turkey, notwithstanding its abolition of the Turkish Khilafat, was still a name to conjure with among the Muslim masses all over the world. But its rulers missed the opportunity. They were too self-centered at the moment.

The opportunity is still there. The heart of the Turkish people still pulsates with Islam. They could go and did in fact go with their leaders in democratizing their state, as the move far from being repugnant to their sentiment, was in the best traditions of Islam. But they could not march forward equally well with them willingly in the field of religion. The events of the last few years have demonstrated that religion is still a factor to reckon with in the life of the Turkish people. "This explains", to quote the admission of Prof. Timur himself, "why some amendments have been and can be made to the new Turkish legal system". Let us hope that the process will continue till the entire body of borrowings from Western law is baptized with the Quranic touch and given currency in the name and with the seal of Islam: for, nothing from

the West will be repugnant to Islam if it is moulded to fit into the ideology of the Qur'an. Side by side, the trend to retrace steps, or the urge among the Turkish masses to foster their emotional attachment to Islam, needs to be carefully watched, and directed along lines which will keep them close to the Quranic conception of life, and prevent them from relapsing into the medieval obscurantism from which they were at first intended to be rescued—an obscurantism thriving on anti-Quranic concepts generated by forged Riwayat attributed to the Prophet.

The view advanced by Mr. Yalman that "we should prepare a purely spiritual field for Islam", by keeping "religion out of discussions from politics, law and science"; or the axiom mooted by Prof. Fyzee that "the essential faith of man is something different from the outward observance of rules" and that therefore law should be kept separate from religion, is a subject big enough for a separate treatment. But since the question has been raised, it may just be pointed out here that this concept of life has no basis or foundation in the Quranic thought. 'Faith' divorced from 'deed' has no *locus standi* in Islam.

The Islam of the Qur'an is not a name for mere contemplation or for a code of rituals or abstract doctrines. It is a name for a particular style of thought and living, a plan of life, if properly followed, lets one live in peace with one's own self and in peace with one's external world of relations. 'Believe and work' is the Quranic directive. The values of life postulated by the doctrinal beliefs are to be translated into appropriate action. The process is designated 'Islam', and gives a distinct personality to the individual, and projects in the social sphere a distinct type of culture and a distant type of civilization resting thereon. In this process, spirit and body do not function in separate compartments. They work in harmony with each other in every situation, in relation both to self and society. Even prayer which Mr. Yalman or Mr. Fyzee will regard as a purely personal affair of an individual, is, in the Quranic scheme, not just a state of inert subjectivity. On the other hand, it is an action of the spirit, a discipline in social morality. Indeed, in its congregational form, it functions as a social institution and levels up social inequalities by requiring one and all to stand shoulder to shoulder in a line on terms of equality before God. Life in Islam is thus intended to be an integral entity, the values of life which it upholds supplying the requisite spiritual background to every activity. Under such a concept of life, no distinction arises between law and religion, and terms such as 'Secular law', 'Secular State' and 'Secular life' do not bear any meaning whatsoever.

The term 'Secularism', be it noted, had its origin in the history of Protestant Christianity, as opposed to the 'Clericalism' of the Papal Church, and can therefore have no valid place in an order of life such as Islam where clericalism in every form is taboo. The term has acquired a new connotation of late, denoting regulation of wordly affairs by wordly methods un-influenced by religion. But can any system of life, however professedly wordly, survive or maintain itself for any length of time, if it does not rest on some spiritual law of life? Is it not a fact that the so-called secularism of the West is, in reality, or in the ultimate analysis, deeply rooted in the Graeco-Roman Christian values of life, and that it is not correct to say that it has nothing to do with religion of any kind? Prof. Timur may lull himself into the belief that "the over-all legal innovation that took place in Turkey was not a transition from the legal machinery of one religion to that of another, for Western Judicial systems are of a secular nature divorced from religious legal provisions". But may it be suggested that, in a system, it is not the machinery that gives it its distinctive character? That is changed from time to time, to suit administrative needs or convenience. On the other hand, it is the principles underlying it which mark its distinguishing quality and which mould and remould its provisions as warranted by the demands or exigencies of time. This is a matter for friends in the Arab countries, who after the example of Turkey seem inclined to transplant Western secularism into their soil, seriously to consider.

If the Muslim law as codified a thousand years ago seems enmeshed in an intricate network of conflicting Riwayat, and on that account is proving not satisfying to the Muslim in the context of the present-day world, the proper course is not bodily to replace it by Western law, but to rescue it from the clutches of the Riwayat and reshape it in conformity with the principles constituting the Quranic ideology in a manner agreeable to the demands of time. And if in this process the need is felt to incorporate into it any provision of Western law, the Quranic ideology, as I understand, will always be found ready to absorb and claim as its own everything agreeable to it, or is not repugnant to its basic principles of morality; for is not the Prophet reported to have said: "knowledge is the lost property (camel) of the Muslim; take it back wherever found"? And there is so much in Western law which in spirit and principle may be acceptable to the Quranic ideology. The caution of the Prophet is, however, always there to keep one steady: "Take that which is clean; and discard that which is unclean".

In this process of assimilation or naturalization, the distinction that is to be kept in view is not between 'religion' and 'law', because in the Quranic concept of life, the distinction is not maintainable. The distinction tenable is between 'faith' and 'action', between 'spirit' and 'its manifestation', the two constituting together the *Din*, the way, the religion of Islam, the manifestative function of which taking on two forms—the devotional, and the social. What defines and regulates this function is the law of Islam. One may separate the devotional part of it called *'Ibadat* from the social called the *Mu'amilat* covering every field of public life outside the purely devotional. The law pertaining to the social side or the public law may be given and needs to be given a separate treatment, and re-stated in the context of every new situation. The provision is already there in the Qur'an to settle such things by means of 'Mushawarat' or consultation among themselves. But every readjustment will have to be referred to the internal principles of movement implicit in the Quranic ideology. For, a reorientation or Ijtihad is always a disclosure of latent potentialities for self-development, but never a superimposition or a supersession of the original. In this process, the Quranic norms of social justice applied will not be found to fall short, as Prof. Fyzee might fear, of any Western norms.

It may be stated here that the institution of Ijtihad was once a dynamic factor in the development of Islamic law. The four Sunni schools of Jurisprudence were themselves the result of Ijtihad. The closing of its door after the fall of Bagdad in the Seventh century of the Hijra has been the primary cause of decadence in Islamic jurisprudence. And although the re-opening of the door was recommended every now and then in subsequent centuries by the earnest among the 'Ulama, Islamic Jurisprudence has really not had the freedom yet to recuperate its health and display fresh energy.

The primary cause for this state of affairs is the fact that rarely during this long period of decadence was any systematic attempt made jointly or even severally by the different schools to study the effective causes of legal rules in Islam. Not that the spirit and principles of Muslim Jurisprudence, as formulated in the early centuries of Islam, were against fresh interpretation of even sacred texts touching law. In fact, as Dr. Sobhi Mahmassani succinctly points out in his paper 'Adaptation of Islamic Jurisprudence to Modern Social Needs', presented at the Princeton University Colloquium, the Arabic version of which he has been good enough to send to me, there were three distinct situations in

which a change in interpretation was allowed by 'Many Caliphs and Jurists'. They were:

*Firstly*, in the case of necessity or public interest.

*Secondly*, where the effective cause (Illat) or *raison d'être* of a legal rule had ceased to exist. It is one of the principles of the Science of Usul (sources of Islamic Jurisprudence) that: 'A legal rule based on an effective cause depends for its existence upon the continuation of its effective cause'.

*Thirdly*, where a legal rule is based on custom or usage, and these change with time, the text may be differently interpreted, and consequently the rule may be changed in order to follow the new custom.

With such elasticity even in the orthodox principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, it should not be difficult to re-interpret, wherever necessary, the provisions of the inherited Islamic law in the context of the present-day life. This is the immediate task before the Muslim world. For, be it remembered that under the very nose of our orthodox 'Ulama and Mujtahids, and our friends of the First group themselves who would like to introduce greater rigidity into their medieval outlook, Westernism has in one form or another made considerable encroachments on the traditional *Shari'ah*, and unless its pace is wisely controlled by the Governments of Muslim countries supported by their intellegentzia, the entire fabric of it, so much shaken already, will at no distant date be dishevelled out of recognition.

The caution is the greater at the present hour when, in dire necessity, Muslim countries have been obliged to accept various economic and technical aids organized by the West. The plans under them, assisted by the technology pertinent to each, have the tendency to give to the people among whom they operate a taste for Western values or standards of material living which they cannot maintain unless they resolve themselves into permanent appendages of the West. That is the danger inherent in the situation and can be met effectively by referring the benefits accruing from these plans to the purposes, principles, and values of life upheld by the Quranic ideology. That is the way to retain one's individuality.

Reform in law and life among the Muslims, is at this moment necessary even without reference to the pressures of Western technology. In this, the efforts of previous reformers or 'mujtahidin' will afford considerable assistance. The present generation is to further their work in

the light of the present-day demands of life. But before they embark on a positive programme enabling them to come back into their own, they will have, in the first instance, to steady themselves by warding off the onslaughts of Westernism by absorbing its shocks in the manner suggested above. Else a tacit adoption, partial or wholesale, of Western law and life in a social milieu resting against a historical background different from that of the West will at best be a bleak imitation or mimicry. It will smother their creative faculty and disable them to make any distinctive contribution to world life. It might even prove a drag on Westernism itself. For, this imitation, at the most, might bring material gain only to a fraction of the Muslim population—the governing or the upper classes of Muslim society who in most cases have already grown accustomed not so much to the bright as much as to the seamy side of Western life. The masses who cannot in the present set-up of things materially profit by the change, though attracted to it in diverse ways, will lose balance and become a serious problem both for their governments and the West. Hence the caution given above to relate every innovation or adoption from the West to the basic principles of the Qur'an and the primary moral needs of the common man. That should be the short-range arrangement. It will prepare the Muslims to take stock of the situation in a proper frame of mind. An over-all reformation is, however, a long-range process, and can only be achieved by allowing the Quranic values of life to function in full form in their midst. And this is possible only when we have released the Qur'an from the dead-weight of such of the Riwayat as have compromised or side-tracked its principles and purposes.

## V

### RE-EXAMINATION FAVOURED

It is a matter for gratification that the bulk of the opinions received on the proposal mooted by the Academy, viz the re-examination of the Hadith literature with a view to paving the way to a reorientation of Islamic thought in all its bearings, are very encouraging. Those who are in favour of the proposition (vide list IV) include Ulama, University professors, Jurists, Administrators and Publicists.

It may be recollected that six issues had been framed for consideration. Excepting the first, calling for opinion on the need for a fresh examination of the Hadith literature and the codification of a single corpus of the Hadith, not all the other issues have been touched upon by every one of the above scholars. And this probably because issues such as the constituting of a board of research, the terms of reference to

it, the method of investigation, and the provision of finance for organising research and publishing results, were subjects which should only be taken up for consideration, once it became clear that the need for investigation was seriously felt in proper quarters.

In respect of the first issue, the replies make it abundantly clear that the proposed investigation and the codification of a single corpus of trustworthy riwayat is imperatively called for. Particular stress is laid on the need by those who hold representative position in the field of Islamic learning such as Mawlana Abdul Qadeer Siddiqi, for long Head of the Faculty of Muslim Theology, Osmania University and sometime principal Shaikh of the Jami'a-i-Nizamiyyah, Hyderabad, India, Mawlana Abdus Salam Nadwi, President of Nadwat-al-'Ulama and of Shibli Academy, Lucknow, Mawlana Mahmud Bashiruddin Ahmad, Imam, Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyyah, Rubwah, Pakistan, Shaikh Munir-el-Qadi of the Council of Ministers, Bagdad, Shaikh Dr. Abd-el-Rahman, Tag, Rector, al-Azhar, Cairo,\* and the Qadi-al-Qudat and the Rais-al-Hayit-al-Ilmiyyah-al-Islamiyyah, Jordon. Indeed, some of them have emphasized that "this is the only way", to quote Mawlana Abdul Qadeer Siddiqi, "to effect a renaissance in Islamic thought, and to promote unity among the different sects in Islam". On the second issue also, there is unanimity of opinion that every Riwayat should be tested in the 'light of the Qur'an' or in the light of the 'Quranic ideology', and that only those which are supported by the Qur'an should be retained and the rest rejected.

## QURANIC IDEOLOGY

What, however, needs to be noted here is that none of our correspondents has attempted to define 'the light of the Qur'an' or 'the Quranic ideology', or explain what exactly is to be meant by either of the two terms in their application to the testing of the Hadith literature. Only one scholar, Mawlana Muhammad Jafar Nadwi of the Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, has suggested certain lines of approach to an appraisal of the Quranic ideology. The Mawlana has already to his credit two important works — the *Maqam-i-Sunnat*, published in the series of his Institute, and *Riaz-al-Sunnat*. "We have already crossed" he says, "thousands of Riwayat as deserving of being expunged from the extant collections of Hadith". He is of opinion that before applying

\*Opinion expressed in an interview to Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz El-Arousy of the Ibrahimiyah University, Cairo, who had been requested to discuss the Academy's memorandum with him and ascertain his exact views thereon.

the touchstone of the Qur'an in the examination of the Hadith, several issues have to be settled touching the Qur'an itself. They are:—

- (1) Is the letter of the Qur'an to be followed or the spirit of it?
- (2) Are all the details of the provisions of the Qur'an valid for all times, or are any of them transitory in their application?
- (3) Are the stories and parables etc. in the Qur'an as basic in character, even as the basic values of the Quran?
- (4) What is the central subject of the Qur'an round which every other revolves?
- (5) Should terms such as 'Mumin', 'Mushrik' 'Ahl-al-Kitab' etc., bear the same concept at all times, or should the concept change from time to time?
- (6) Are the teachings of the Qur'an dynamic or susceptible to fresh and fresher interpretation in the context of changing situations, or are they static and local in application both in point of time and space?

Questions Nos. 1 to 5 are more or less covered by No. 6, which in a way is an inclusive question.' An answer to the question, whether the teachings of the Qur'an are static or dynamic might disclose the spirit underlying the social and legal provisions of the Qur'an, but may not raise before our mind's eye a full view of the ideology of the Qur'an or of the Quranic way of thought and living. To get at this, a much wider and deeper approach might be necessary. Questions such as the following will call for consideration:

- I What is man, according to the Qur'an, in relation to the rest of the Universe?
- II What is the order of life which the Qur'an aims to provide or evolve for man?
- III What values of life does it project on which it desires this order to rest?
- IV What is the concept of God presented by the Qur'an in His essence, as well as, in the context of His attributes considered both severally, and cumulatively? What is *Sunnat Allah*, the way of God or as differently termed *Fitrat Allah* or *Khalq Allah* which the Qur'an calls the *Din-al-Qayyim* or the right way which every one has to observe if he is to achieve Islam or peace with one's self and peace with his external world? 'Believe and Act' is the Quranic injunction, action to be in

**consonance with belief.** What form then is the belief in God of the Quranic conception, observing a *Sunnat* or a way of his own which the Qur'an says He never alters, to assume when translated into action, or what mode of life does it argue for man (a) as an individual and (b) as a unit of society, so as to promote, (i) perfection of man as man and (ii) perfection of society?

**V** Item No. IV raises an important issue. The attributes of God which are meant to be displayed by man in his own person or in relation to himself, and in his social relationships were not brought to view all at once. They were pointed out progressively according to the piecemeal delivery of the Qur'an. Could the process be cut into periods and the attributes distributed into groups in a progressive order? Does each fresh disclosure of the Divine attribute signify a corresponding responsibility assigned to man? Is this gradual assignment reflected in the provision of rules of conduct prescribed by the Qur'an? The Qur'an was intended in the first instance to mould the Arabs of the Prophet's time into a pattern—an *Ummatan Wasata* for the rest of the world. A process of reformation or perfection such as this always marks a preparatory or transitional stage. The question arises: which of the provisions of the Qur'an may be assigned to the transitional stage, and which to the stage of *Ummatan Wasata*?

**VI** In this context the question arises: what is the criterion by which the Qur'an distinguishes right from wrong, 'Halal' from 'Haram' and so on and so forth?

**VII** Further, the question of 'Uswa-i-Hasna' or good pattern, the example of the Prophet, will next come in for consideration. The Quranic way of life was, in the first instance, meant to be observed by the Prophet himself in his capacity as 'bashar' or human being. How and in what spirit he implemented in his person the provisions of the Qur'an, as individual, as unit of society, and as head of a state, should furnish the basis for application in analogous situations. But there is one serious impediment in following the pattern. Certain schools of orthodox 'Ulama assert on the basis of certain Riwayat and of interpretation of certain passages in the Qur'an that every little thing which the Prophet did was under the direct inspiration or 'Wahi' from God. This type of *Wahi* is called, in the manner of the Judaic scribes, *Wahi-i-Khafi* or *Wahi-i-Ghair Matlu* as distinguished from the *Wahi* embodied in the Qur'an which is styled *Wahi-i-Jali* or *Wahi-i-Matlu*. Every thought and action of the Prophet is thus looked upon as the result of divine inspira-

tion. This is reducing the Prophet to the position of a mere automaton and denying him a personality of his own as 'bashar'. How then is one to imitate a being or think or do as he did unless one is a Prophet himself and is dependent for even the slightest movement in thought and action on the direct direction of God. There are further implications in this pose, and unless this concept is liquidated by a straight reference to the Qur'an, and the fact maintained that every thing done or said by the Prophet in pursuance of the Quranic message and the purposes underlying it, was said or done on his own personal initiative as a 'bashar' and strictly within the frame-work of the Quranic thought or message, and that nothing attributed to him in the Riwayat could alter or supersede the word or 'wahi' of the Qur'an, Islam will have to proclaim itself as a religion meant for a community of prophets only and not for men and women who cannot command a 'wahi' at every turn. No investigation into the authenticity of Riwayat will be worth undertaking by any board of research if this proposition is not borne in mind and upheld.

VIII The Quranic matter is stated to consist of 'Muhkamat' and 'Mutashabihat'. Is this classification on the basis of peculiarity in expression, the one being in the plain style, the other in the figurative, or, does it rest on the type of ideas they severally convey? Whatever the basis of differentiation, it must be admitted that the two will have to subserve a common end, viz, the presentation of the integral message of the Qur'an. The two can therefore convey neither conflicting views, nor divergent. A figure of speech, if it has any purpose to serve in literature, has to rouse imagination and through its medium, graphically clinch an idea which in plain language might need an elaborate garb for expression. The 'Mutashabihat' are there in the Qur'an only to emphasize and add colour to what is stated through the 'Muhkamat'. It is obviously why the 'Muhkamat' are styled by the Qur'an itself as *Hunna Ummul Kitab*, or the mother or core of the Qur'an. It will be unfair to the Qur'an, the 'Kitab-al-Mubin', the open book, to take the literal sense of its figurative language, or to read any hidden meaning into it. The *Amthal* may easily be classed with the 'Mutashabihat' and the same observations applied to them.

IX A good portion of the Qur'an is occupied by stories mostly touching the life and trials of the Prophets of Israel. The question is: What purpose do they serve in the context of the Quranic message? The primary purpose was not only to correct certain notions about them prevalent in the time of the Prophet— notions derogatory to their role as Prophets, but also to draw lessons from their history so as to reinforce

the truth presented by the Qur'an. It should be borne in mind that the Qur'an has a direct responsibility in restoring the perspective, as it claims to present the same message as was delivered to the Prophets of Israel-Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others, and also aims to revive it in its pristine monotheistic purity among their followers, and weld them all into a single federated humanity—a purpose clearly set out in the following verse: "O people of the Book! (Christian and Jewish Scriptures), come to a word fair between us and you that we worship God and associate nothing with Him, and do not take each other as Lords to the exclusion of God" (Q. 13:57). The purpose underlying Quranic references to Israelite stories was to clear misunderstandings coming in the way of unity. The Qur'an has no other interest in them as is evident from the restrictions placed by Khalifs 'Umar and 'Uthman on Tamim Dari, a Christian convert companion of the Prophet who was in the habit of beguiling the people of Medina with Israelite legendary lore which has through various channels crept into the Riwayat and eventually into the Tafasir, even as other lores.

X Has 'Tasawwuf' any organic relation with the Quranic plan of life? If so, what is its exact nature or its place therein? Does the Qur'an lend support to its imagery and the practices associated with it?

XI Should the Quranic ideology take any specific interest in subjects such as (a) 'fada'il-i-sahaba' and 'fada'il-i-Qaba-il', 'fada'il-i-maqamat', and 'fada'il-i-'Ulama', 'Huffaz' and so on, and (b) prophecies about coming events in the life of the Ummat with which the Hadith literature abounds?

XII Does the Quranic ideology recognise the institution of 'Ulama and the concept of *Ijma'* as developed by them? If the recognition is accorded, Islam in its organisational form becomes a theocracy even as Judaism of the scribes. How will this square with the Islam of the Qur'an which discountenances priesthood? The office of the 'Ulama who according to a Riwayat are the 'heritage of Prophets' and the legitimate interpreters of the meaning of the Prophetic message corresponds to that of the Judaic scribes who claimed to 'sit in the seat of Moses', and dispense the Divine Mosaic law according to their own interpretation. Does the Quranic ideology uphold this position? Be it noted that the four Sunni codes of 'fiqh', for instance, were framed not by the central seat of Islamic Khilafat, but by private individuals who would not even seek prior permission or authority from the centre. How do such codes fit into the Quranic ideology? The questionnaire may be lengthened.

**XIII** What is the attitude of the Qur'an towards the problems of 'good and evil', the 'life hereafter', and 'salvation'?

These are some of the questions which first need to be examined in order to determine the elements which should enter into the composition of the Quranic ideology before it is applied to the Riwayat, as well as, to fiqh.

## **BOARD OF RESEARCH**

The main issue that calls for immediate attention is the auspices under which the proposed board of research is to be constituted. At bottom, the issue is one of providing requisite finance for the project. Several correspondents have suggested that our Academy itself should undertake the task. A reference to our original memorandum, however, will make it clear that such a purpose was never under our contemplation. The Academy is a registered body composed of scholars who under an agreed programme carry on research, and jointly meet the cost of the Academy's publications. It has not so far sought any financial aid either from Government or from the public. The organization has not therefore the requisite resources to undertake a task of this magnitude. Else, the Academy would have deemed it a great honour and privilege to formulate a plan of concentrating on the task the best minds available in the Islamic world, and push it through with the utmost expedition. Its essential aim in raising the question, however, was just to draw the attention of the thoughtful among Muslims everywhere to a crying religious need of the hour. It was to rouse the conscience of our 'Ulama, and feel also the pulse of the Community. It is a matter for the utmost satisfaction that those from whom a violent reaction was expected have not only remained discreetly silent, but some of their top-ranking representatives have even come forward openly to bless the movement.

It now rests with Muslim governments and well-established educational institutions and trusts with adequate funds at their disposal to join hands and give a concrete shape to the proposal. Several suggestions have been made in this connection. One is to collect funds for the purpose from the general Muslim public. In fact, the Imam of Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyyah, Rubwah, Mawlana Mahmud Bashiruddin Ahmad, has offered on behalf of his Jama'at to share the expenses of the undertaking. But the collection of funds in this manner is a tedious affair involving wastage of precious time. The task is clearly one of urgency and may best be taken up by Muslim governments, or well-established institutions and educational trusts. Indeed, a suggestion has been made

by Mr. Ghulam Muhammad of Nizamabad that His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia be invited to establish an ad hoc Institute of Research at Madina, and meet the cost of running it by collecting a special levy of a few 'riyals' per head from Haj pilgrims. Another suggestion has been advanced, and this by the Government of Jordan in the Department of Foreign Affairs, that with the financial aid afforded by the Islamic world, the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, might constitute under its auspices the proposed board of research. The emphasis in this suggestion is on the venue of the board, in respect of which Prof. Syed Abdul Wahab Bokhari, Professor of Arabic and Islamic History, Presidency College, Madras, thinks that under the existing state of affairs a calmer intellectual atmosphere than what may be available elsewhere can be provided for the board in some central place in India—at least for the time being. Should the venue be India, Dr. Muhammad Rahatullah Khan, Curator, Asafiyah State Library and a member of the Council of our Academy, holds the view that the proposed board of research might appropriately be constituted under the presidentship of that eminent scholar of Islam, Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad, Minister of Education, Government of India.

A special suggestion has been made by Prof. Howard Reed of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, that the UNESCO might be invited to evince an interest in the matter. He says:

"You and your Committee are doubtless aware that the UNESCO has recently indicated support for the late A. J. Wensink's ambitious project of preparing a concordance of the Hadith literature, and it occurs to me that they too might be able to offer constructive suggestions in connection with your proposals".

All these suggestions are worthy of consideration. The present note is being sent round to the Government of Saudi Arabia, al-Azhar University, the UNESCO, as well as, to all leading Muslim educational institutions and trusts and governments to see if any of these are willing to take the initiative in the matter. Should the proposal materialize, the Academy will always be found ready to collaborate on the research side with any board that might be constituted under proper auspices.

Whatever the agency or institution under whose auspices research is to be conducted, the constitution of the research machinery will have to receive very careful consideration. Some of the correspondents have emphasized that the Board should be composed of scholars who can rise above all sectarian 'Isms' in Islam, or as Mawlana Muhammad Jaffar

Nadwi puts it 'above every *Iyyat*, 'Sunniyyat, Shi'yyat, Devbandiyyat, Brelviyyat and every other *Iyyat*'. Mawlana Mahmud Bashiruddin Ahmad, Imam, Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyyah, desires the Board to be composed of representatives of all sects in Islam, and Mawlana Muhammad Ajmal Khan, New Delhi, suggests the inclusion of European orientalists and scholars professing other faiths. A few friends have suggested that the 'Ulama should be excluded from representation on the Board. 'Perhaps the research work', says one of them, 'will reap advantage from their absence. For, if they take part in it, they will do their utmost to water down all our scientific principles of objectivity and impartiality, and they may succeed in so doing'. This is not an unlikely contingency. But the world of Islam does possess in its fold 'Ulama of the type represented on our list of supporters who have the talent to rise equal to the occasion and uphold the cause of truth with as much zeal and tenacity as others.

The above suggestions, weighty as they are, will ultimately have to be considered in relation to the character of the work the Board will be called upon to undertake.

Since the Board will have to go mainly by the 'mutun' or the actual text of the Riwayat, its primary function, as I understand, will be to determine which of the Riwayat (a) truly fit into the ideology of the Qur'an and the character of the Prophet delineated therein; (b) display distinctly, in one form or another, strains which are stated by Hadith critics to have proceeded from Judaism, early Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Greek and Roman thought, Neo-Platonism, Buddhism, and Indian Pantheism; (c) reflect the partizan rivalries of the first two centuries of Islam—dynastic, tribal, sectarian and personal; (d) mark a revival of pre-Islamic Arab beliefs, customs, manners and tastes suppressed or modified in the time of the Prophet, and (e) are contrary to human experience and the laws of nature, or are repugnant to the Quranic ideology.

Before the research machinery is set to work on the lines indicated above, it will be necessary to form a committee of scholars to formulate the Quranic ideology which is to form the criterion of application. Those who work on this committee should be scholars who are trained in research techniques and modern methods and are versed in comparative religion and possess the talent to take an analytical survey of the contents, principles and purposes of the Qur'an and build a comprehensive picture of its ideology, and lay down the lines of criteria to follow in sifting the Riwayat bearing the Quranic touch from those which do not. The initial task discharged, this very committee may be constituted into the

**Board of investigation.** Its number may be augmented by including in the Board scholars who have a special knowledge of religions other than Islam, the history of the early centuries of Islam and the pre-Islamic social history of the Arabs, as well as, those conversant with modern sciences, both social and natural.

These are but tentative suggestions—purely on the academic side—which may be considered by the Board to be. As for the rest—the distribution of work, collaboration, co-ordination, codification and publication of results, as well as the secretarial arrangement and equipment, the Board will, of course, follow a plan of its own, as arranged with the institution or agency under whose auspices it will have to carry on its work. The task is truly stupendous; but the Ummat of Islam, if it cares to revise its way of living and march onward as a force for peace, will have to perform the task without loss of time. If the machinery set up functions in full form, I dare say, the work of the Board should be completed within five years.

## CONCLUSION

One thing, however, I feel I should stress before I close. The trends at work among Muslims at the present hour do not seem to promise any very long life to the Islam dominated by the Riwayat. As the replies received have revealed, reinforced by the proceedings of the Colloquium held at Princeton University (Sept. 1953), there is no enthusiasm for it particularly noticeable anywhere, at all events, among the educated classes. It is being willingly laid aside even at the heart of the Muslim world—the Middle East—and there is no other form of Islam organized already to take its place, and function as a staying force. No doubt, a good deal of lip-loyalty to the Quranic Ideology is expressed and even paraded in easy-going circles everywhere, but the Islam which the Qur'an stands for has yet to emerge and take shape, on an agreed basis. In the meanwhile, things are left to drift. Even if anything is thought of, at all, by the ruling or the educated stratum of society, it is to invite Westernism to supplant what is left of traditionalism; and this is done without considering what ultimate effect it will have on Islam itself. The masses will be the worst sufferers under the change. With no talent or material equipment enabling them to fit themselves to western way of living, their inherited traditionalism furnishing no stimulus for progress, and with no alternative programme of Islam made available to them resting on the dynamics of the Qur'an, they will soon lapse into a state of unrelieved perplexity with no way out except the road to Moscow. I am afraid this process has already begun. If the Muslim world is to be

a force for peace, it can only be through a stable outlook on the part of its masses. And this stability cannot be given or promoted by imposing on them Westernism, but by purifying and energizing the traditional Islam itself to which they are attached. This is the only way to equip it to absorb modernity. This is possible only when it is referred back, as quickly as possible, to the universal norms of the Quranic ideology which, as pointed out already, will not come into conflict with anything good that may come from anywhere. We need have no fear of any effective opposition from the orthodox circles, as has been made clear by the attitude taken up by some of the leading minds among them. They will certainly realize that the gold that there is in the Riwayat will go with the dross that has clung to it in the coming deluge which is sure to overtake traditionalism under the impact of Western technology, and will recognize that it will be serving Islam if that gold is rescued in time to serve as an aid to a revival of the Quranic thought and life for the world of today. It is for those who are at the helm of affairs in Muslim lands to put their heads together and make a move, as suggested by the Academy, to usher in a renaissance in Islam. Else, the writing on the wall is clear enough. It is *Sunnat Allah*—the way of God:

*"God does not alter the condition of a people,  
Unless they themselves alter it from within". (Q. 13:12).*

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**SYED ABDUL LATIF.**

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## LIST OF BOOKS BY Dr. SYED ABDUL LATIF

1. AL-QURAN RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
2. MOULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD'S  
TARJUMANAL-QURAN RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
3. THE MIND AL-QURAN BUILDS
4. BASES OF ISLAMIC CULTURE
5. THE MUSLIM PROBLEM IN INDIA
6. PRINCIPLES OF ISLAMIC CULTURE
7. THE MUSLIM CULTURE IN INDIA
8. THE CULTURAL FUTURE OF INDIA
9. THE UNITY OF MAN
10. THE CULTURAL BASIS OF A NEW WORLD ORDER
11. A FEDERATION OF CULTURAL ZONES FOR INDIA
12. WAS THE PROPHET OF ISLAM UNLETTERED?
13. THE CALL OF THE QURAN
14. PROBLEM OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES
15. CULTURE AND CIVILISATION \_\_\_\_\_THE ISLAMIC VIEW
16. ISLAMIC CULTURAL STUDIES
17. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIETY IN ISLAM  
AND PRAYERS IN ISLAM
18. THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
ON URDU LITERATURE
19. GHALIB\_\_\_\_\_TRUE APPRECIATION
20. HUMANISM OF IQBAL
21. وہ ذہن جس کی تعمیر قرآن کرتا ہے  
(ترجمہ عبدالقیوم خاں باقی)
22. ہندوستان میں اسلامی تہذیب
23. ہندوستان اور اس کا تہذیبی مستقبل
24. مسلمانانِ حیدر آباد کا معاشی مسئلہ
25. انکارِ اسلامی کی تشکیل و جدید
26. "غالب" (ترجمہ سید معین الدین قریشی)