

## ISLAM: EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLY AND CONCEPT OF MAN

Very rarely does the statement of its basic doctrines and demands truly define the individuality of a religion. It certainly does not in Islam. The particulars by which both believer and outsider will identify the Muslim faith are hardly of a kind to account for its striking distinctiveness. This distinctiveness is customarily circumscribed in terms of the so-called "pillars of the faith;" but to repeat for the thousand and first time that, to the Muslim, there is but one God whose Messenger is Muhammad, that five daily prayers are enjoined as are one month of fasting, an alms-tax and, when possible, the pilgrimage to the central sanctuary at Mecca, the Messenger's birth-place, will not convey much of the uniqueness and the unmistakability of Islam. Even when we realize that originality is not a value specific to the religious life—where innovation to be valid must always mean uncovering of, or recourse to, an eternal verity—the formulation of the "pillars" contains nothing that could have startled the world into which Islam was born long accustomed as it was to the ideas of monotheism and the prophetic messenger and the devotional practices of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. The immediate

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historical effect of the new faith stemmed from the setting rather than the content, its accidental limitations rather than its universal message, its appropriateness to the Arab environment of the day, the amplification it allowed the intellectual and emotional life, and the cohesion and dignity it offered the scattered tribes for the very first time. However, the underlying cause of this remolding of the Arabs and even more so, of the survival of Islam and its spread into other language and culture areas is not to be sought in any specific tenet or command but in its giving body and articulation to a new experience of the holy from which there flew (or to which there became attached) a specific attitude to man and the universe, an experience and an attitude which became associated with certain (to the believer evocative) formulations and to which in turn new yet kindred experiences and attitudes would become associated. New yet kindred—for within the area of Near Eastern civilizations the religious life had, at least for the thousand years preceding the birth of Muhammad (ca. A.D. 580), centered on a limited number of motifs or, more subjectively phrased, been animated by a limited number of spiritual aspirations and moral preoccupations.

There is, in this mode of analytical description, no suggestion that the conquering tribes that established the Arab phase of the Islamic Empire and with it the Arab foundation of what was to become the civilization of Islam, were self-conscious representatives of a new piety, absolutist in professing its uniqueness, relativist in differentiating it from kindred forms of experience. To the overwhelming majority of Arab soldiers adherence to the new faith was as much (if not more) a profession of loyalty to the Arabic speaking community as a profession of loyalty to the Lord of the Worlds. Islam as the badge of the conqueror, and soon of the ruler, Allah, the god who led the Arabs from tribe to nation under the direct guidance of His chosen spokesman Muhammad, and his successors, the caliphs—only a later generation realized fully the transition from an ethnic to a universal god, a still later generation that from an Arab to the Muslim *umma*; and yet later and never entirely, was the call to aggressive enlargement of the Muslim domain transformed into the exhortation to widen the sway of the faith over the believer's heart. From the password of a rising

race Islam turned into the unbreakable mortar of nations and races, victors and vanquished, the vision of Muhammad, the lonely city Arab, imposing itself as the cadre of thinking and feeling on the fervent and the lukewarm, the worldly and the pious, on Arab and 'ajam, converts and recusants—an overwhelming triumph of the inner over the outer life.

Viewing the religious endeavours of that millennium retrospectively from the Muslim Revelation as the final or focal point one perceives as the primary concern the striving for a unified world secure in the hands of one God, creator, upholder, terminator and judge. The world is secure in him because it is dependent on him. There is no power but in him, no initiative beside him, no moral law independent of his determination, no fate that is anything but an extrapolation of his will. The experience of his absolute transcendence combined with his equally absolute concern for the particulars of his creation and his untrammelled omnipotence to which the mere thought that his own order could impose a self-sought limitation would be a blasphemous insult—the overwhelming certitude of this *numen* and of man's obligation to recognize and serve him is the experience which Islam has articulated and in time institutionalized and thus preserved. The particular *sapor* of this experience is primary to the selection and use which Islam was to make of what other motifs and valuations were at hand. For the experience of transcendent holiness while carrying the solution of some of the problems besetting the Arabs of the period posed or pointed up others that had been unnoted or innocuous in a polytheistic thought world. The heathen divinities were renounced with surprising ease; the restriction of objects through which the holy is realized, characteristic of any transition to a higher form of the religious life, met with hardly any resistance although not too much later popular Islam relapsed into experiencing the numinous in a multiplicity of sources: the Prophet, saints, even trees and other objects, homely and intimate and more directly attachable to the sufferings and joys of the untutored, than even a naively humanized image of the Lord of the Worlds.

More than in any other of the great Near Eastern religions what one might call the human service function of the faith

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is, in early Islam, concealed by a burning solicitude for the integrity of the deity. Where the Christian God loves man to the extent of sacrificing his Son to make possible his redemption from a fall for which man himself bears the guilt (cf., e.g., 1 *John* 4:9, 10), the Muslim God confines himself to sending warners to the several peoples, the last of them Muhammad, the prophet of the Arabs, to recall them to obedience, to advise them of their ultimate destiny and the conditions under which they may face the Last Judgement with a measure of confidence. The Messenger himself is a superb human instrument but no more; his revelations are the uncreate word of God to which Muhammad did not (in contrast to the prophets of the Old and the evangelists of the New Testament) adjoin a personal form and flavor. Like a splinter of eternity, a spiritual yet material counterpart of the Black Stone, the tangible witness of the other world in the North East corner of the Meccan Ka'ba, the Koran testifies to the existence of the Lord, an anchor of timelessness in a world of change in which there is perpetual safety and guidance for those whom God wills to be guided and safe. Ultimately, that is to say, existentially, Islam is its own proof. It accounts for man's shifting sense of freedom and coercedness, metaphysical and ethical, for his fretful striving against his moral inadequacy or carelessness, for the unpredictability of life and its injustices, apparent or real, and lays out a road on which man, important as the apex of creation but unimportant as a mere creature, may travel to the safety of death and the Garden, believing himself to be a cause but actually a mere effect of that continuous creation by which the Lord, moment after moment, renews and therewith modifies the world.

Islam restates, or rather completes and perfects the revelations vouchsafed by other and earlier communities. Its identity with the original revelation (*Uroffenbarung*) confided to Abraham and quite generally the other scriptural monotheistic religions is the real proof of Muhammad's veracity; where deviations exist they are the consequence of more or less deliberate falsification by disciples and remote successors. So in a sense Muhammad's task is restoration, and innovation only in regard to that Arab paganism which he was sent to destroy. Where the Christian

theologian discerned in the partial truths possessed by pagans and Jews a *praeparatio evangelica*, the *logos spermatikos* of natural religion, and hence an upward movement culminating in the coming of the Christ, the Muslim saw an oft-repeated crumbling of the edifice of faith, an oft-repeated falling away of communities that but for their pride and neglectfulness might have been what in the end Islam was to become, God's best community.

Every motif chosen by Islam meant a motif rejected. The infinite transcendence of the Muslim Lord removed the "deification" of the Gnostic; the full humanity of the Messenger excluded the divine mediator;<sup>1</sup> the finality of Muhammad's mission, the continuous self-revelation of the deity; the inclination toward predestination and a God who was, above all, unimpeded will, ruled out a God identifying with an absolute morality and an ethics of human freedom. To be fully understandable the history of Islam must be written as the history of submergence and re-emergence of those (and other) motifs which have continued to dominate religious thinking and feeling in the Near Eastern culture area; and it is likely that only by fastening on those mainsprings of spiritual movements will it be possible adequately to assess kinship, interaction and estrangement of Byzantine Christianity (as well as of the other Eastern Christian Churches) and Islam in its numerous realizations, veiled as these relationships are by language curtains, terminological conventions, organizational idiosyncrasies, political isolation and conflict, and, by no means last, a different selective response to the Hellenic heritage.

But an investigation of this order must be preceded by an attempt to follow through, on the theological and the cultural level, the consequences, within Islam, of the concept of God which is the source of its life. Yet even at this point the analysis must remain dryly descriptive unless it be undertaken with the fact in mind that throughout the area of Near Eastern civilizations it was fundamentally the same problems that had to be faced

<sup>1</sup> For the survival of motifs cf., e.g., the idea of the *shaikh* as mediator, *wāsits*, in Bāsh Tarzī, *Kitāb al-minah ar-rabbāniyya* (Tunis, 1351), p. 92; the author is affiliated with the Rahmāniyya order; cf. G.-C. Anawati and L. Gardet, *Mystique Musulmane* (Paris 1961), p. 201, n. 65.

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and solved on the basis of the same presuppositions (such as the personal creator god and a hereafter where reward and punishment would be meted out) and the same intellectual methods (the binomial logic of analogy, *at-tariqa 'l-jadaliyya*, to be supplemented by the trinomial Greek syllogism, allegorical interpretation of scripture<sup>2</sup>) and the same material authorities (a revealed book, an unbroken apostolic tradition).

It may perhaps appear as an unwarranted humanization of religion were one to connect the choice and development of

<sup>2</sup> There does, however, obtain one major difference in interpretative methodology. Both Christians and Muslims accept the principle that Biblical data preannounce the coming of the Christ and Muhammad respectively (including details of their appearance and circumstances connected with their coming) but only Christianity accepted the *praefiguratio* by *dicta et gesta* of the Old Testament of events reported by the New Testament. Already St. Paul speaks (*Rom.* 5:14) of Adam as the *typos tou mellontos, forma futuri*, "the figure of him that was to come," and *Hebr.* 10:1 of the law as *skian gar echon ton mellonton agathon, umbram enim habens futurorum bonorum*, "having a shadow of good things to come." David as the *typos* of Jesus, his victory a *victoria figurata et mystica* of the *victoria vera* of the Christ, the incident with Bathseba and Uriah as the *praefiguratio* of Jesus' wresting the Church from the Devil or the Jewish people; or Christ sacrificed in Abel, the Church typified in Noah's Ark, and more generally, the events of the Old Testament as prefiguration of the work of salvation (S. Quodvultdeus [d. ca 450]: *Lex omnis est prophetia, Christum dominum sonuit et Ecclesiam*)—this approach has no systematic counterpart in Islamic *ta'wil*. From the historian's point of view *praefiguratio* is a means of integrating, or coming to terms with the Old Testament. Although the relationship of Koran and earlier Scriptures is not as close as that between Old and New Testament typology would have been useful in relating, e.g., the fate of earlier prophets to that of Muhammad (when actually Muslim interpretation confines itself to noting parallels with a view to confirming Muhammad's veracity by the similarities of his own and his predecessors' life patterns and tribulations) as well as in interdenominational arguments within Islam. Typology made possible a clear tracing of God's plan for mankind and thus the relating of the events of an otherwise meaningless or dead past to a permanent order from which they would receive their lasting significance. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) states this function of typology most clearly: *Historia sacra legis non sine aliqua praefiguratione futurorum gesta atque conscripta est*. (For the references to Church Fathers cf. H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* [Paris, 1959], pp. 463, 509, 500 and 493.) Instances of *praefiguratio* as an *Ordnungsprinzip* of religious thought may perhaps be found in the sayings of certain Muslim mystics, such as al-Hallāḡ (d. 922)—at least as understood by Massignon (cf. his "Perspective transhistorique sur la vie de Hallāḡ," 1955, reprinted in *La Parole donnée* [Paris, 1962], pp. 73-97, e.g., p. 83)—; it has, however, not even among "extreme" mystics served as a tool for the systematic interpretation of Revelation or the *dicta* of Sacred Tradition.

motifs, the intuition and articulation of the concept of God with certain attitudes, modes of response to being in the world on the part of different men or human communities. Yet it is difficult to see how the affective acceptability or convincingness of a religious world view, especially when it is first offered, could be separated from the mood of the respondents, their outlook and appraisal of themselves as "thrown" into a world they never made.

It would not be correct to say, with Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) and *Vulgärmarxismus*, that religion is hence but an effort of man's imagination to erect a system within which he can exist and justify himself and his existence. A glance at primitive religions suffices to show that these will serve not so much man's self-interpretation as a craving to put order into the oppressive multiplicity of phenomena. What is true, on the other hand, is the uneven appropriateness of religious motifs (myths, structures) to describe adequately or to exhaust the depths of those aspects of himself which man craves to have accounted for and controlled by his faith. Be it noted, however, that while one may be justified in evaluating or ranking religions by the fullness with which they take hold, explain, mold and potentially soothe man's metaphysical sensitivity, unconditional adherence to a given religion does not entirely depend on this kind of psychological adequacy. In the long run, it is true, inadequacy of this order does prepare the ground for disappearance or reform—as in the case of Arabian paganism and five centuries later, in that of the reconstitution of Sunnite Islam.

The immortality of the soul being taken for granted in the dominant strains of thought of the period, that great preoccupation of the times, the problem of evil, presented itself to the Arab first and foremost in terms of his life in the world to come. The fear of the judgement which was to accompany the end of the world was, if not the most potent, at any rate the most immediately compelling motivation of the Prophet's preaching and the attention of his audience. The standards by which the Arab was told he would be judged were not those by which, in the footsteps of his fathers, he had acted and judged himself. With slight exaggeration one may say that only with Muhammad did sin as the personal appropriation of evil enter

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the life of him who had remained untouched by Christian, Jewish or Iranian ideas that had been making their way into the Peninsula, unsifted, confused and confusing.

But in bringing his people face to face with sin, Muhammad blurred the confrontation by disconnecting, as it were, evil from the nature of man. Monotheism in its sternest understanding, the deity as sole agent and judge, his omnipotence protected so to say by a monopoly on liberty which given the limitations of human comprehension that He had ordained must result in a sense of arbitrariness and resigned if gladly conceded submission on the part of man. Strictly speaking autonomous moral existence found itself projected into and limited to the divinity. The divinity alone determined good and evil, today's ruling not necessarily but only habitually prejudging tomorrow's; the transfer to the human universe transposed the choice between the good and the bad as such to one between obedience and disobedience. Sin became rebellion. But beyond the revolt against a set of commands whose fulfillment is as much a test of submissiveness as a sensible conforming with directions toward Paradise, the Koran does not suggest a structural vision of evil. Unbelief as the knowing rejection of truth, the denial of the fundamental realities of the universe and a repudiation of the "best community" is the unpardonable sin. For it leaves man culpably outside the circle within which the upper and the nether world are communicating and where the writ of the Lord is not only valid but meaningful.

But to throw back on the Lord the responsibility for everything that will happen to and through man, to sacrifice to His omnipotence man's role as at least a secondary cause is to eschew the problem of evil altogether. For "as long as the world of the divine is not subjected to the absolute rule of moral laws man lives no doubt in perpetual fear of the calamities that may befall him, but he does not suffer from the evil as an obstacle to the intelligibility"<sup>3</sup> and hence the justifiability of the course of events. To place the idea of the evil outside of man is to deny its existence or at least to abdicate an explanation for those elements of the senseless and the mean-

<sup>3</sup> F. Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistras* (Paris, 1956), p. 231; Masai is speaking of Greek polytheism.



ingless which are jutting forth not merely from the unknown outside but also from the half-known soul, onto the stage on which man would play his part.

There are, it seems, within the sphere of the higher religions only two ways simultaneously to acknowledge the fact of evil and to shunt it off from any primary human responsibility. With Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism and (on the margin of Christianity) Marcionism a twofold creation may be assumed—two gods, one god, one evil, have brought forth two coalescing and conflicting segments of the world; by taking part on the side of the good creation, man can do his share to tilt the balance. Like medieval Christendom, Islam felt the attraction of disposing of the problem by the introduction of irreducible principles whose postulated characteristics stand in stead of an explanation; but again like medieval Christendom, Islam rejected violently, disgustedly, a construction infringing on divine omnipotence and the unity of creation. To free the believer from the anxiety of the irrational, Islam adopted the other possibility; it became a religion of the law (*Gesetzesreligion*), surrounding the human existence with an unbroken fence of injunctions and prohibitions, compliance with which (if done with the right intention) was good, neglect of which was evil, not because of any reasons inherent in the commands but by definition and designation from the outside, from God on whom alone thus the responsibility for any underlying moral order devolved.

God, experienced as absolutely transcendent, omnipotent, will jealously hold to his rights over man which, unilaterally imposed but also accepted by Adan for his posterity before creation, secured man an elevated legal status, *hukm*, in both worlds but took concern with ultimates out of his hands. Man's grandeur is grandeur mediated, grandeur on sufferance. His humiliation before God is his glory. His choices are made for him. The irrational is a distraction rather than a temptation. In the *Fātiba* the Muslim prays to be guided on the straight path, in the Lord's Prayer the Christian asks not to be led into temptation. The Muslim, too, may be tempted off the right road, but he should be able to resist for he knows what God expects of him (unless He decides to lead him astray); the irrational and anti-divine is in him merely as ignorance, lack of judgement

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or weakness. The Christian, however, confronts evil itself which, since the Fall, nests in the core of his will. The struggle with evil is recognized as taking place where it actually does, in man himself. The touch of futility which blights his doings is the result of his proneness to sin. His is under God a genuine choice, a genuine victory, and more often perhaps, a genuine defeat.

Without accepting a comparable interiorization of evil the ancients were scandalized by it as an irrational element.<sup>4</sup> Their basic optimism preserved the vision of man and his will as unbroken, but they knew his susceptibility to the irrational, they knew how easily he would be trapped by fate, becoming ensnared by his very resistance or by the meeting of two chains of causality one of which at least he himself had freely put in motion. Hence to the ancients as well as to the Christian, man could choose; what is more: how and why he chose was truly significant for the course of events as for his moral stature; he could place himself of his own volition under one or the other law. For there was a universal moral law and a particular moral law endowed with the same ineluctable authority. Antigone is right and Kreon not wrong; Kreon is right but Antigone not wrong. Electra is right and Electra is wrong; Macbeth as well as Lear and Othello fall because error and evil are within their will, not because of a whim of fate, the extraneous design of the deity.

If Sunnite Islam has failed to develop a drama, acquainted though it was with the Greek and acquainted though it could have been with the Indian tradition, this is due not so much to historical accident but to a concept of man for which the peculiar conflict of tragedy could not arise. For the tragic occurs when freedom defeated arises to a victory which is bought by the sacrifice, freely offered, of the life of the hero who is unable to yield the norm to reality or to yield his own reality to a norm yet recognized as valuable and transpersonally valid.<sup>5</sup> With some

<sup>4</sup> Salvianus of Marseille, writing ca. 440 A.D., *De gubernatione Dei*, iv 9, still says: Although no evil deed has any rational foundation, since there is no bond between reason and wickedness ... (trans. Eva M. Sanford, *On the Government of God*, New York, 1930, p. 114.)

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also J. Nabert, *Essai sur le mal* (Paris, 1955), pp. 21-23.

hyperbole one may state that classical Islam has sacrificed man to God; and this sacrifice, implicit as it was in the founding experience, affected not only the religious life in the narrow meaning of the word but through philosophy and ethics, literature as well. Without the freedom of genuine choice, without a more than private significance of choice altogether, without the projection of moral polarity into the human soul itself, man cannot assume the role of a *dramatis persona*.

The effect of the concept of God on the concept of man does not end here. For it affects gravely the concept of history and hence the proper order within which man unfolds and realizes himself. Thucydides may have been the first who perceived history as the struggle between necessity and freedom—to repeat the formula coined by Theodor Mommsen<sup>6</sup>—and thus, insofar as man is involved, a moral problem. Where the Muslim God allows man the illusion of a meaningful choice in history, it is, on the personal level, the decision to join or stay outside the realm of the true faith—in other words, the decision is restricted to the unbeliever—; and on the collective or political level, the decision to spread the area of Muslim dominance. The Koran reflects historic circumstances in the *asbāb an-nūzul*, the occasions of revelation, and in modifications, even abrogations of injunctions provoked by, or tied to particular situations. While this fact was never lost sight of, Muslim theology soon began to operate in timelessness; the antinomy between an unchanging God and a God acting in time (and therefore undergoing change as between, before and after the particular act) was never entirely resolved; but sentiment was strong on the side of the Lord's hieratic sameness, and no developing or unfolding was acceptable in Him. For, to transfer a phrase of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), change is "an imitation of death."<sup>7</sup> His world changed, man walked over it to be judged; but since meaningful history remained limited

<sup>6</sup> *Römische Geschichte*, 14th ed., Berlin, 1931, II, 452; quoted by H. E. Stier, "Roms Aufstieg zur Vormacht im Mittelmeer," *Die Welt als Geschichte*, VII (1941), 9-51, at p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Magna Moralia*, XXV, 9; cf. Dom Jean Leclercq, Dom Fr. Vandenbroucke and L. Bouyer, *La Spiritualité du moyen âge*, Paris, 1961.

to history of salvation through revelation, man's historicity was limited to his religious fate, and the actual richness of life against which he would recognize himself was devaluated (or rather denied value in itself) and with it the histrionic strugglings through which man maintains himself on the stage. That this outlook could not produce a historical drama and epical narrative only with religious combat as basic theme does not require elaboration.

The rigidity of monotheistic transcendence as experienced by Muhammad excluded anything like the perception of (the possibility of) an inner life of the deity which is the basis of the trinitarian intuition of the divinity. To the Christian, the trinitarian concept removes the ever lurking threat of anthropomorphism; to the Muslim, who cannot free himself of a naturalistic interpretation of the relation between God the Father and God the Son, it is anthropomorphism and inflicts on the Lord the supreme and unforgivable insult of "associationism," *shirk*, i. e., of associating other divine beings with Him.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the incarnation of the Son projects historicity into the deity himself. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (*John* 1:14). Or in the beautiful phrase of John Scot Erigena (ca. 810-ca. 877), our redemption was won in *profundissima vallis historiae* (deep down in the valley of history)<sup>9</sup> precisely because unilinear history is the "time medium" of human existence.

<sup>8</sup> It is significant how clearly Islam excluded the identification of the heavenly apparition who mediated the revelation to Muhammad with the Spirit of God. The sensitivity to any danger of a possible hypostatic separation of God's manifestations (*Wirkungsweisen*) is never dulled.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by de Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 434. Cf. Mouroux, *Le mystère du temps* (Paris, 1961), p. 10: The Christ is "l'Évènement historique Absolu"; see also ch. vii, p. 144-147 ("Présence du Christ au temps"). Within Christianity itself, large groups of believers had felt it difficult to reconcile the basic position of Judaeo-Christian monotheism with the tripersonality of the Deity. Already Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeam*, ch. 2, 3 and 8, is compelled to argue with the help of various comparisons (many rays / one sun; many rivers / one source; many branches / one root) the distinction between structure and number (*oikonomia* and *numerus*), *dispositio trinitatis* versus *divisio unitatis*. The problem has recently been set forth with great clarity by J.-P. Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l'Afrique Romaine de Septime Sévère à l'invasion vandale* (Paris, 1958), pp. 37 ff., esp. 37-38.

What has been called the Christian myth presupposes the unfolding of God in history, and this unfolding is directed, as it were, at the drama of man in history leading from primordial innocence to fall and redemption. The sameness of God is not tarnished by the admission of a development—there is a “historical” sequence with distinct phases as when the Son is not yet incarnated, lives as God-Man in Palestine, and returns on having suffered death as real as ever came to man. God’s plan for mankind requires this “phasing” and presupposes, for its execution, the existence of “persons” in the one “substance.” It is sometimes overlooked that Scripture does not speak as much of God’s tripersonality *per se* as of his tripersonality in relation to man. In other words, the Christian concept of the triune God accounts for man as a being in history and allows for an understanding of man and his condition through a concept of the divine which implies or entails a concept of man that acknowledges and anchors ontologically the dominant facts of man’s nature and man’s condition.

Without of course renouncing the conviction of the reality of the Trinity, Saint Augustine established the psychological analogies between the inner structure of the triune God and the inner structure of man whose faculties of *mens*, *notitia* and *amor*, or *memoria*, *intelligentia* and *voluntas* would correspond to the aspects of the Godhead as manifested in its three hypostases.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. H. Fries (ed.), *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* (Munich, 1962-63), II, 709, s.v. Trinität.

The remoteness of theological doctrine from the consciousness of even the educated Christian makes it desirable to quote a contemporary statement on the nature of the Trinity. Summing up the teachings of the orthodox Fathers G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, 1952), pp. 300-301, explains the need for the being of God to be justified on the philosophical plane as transcendent, creative and immanent. These three epithets “fairly express the special characteristics of the Three Persons, at any rate in relation to the universe, which is as far as human knowledge can very well expect to reach. The conception of the Father as *anarchos arche*, Source without other source than itself, safeguards the supremacy of God over created objects and His absolute distinction from the all. Whatever there was of religious value in the Gnostic assertion of a divine transcendence so complete that it could not bear direct contact with the world, is preserved when the divine agency in creation is assigned to God the Son; at the same time, because the Son is fully God, the truth is maintained that both creation and redemption (or re-creation) are acts of God. The immanence

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The mutual relations between the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, as described, for example, in *John* 14: 11. 16-17 and 26, later designated by theology as Filiation and Spiration, were compared by Augustine to the processes of human self-knowledge and self-love. Thus human self-understanding was secured by an analogical connection with (the source of) being itself.

In the present analysis concerned as it is with the direct and indirect effect on the concept of man (and through it on Muslim civilization as a whole) of Muhammad's apprehension of God, one may well reverse the analogy and state that the nature of man is in no way reflected in the nature of God, nor does the anthropomorphic presentation of the Lord in certain Koranic passages imply or suggest an *analogia entis*, a thought which, in fact, theology has been careful to rule out.<sup>11</sup> One must

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of the Spirit, in the special work of sanctification but also in the general guidance of the universe to the end designed for it, asserts the principle that God is not only transcendent in the fullest degree, not only active in controlling the world *ab extra*, but also operative in it from within...By a full use of the subtlety of Greek thought and language, it was laid down that God is a single objective Being in three objects of presentation. This may be paraphrased in the expression... that He is one object in Himself and three objects to Himself." In modern terms, this may be stated in the formula "that in God there are three divine organs of God-consciousness, but one center of divine self-consciousness. As seen and thought, He is three; as seeing and thinking, He is one. He is one eternal principle of life and light and love. Yet the life implies reproduction within the Trinitarian cycle of the divine being; the light is reflected in a social order of morality; and the love is embodied in a genuinely mutual activity."

An attempt to account for historicity within the deity was made by the Shi'a by developing the concept of *badā'*, "the emergence of new circumstances which cause a change in an earlier divine ruling." This notion is meant in part to allow for the possibility of effective repentance but is also connected with the doctrine of abrogation, or *naskh*, according to which the Lord substituted certain injunctions in the Koran for earlier revealed precepts that had been tied to a particular situation. The tenet of *verbatim* inspiration created difficulties which the Latin Church found it easier to overcome in terms of a view strikingly formulated by Honorius of Autun (early twelfth century) in the sentence: *Saepius mos Ecclesiae mutatus legitur, et secundum tempus variavit stylum suum Spiritus sanctus* (quoted by de Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 17). For *badā'*, cf. the article by Goldziher-Tritton, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden, 1960 ff.), s.v., I, 850-851, and G. E. von Grunebaum, *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (2nd ed.; London, 1961), p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> This is the meaning of the famous formula *bi-lā kaiḥ*.

be reminded in this context that important sections within Christianity were scandalized by the historization and humanization of the deity, and that the Monophysites, for example, refused to accept the apprehension of the historical Jesus as *vere Deus vere homo*. The repugnance to an even temporal admission of a human nature into one of the divine persons or hypostases which animated the Monophysites of Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor recurs in Islam's insistence on unqualified divine transcendence.

The same fundamental outlook on human and divine takes body in very different dogmatic constructs. With the rejection by Islam of a multipersonal God, a prejudgement was rendered against a characteristically Christian type of piety, to wit, that form of devotion, so frequently enjoined by Saint Paul, in which man in search of salvation must follow, even accompany the Savior—he must suffer with him, be crucified with him, die with him, be resurrected with him and be glorified with him (*Rom.* 8:17; 6:6; *2 Tim.* 2:11; *Col.* 2:12; *Rom.* 8:17). God is not merely encountered in the partnership of the Covenant; man's aspiration drives him to intimate communion, as it were, in active participation in Jesus' suffering and love.<sup>12</sup>

It is obvious that in classical Islam piety could not take this direction which is best expressed by Paul's word of the *hypothesis*, of man being God's child (*Gotteskindschaft*: *Rom.* 8:15, 23; *Gal.* 4:5). It underwent, in fact, not inconsiderable difficulties in having the twin concepts of man's love of God and God's love of man accepted into orthodox (or standard) theology. At this point once again the paramountcy of the existential factor over against the dogmatic or the institutional comes clearly to the fore. Both Islam and Augustinian Christianity recognize the will as man's primary power. But whereas Augustine concludes from the primacy of the will to the primacy of love and the necessity of man's love of God,<sup>13</sup> the *communis opinio* of classical Islam perceives the will as limited to particulars and hence love as confined to the contingent and the particular.<sup>14</sup> The New

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Handbuch*, II, 57, a.v. Liebe.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Anawati-Gardet, *op. cit.*, pp. 78 and 161-62.

<sup>14</sup> The Fathers of the Church were of course bound by the numerous statements

Testament speaks of God's love to his only-begotten Son (e.g., *John* 17:23, 24, 26) and the first two persons of the Trinity have been explained<sup>15</sup> as *diligens* and *dilectus*; in Islam it would be meaningless to project love into the deity. One of the only two Koranic passages which refer to God's love for man and man's love for Him offers a context which discouraged, for a century and a half, its use as a justification for a kind of piety which only gradually gained sufficient strength to compel a re-reading of the revealed text.<sup>16</sup> The other<sup>17</sup> does represent an opportunity for the cultivation of a relationship with the Lord which the theologians, in their anxiety for His inaccessibility, did their best to block. The celebrated woman-saint, Rabi 'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 801), who made love of God the center of the devotional life, reacquired, as it were, in striking sayings and superb verses that love of God for His own sake, without regard for reward or punishment, that *gratis amare* of Augustine which has been the essence of the *agape* of the early Christian Fathers.<sup>18</sup>

It is understandable that the theologians in their endeavour to formulate and formalize the Muslim religious experience opted for the God of remote transcendence, dominated as they were, together with one may presume the majority of the faithful, by His *mysterium tremendum*, the mystery of His majesty. Besides, the tenets of Islam had to be enunciated in combat against competing doctrines, above all Christianity of

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in Scripture of God's love to man and man's obligation to love his Lord but the very basis of their position in the sacred text is significant.

<sup>15</sup> By Richad of Saint-Victor (d. 1173) *apud Handbuch*, II, 711.

<sup>16</sup> Koran 5:59.

<sup>17</sup> Koran 3:29.—To forestall misunderstandings of the kind launched by Ch. Abdul Aziz, Karachi, against M. Lings, *Islamic Studies* (Karachi) II/1 (March, 1963), 155, where Koran 2:160, 5:59 and 3:29 are quoted and discussed completely out of context, let me state that a passage like Koran: 2:160 refers only to man's love of Allāh. This love is, besides, assimilated to the love felt by unbelievers to other gods except that the believer's affection to God is said to be stronger. "Yet of the people are some who choose peers apart from Allāh, whom they love with a love like that given to Allāh; only those who have believed love Allāh with a stronger love."

<sup>18</sup> Ref. in *Handbuch*, II, 62.



various hues and Zoroastrianism, and a compulsion was felt to make those tenets serviceable to the consolidation of the community. All of these motivations tended to draw the doctors of the faith away from enthusiastic forms of piety and to induce emphasis on legality, the safeguarding of the holiness of the community and, within the limits traced by Revelation and Tradition, the use of reason (rather than intuition and rapture) to secure the foundations of a life under rather than with the Lord. To accept love and the possibility of the bridging in ecstasy of the abyss between creature and creator—however carefully the metaphors of the articulation of the experience might be phrased—meant the toleration, if not the encouragement of a more individualistic religiosity, a keener awareness of the inevitable limitations of the law, an acknowledgment of the imperfection of reason, unable in its contingency to lead beyond the contingent, and in general a yielding of intellectual criteria of truthfinding *in spiritualibus* which was hardly compatible with the outreach into philosophy and the sciences which had captivated the leading strata of the third and fourth centuries of Islam.

The rise of mysticism beyond “being led by the contemplation of God’s beneficence to a love of him” into “becoming so enraptured by love as to regard all favors (of the Lord) as a veil between themselves and God”<sup>19</sup> reflects a twofold change of the dominant mood of the Muslim community. Piety was coming to be kindled rather by the experience of God’s beauty and loving kindness than by the experience of His majesty and justice; and the stock of speculative reason went down as threatening the explicit statements of Scripture and as submitting to sophistic thought methods of pagan ancestry. One feels inclined to coordinate this development with the need to accommodate, and in some cases recapture the religious allegiance of the unlettered who found themselves, in part owing to political and socio-economic factors, estranged or at least detached from “official” Islam. And it must be emphasized that what the non-Muslim can hardly help perceiving as contradictory statements in the Koran, or at best as exhortations to different

<sup>19</sup> Hujwīrī (d. after 1072), *Kashf al-mahjūb*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (Leiden and London, 1911), p. 308.

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types of piety, are actually reflections of varying aspects of experiential truth, where reason and freedom as well as intuition and submission are equally real and self-evident, and where in the nuclear Revelation the germs exist of a variety of religious experiences, specialized and onesided elaborations of that explosive apprehension of the Holy which constitutes the mediator of definite types of legal, philosophical and mystical religion that are fully entitled to the claim of representing the Prophetic Tradition and yet are unprepared, for existential rather than merely political and sectarian reasons, to accept each other. It took two centuries before the religious need had swung over sufficiently to the mystical experience to induce its full theological approbation and the sense of community liability became sufficiently keen to rein in the disintegrative antinomianism of the ecstasies.

The yielding to what, as long as their appeal to sections of the educated is borne in mind, may be called popular forms of piety had certain consequences or concomitants which could have been foreseen only in part, if at all. The recognition of ecstasy as a legitimate goal of the religious life together with a belief that this goal was open not to the few but to the many led to various patterns of organized mysticism, or *tasawwuf*, Sufism, to use the Muslim term, as well as to the development of various techniques apt to induce or to assist in bringing about that "loss of self," that (temporary) union with the deity which was henceforth to be the supreme experience of an even larger proportion of the faithful. Overstating the situation somewhat, one may say that natural mysticism tended to take the place of illumination induced by asceticism, prayer and contemplation.

The second half of the eleventh century achieves the theoretical rapprochement between the "moderate" mystics who accept the Law as the basis of spirituality and reject the monistic or pantheistic interpretation of the unitive experience and Sunnite orthodox theology that admits the possibility and desirability of going beyond the fulfillment of the Law by aspiring to the unitive experience, individually or collectively attained, as long as no comingling of natures human and divine was assumed. The second half of the twelfth century witnesses the stabilization of the mystical movement through the organization of the

*tariqāt*, or "orders," groupings of disciples around a *shaiikh* or master solidified in perpetuity by the provision of regular succession to the authority and *baraka* of the founding saint but also by constituting the group as a judicial entity with property and a legal life of its own.

Each of the orders (which soon were proliferating and which, in many cases, were establishing themselves in different parts of the Muslim world to become more and more the centers of the actual religious life of the local community) developed its own "way" or technique for achieving its spiritual aspiration. This "way" would vary from the dance of the Mawlawī with its cosmic symbolism to the prayer rhythmicized by music and song of the Quādīrī, the shamanistic trance of the fire and sword swallowing Rifā'ī, the auxiliary use of hashish adopted in Persia by some sections of the Qalandarī from the thirteenth century<sup>20</sup>—each order serving and formalizing the needs of different social, cultural and racial strata, but all proceeding on the unspoken assumption that sainthood, not to speak of momentary rapture was accessible to the many and incorporating in various fashions the practice of the *dhikr*, the "remembrance" of the Lord, the perpetual repetition of a short prayer formula containing the (or a) name of God, or consisting of nothing but this name, in coordination with a sequence of motions and controlled breathing.

It is this practice of the *dhikr* whose beginnings, it is true, go back into the tenth century, which makes obvious even to the superficial observer the convergence of the style of piety in Byzantine Christianity and Eastern Islam of which the ecstatic exercises are such a striking symptom. The condemnation of a set of philosophical tenets by a Synod in 1076/77 and the condemnation of the *hypatos ton philosophon* (The 'Consul of the Philosophers'), John Italos, in 1082 may be taken as the turning point when in Greek Christendom *ma'rifa* defeated 'ilm, "irrational" or anti-rational and at any rate anti-classical, anti-Hellenic religious thinking and the enthusiastic piety of the monks (representing the lower classes supported by the govern-

<sup>20</sup> I. Mélikoff, *Abū Muslim, le "porte-bache" du Korasan* (Paris, 1962), p. 63 (where reff.).

ment in need of national concentration) won a victory securing it "official" consecration and political backing. It is difficult not to be struck by the chronological parallel of this development with the work of a Juwainī (d. 1085) and a Ghazzālī (d. 1111) and with the desperate anti-scholasticism (concretely: anti-Mu'tazilism and anti-Ash'arism) of their theological opponents, the leading Hanbalites in Baghdad (as symbolized by the affair of Ibn 'Aqīl that spanned the years from 1068 to 1072 and which ended only when Ibn 'Aqīl reneged on his Mu'tazilite interests to win readmission to the good graces of his *madhhab* and with it the possibility to continue his professorial activities in the capital). Nor is the "cult" of the unlettered and untutored pious at the expense of the scholastic theologian and religious legislator to be overlooked which spread on Byzantine as well as Muslim soil. The Muslim concept of the unlettered prophet whose lack of erudition was seen as a guarantee of the authenticity of Revelation has its motivic parallel in (if it does not go back to) New Testament passages such as *John* 7:15 where we read that "the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man (i.e. Jesus) letters, having never learned?"<sup>21</sup> What is noteworthy in this context is, however, less the existence in both faiths of this attitude than its almost simultaneous reemergence to emotional dominance.<sup>22</sup>

The enthusiastic piety of the Byzantines and its outgrowth, contemplative Hesychasm, are optimistic movements as in the *Vulgärsufismus* of contemporary Islam. They are animated by

<sup>21</sup> Cf. also *Acts* 4:13.

<sup>22</sup> For the situation in Byzantium cf., e.g., P. E. Stephanou, *Jean Italos, Philosophe et humaniste* (Rome, 1949), pp. 21-34.

A sense of kinship of religious motifs on the one hand, of the relative ease with which patristic authority would allow the Byzantine theologian to integrate ecstatic "union" may be gained from the citations referring to man's "deification" which Prestige, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74, has culled from the great Fathers whose authority needed only slight retouching to become usable as support of the new enthusiastic piety. Mention should be made in this connection of the opposition engendered in Latin Christendom by the new scholasticism of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which was motivated by the feeling that the new questioning was giving preponderance to reason over faith; reff. have been conveniently assembled by de Lubac, *op. cit.*, 104 ff. It would seem however, that this opposition never did reach the fury of certain anti-Mu'tazilite trends within contemporary Islam.

confidence in God's willingness to view with favor the endeavours of his devotees, they fasten on God's benevolence rather than His aloofness and are animated primarily by hope and no longer by fear. The temptation of mistaking technique for illumination obtained on both sides of the religious curtain, although it would seem that the discipline of an organized hierarchy and the restrictions of a dogma that was, much more than to the Muslim, a common and valued possession of the *Kirchenvolk*, prevented in Byzantium abuses which pagan tradition, not yet fully renounced by only recently converted strata in Asia Minor and Iran, and the absence of systematically applied governmental controls allowed to infiltrate the practices of some Sufic conventicles. But the manipulation of the mind by the *dhikr* and the *mneme* (*Theou* or *Iesou*) dominate in both movements. Their theory as the doctrine of continuous prayer is expounded, or more properly, reexpounded almost simultaneously by Niketas Stethatos (d. 1054) and Ghazzālī, as it had been in the West in the succession of the Lotharingian Grimlaic since the middle of the ninth century, with an intensification of the *oratio continua* in Jean de Fécamp (d. 1078), the order of Grandmont (Etienne de Muret, d. 1124) and the Chartreuse. "Remembrance of God or mental prayer," says Gregory Sinaita (ca. 1300), "is higher than all other works; as the love of God, it stands at the head of all the virtues."<sup>23</sup> The first systematic *expose* of the *dhikr* technique seems to go back to Ibn 'Ata' Allāh (d. 1309)—once again the synchronism should be noted, but not interpreted in terms of influence.

The developmental parallelism would seem to hold good for Latin Christianity as well. Where through the tenth century the Lord is a God of transcendence, a numen to be feared, chastiser of the living, judge of the departed, the god of Northern France a hundred years later would be perceived in His concern for man, not to say, in His humanity. God as Christ, God as the Jesus Child, God as the sufferer, together with the Virgin become more and more the central figures of piety. The Lord has come closer to man who no longer fears him in

<sup>23</sup> Kallistos and Ignatios, *Directions to Hesychasts*, No. 7, in *Writings from the Philokalia in Prayer of the Heart*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer (London, 1951), p. 80.

irrational abjectness but dares to love and believe himself loved. At the same time, faith wants to be comprehended and reasoned out; the intellectual content of the religious experience and the date of revelation becomes a prime concern to be pursued with the 'un-Christian' tools of Aristotelianism and until the reversal of the condemnation of the Averroists (and of St. Thomas) 1270 and 1277, brings for centuries to come a strict separation of religious attitude and rational endeavor. In terms of psychological orientation, the Thomistic primacy of the intellect yields to the Augustinian (and Franciscan) primacy of the will. Mystical illumination, not illumination of faith by reason, is the goal of theologians formed by Franciscan religiosity. To renounce any imaginative or intellectual representation of the divine is seen as the precondition of unitive experience.<sup>24</sup>

But here the parallelism ends. For while in the West reason as irrelevant to faith may now be brought to bear on everything human without restraint and science begins its surge with breathtaking speed, this releasing of man and his natural environment from the control of theological data and methods—not obtained without resistance even in the West—does not take place in either Byzantium or Islam and the encyclopaedic

<sup>24</sup> What Dom F. Vandenbroucke (in the work mentioned above, note 7, pp. 425 and 446-447) has to say of the development of the spiritual life in fourteenth century Europe allows application to Arab Islam as well (where the date may, however, be somewhat advanced). "Ce siècle, en même temps qu'il voyait s'affirmer le divorce définitif entre théologie et mystique, connaîtra de surcroît la séparation entre mystique et communauté, entre piété privée et vie liturgique et sacramentelle." (It must of course be remembered that, in Islam, the concept of sacraments does not exist. Also, as in the Latin West, the separation between mysticism and community must be understood as indicating a vast expansion of the organized mystical life distinct though it will remain from the circles unaffected by the new wave of piety.) "Le théologien devient le spécialiste d'une science indépendante de son témoignage personnel, indépendante de sa sainteté ou de son péché. Et le spirituel devient un dévot qui n'a cure de la théologie et, à la limite, vit son expérience pour elle-même, sans égard au contenu dogmatique à explorer. Si d'autres tendent encore la synthèse, leur lecteur a tôt fait de dénoncer en eux des compilateurs..." For the growing of theology into a science, accomplished by St. Thomas, and the scope of scientific theology, of M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie comme science au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1957), *passim*, but esp. pp. 9 ff.; the Western development sheds a good deal of light on the progress marked by a Juwainī or a Fakhr ad-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1209) in the technical aspects of Muslim theology.

inventorizing of the universe which *latinitas* still shares with Islam<sup>25</sup> is only in the West a first step toward that more precise perception of time and space, toward the mathematical description and organization of the environment to which the West proceeds in the fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

It is identical dispositions, assumptions, aspirations coming to the fore on the splintering of the Hellenic carapace of scholastic philosophy in Islam and Byzantine Christianity, but in no sense, as chronology might suggest at first blush, a flow from Byzantium to Islam of a new religious trend. This diagnosis is supported by the continued estrangement or misconception on the part of Islam of the basic teachings of Christianity. It is true that Sufis and Sufi-inspired poetry did emphasize not infrequently in the later Middle Ages the ultimate irrelevance of denominational affiliation and that here and there Christianizing tenets can be traced. In the last analysis, however, such declarations of indifferentism are but declarations of freedom from orthodoxy, statements of social rebelliousness, that never led to a break with the community; in short, they are part and parcel of a style of religious living, not an attempt to shed the Islamic heritage. No serious study of other religions has come from Sufic milieus. The finality of the Muslim Revelation continued an effective bar to reexamination of the Koranic misdrawing of Christianity with its caricaturistic features of a trinity consisting of God, Jesus and Mary, and the denial of the reality of Jesus' death on the cross. This finality of the Revelation proved then as often a potent protective not only against the relativism that may result from comparative religious studies but also against discord in the community when a movement like the Christian Reformation was a distinct possibility.

This solidarity of the Muslim community, the unbreakability

<sup>25</sup> Quazwīnī's (d. 1283) *Cosmography* (German tr. H. Ethé, Leipzig, 1868), can legitimately be compared with the various encyclopaedias of the thirteenth century in the West which have come to us under the picturesque titles of *Specula*, *Thesauri* and the like.

<sup>26</sup> For convenience reference may be made to the relevant passages in Leclercq et. al., *op. cit.*; the wider context of the change is perceptively suggested by G. Duby in G. D. and R. Mandrou, *Histoire de la civilisation française* (Paris, 1958; 2nd ed.) vol. I, cf. esp. pp. 29 f., 106 ff., 181 ff.

of the wall around the *umma Muhammadiyya*, had to be bought by a deliberate renunciation of empirical self-perception, of clarity, not directed or confined by the sacred text, about the nature of Islam in the universal context of human religiosity, of finding access to one's self through self-examination against other possibilities of spirituality, and self-affirmation based on critique and choice. Full freedom of the spirit can be attained only by self-confrontation, and in the words of Werner Jaeger, culture is the mind's "pellucid knowledge of itself and its secure resting within its own form."<sup>27</sup> Unless the analysis of the world enshrines the analysis of the self as well, this analysis is apt to leave us untouched and remain devoid of formative power. The medieval Christian confronted himself through the Bible; it was Scripture that provided materials and foil of self-exegesis.<sup>28</sup> We of the Modern West, however, are so conditioned that we grow into our own by confronting what is not ours and what we are not. Thus we owe our own formation to facing what we have been and what others are. And it is thanks to this trait which I am not sure can be considered universally human but which, unfortunately but gloriously, would seem confined to brief periods and limited areas of history,<sup>29</sup> that science persists as an ongoing process—creative and educative in unceasing reciprocity. Ourselves, ever restless in the wonderment of discovery, will change and our searchings must respond to what we have become. But while we change, our longing stays to penetrate layer for layer the secrets of the alien to return to ourselves. And there may be no better guide to our own soul than the civilization which a great French scholar has called "The Occident of the East," the world of Islam.

<sup>27</sup> *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge* (2nd ed.; Berlin 1960), p. 105.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. de Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 569-70.

<sup>29</sup> The mentality which dominates the strivings of the modern West is well expressed by Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 395) when he speaks of the *epekteinesthai* of the human soul (in quest of assimilation to the divine). It is, to quote Jaeger once more, "das Sichdehnen und strecken nach dem Ziel der Bahn in nimmer nachlassendem Eifer, über den schon erreichten Punkt hinauszudringen. Doch da das Ziel das Absolute ist, kann es in Wirklichkeit niemals erreicht werden." (Jaeger, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-80.) For expressions of this outlook cf. G. E. von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam. The Search for Cultural Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), 104 ff.