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MORE ON THE QUR'ANIC "HYPOCRITES" AND CONTEXTUALIZED IDENTIFICATION

by the Editor

In his article, "*Hypocrites are Dangerous*," published in SEEDBED last year, David Shenk drew on the Qur'anic theme "hypocrites" (*Munāfiqūn*, منافقون) to throw light on the question of how Christians ministering among Muslims ought to identify themselves (IX/1 [1994]:15-16). Should one identify himself from the outset as "Christian" (in Arabic *Masiḥi* or *Naṣrāni*), with all the false ideas those terms evoke for Muslims? Or may one say he is a "Muslim follower of Jesus," or the like, as some are now proposing? A colleague commented after reading it that it would have been helped him greatly (and probably other readers as well) if SEEDBED had added some references and background information on the Qur'anic "Hypocrites." That is what the present article seeks to do. If you have any comments to make on the Qur'anic data, or wish to contribute to the discussion of how Christians should identify themselves in Muslim society, your feedback would most welcome.

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References to Hypocrites are fairly numerous in the Qur'an; one complete Sura, number 63 ("*The Hypocrites*") is devoted to them. I found a very informative summary of the Qur'anic perspective on Hypocrites in *A Guide to the Contents of the Qur'an*, by Faruq Sherif [Ithaca Press, 13 Southwark Street, London SE1 1RQ, 1985]. By the way, if you are looking for a good introduction to the teaching of the Qur'an that includes historical background as well, here is one. The author is Muslim. The following is found on pages 87 to 89 of that work.

From the examination of the verses in which the terms 'Munafiq' (approximate translation: hypocrite) and 'Nifaq' (hypocrisy) occur, the following definition can be given for the word 'Munafiq': 'Munafiq' is a person who, in matters of faith, says with his tongue what does not exist in his heart. This statement actually appears in the Qur'an. Verse 161 [167] of Sura III, referring to the behaviour of the hypocrites during the battle of Uhud, says that they said with their lips what was not in their hearts. This description elucidates also another point, namely that 'hypocrisy' is an intermediate condition between belief and unbelief and not (as some commentators have argued) a species of unbelief. There is no hypocrisy in either a believer or an unbeliever. In the case of the former his tongue and his heart are at one in acknowledging God's signs and his apostle; and in the case of the latter his tongue and his heart are at one in rejecting them. The verse cited says that on that day (i.e. on the day of the battle) the hypocrites were nearer to unbelief than they were to belief.

The Qur'an mentions hypocrisy mostly in the context of special historical events or persons. Among such events are the battle of Uhud, the expulsion of the Jews of Bani-Nadhir from Medina, and the attack on the tribe of Bani-Mustaliq. But the term hypocrisy has also been applied to special groups of people. Thus verse 98 [97] of Sura IX refers to the Arab bedouins as specially given to hypocrisy, and a similar statement is made in the same Sura (verse 102 [101]) about the people of Medina.

From the verses of the Qur'an it is evident that the Prophet entertained particularly bitter feelings towards the hypocrites. This is because in matters of vital importance they proved themselves to be false. On occasions when the Prophet led campaigns against his opponents, the hypocrites, while outwardly professing faith, in actual fact behaved in a hostile manner. Not only they did not co-operate; they worked against the Prophet's plans. They avoided participating in the expeditions, and if they did participate, they were the first

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to desert. They cautioned others to stand aloof; they tried to cause disaffection among the believers; they conspired in secret or tried to come to terms with the enemy; they made promises on oath and broke them. No wonder then that the Prophet should have treated them as no different from unbelievers and polytheists. Verses 15-18 of Sura LVIII say: "God has prepared for them a severe penalty; evil indeed are their deeds. They have made their oaths a screen for their misdeeds: thus they obstruct men from the path of God: therefore shall they have a humiliating penalty. Of no profit whatever to them, against God, will be their riches or their sons. They will be companions of the Fire to dwell therein for ever." Verses 102 to 104 [101] of Sura IX say: "Certain of the desert Arabs round about you are hypocrites, as well as among the Medina folk; they are obstinate in hypocrisy...they shall be sent to a grievous penalty." Verse 9 of Sura LXVI, addressing the Prophet, says: "Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be firm against them. Their abode is hell". But in verse 104 [103] of Sura IX the Prophet receives this injunction: "Take alms from their goods so as to purify and sanctify them. pray on their behalf, for your prayers are a source of security for them, and God is One who hears and knows."

Hypocrites are again and again referred to in the Qur'an and placed on the same footing as unbelievers. Their characteristics are described, *inter alia*, in Sura IV which was revealed shortly after the battle of Uhud, the battle in which the hypocrites showed their true colours more openly. It is pointed out that they change constantly from one side to another, they try to lead the believers astray, that they aim at deceiving God, but it is God who deceives them, and that if they pray it is only for the sake of ostentation. The whole subject of the hypocrites, namely how they betray themselves, how they should be treated by the believers, and what Allah has in store for them comes up with emphasis in the said Sura. It appears that the conduct of the hypocrites during the battle of Uhud gave rise to a controversy among the Prophet's followers. There were two schools of opinion. One maintained that they should be put to death, while the other was in favour of leaving them alone. The Qur'an decreed a middle course between the two extremes. It laid down that they should not be admitted to the circle of the faithful, that they should be given a chance to set out (fight) in the path of God, but if they turned back they should be put to death wherever found; that if they deserted and took refuge with a tribe with which the Moslems had a pact of non-aggression they should not be molested; that if they came to the believers and declared themselves unwilling to take part in any fighting, while giving guarantees of peace they should be given quarter, but that if they persisted in their ways they should be seized and slain wherever found. (IV. 90 to 93 [88-91]) The fate of the hypocrites in the life to come is to be consigned for ever to hell-fire (verses IV. 139, 144 [138, 140, 145]) unless they repent and mend their ways, becoming wholehearted believers (IV. 145 [146]). But here again one is reminded of the mystery of Allah's plans. "Would you guide those whom Allah has caused to err? He whom Allah has led astray cannot be guided." (IV. 90, 142 [88, 143]).

By way of conclusion I shall simply extract sections from the article by David Shenk.

Ever since Medina, the Muslim community is inclined to develop a fixation on the need to secure the internal integrity of the Muslim community. Hypocrites are not to be tolerated. ... However, the Muslim community is commanded to protect the integrity of other monotheistic communities of faith who exist within its political control. Both Jewish and Christian communities are to become *dhimmi* (protected) communities. These are identifiable faith communities who exist within the suzerainty of Muslim political control.

A serious problem arises, however, when Christians begin to function within the *ummah* with camouflage. When Christians begin to worship or conduct themselves like Muslims, then the boundaries between the two communities which the *dhimmi* system has established become erased. In a region under the political control of Islam, that is intolerable. It feels like sabotage from within. It conjures memories of the Jews in Medina who acted like Muslims but were not really committed to Islam.

[Here, David cites the case of the *Isawa*, a people group in Nigeria who attempted to follow Jesus in their own way as Muslims and were practically annihilated for it, to show the typical consequences of this kind of action. He further illustrates the problem from his own experience in Somalia and Kenya, and concludes:]

My judgment is that it is wise for the church in mission in Muslim settings to function unobtrusively. It is important to attempt to function with a low profile and to work in convergence with the local culture as much as possible. But my judgment is that little is gained and perhaps much is lost when Christians identify with the Muslim community in ways that can easily be interpreted as undermining the internal integrity of the Muslim community. My judgment is that it is much easier for Muslims to tolerate the presence of Christians among them when the definitions of that Christian community are quite clear. This is not to mean that the definitions of the community shall be obnoxious or noncontextual. But the Muslims must be able to know who the followers of Jesus are in distinction to those who seek to walk in the *sunnah* (customary practice) of Mohammed. (From *SEEDBED IX/1* [1994], pages 15 - 16.)

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WHY IS TUNISIA SO HARD: A PERSONAL VIEW

by I. L.

In a recent article, Robin Daniel presented the lessons of history as he saw it, as to why the church of Christ which flourished in North Africa in the early Christian centuries failed to survive after the Muslim invasion (SEEDBED IX, No. 2). This article presents a contrasting personal viewpoint.

Obviously, anyone working in a resistant country wants to know why the country is so resistant. We need to learn from the past and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. The history of the church, both remote and recent, therefore becomes very important. A related question asks why there is a church in other Arab countries, but not in Tunisia? This is not a question that is asked only by those of us who work here. Others elsewhere with a real concern for the church are also asking why Tunisia is so resistant. We hear of various ideas and solutions along the way, such as the need to engage in more "spiritual warfare," or to identify and defeat "the enemy."

It is fundamental to recognize, on the one hand, that we who live in the present are not responsible for the sins of the past; while it is appropriate to acknowledge the evident sins of believers of the past, and even "confess" them, it is not for us to "repent" of sins we ourselves have not committed. On the other hand, while we are not responsible for the past, we are responsible *to learn* from the past. We also need to recognize that *certain factors* make the Middle East different from North Africa, and distinguish Tunisia from the rest of North Africa even today.

First of all, it is too simplistic to speak as if there were one Islamic invasion during which Christianity was wiped out. There was a complicated series of invasions, culminating in the occasion in 1152 AD when the last Christians and Jews were given the choice: martyrdom or conversion to Islam.

As I understand history (expert readers may wish to add a note of clarification here), the Christians of the Middle East were offered the status of "*Dhimmi*," as one of the options open to them. They were allowed to exist provided they paid the *djizya*, a special tribute levied on Christians and Jews, and were made a 'subject' people. In 1152 AD the Christian population of Tunisia were not given the options of emigration, or of paying tribute (Cuoq 1984).

Again, in North Africa today it is the Berbers who are the most open to the gospel. Tunisia, however, is 99% Arab, so this country cannot benefit from the greater receptiveness of the Berbers.

Third, the Scriptures were probably not translated into Arabic until about 720 AD (Geisler 1983, p.326), whereas Mohammed died in 632. Moreover, the early church in Tunisia was not rooted in the indigenous local population; it was a Latin church, and Latin was the preferred language and the language of Scriptures then in use. Today, by

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contrast, with the relatively wide availability of Scripture in more than one Arabic translation, radio broadcasts and various videos in Arabic, that is no longer a problem.

Finally, we note that the great waves of missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appear to have largely passed by North Africa.

In view of the fact that Tunisia may never in history have had a vibrant indigenous church of any size, we who work here are faced with the exciting prospect of being among the first to bring the gospel. True, others have laboured during this century, but the task has really only begun. We can enter into the spirit of Romans 15:20; there is plenty of scope for someone to work "where the gospel has never been proclaimed before." While such a view easily falls into unbiblical elitism and pride, it can also be a source of joy and encouragement.

So what about today. Why is it that after over one hundred years of work in this country the results are so few: one small group and a few scattered believers?

The human factors are that we are limited to friendship evangelism, and to radio, for the foreseeable future. Literature distribution is problematic and can have unpleasant consequences for those here long term, even when done by tourist groups; this was done extensively in the past, and we are still waiting for the harvest from such efforts.

The government viewpoint needs to be understood. It is watching events in nearby countries very closely; it cannot afford to tolerate anything that decreases the stability of the country. Religion is closely monitored, therefore, especially any form that could become a destabilizing factor. One result is that no one has the right to publicize anything without prior official permission. If the Muslim groups are not permitted to distribute literature, how much less Christians! Whereas in the West we are used to frequently finding unasked-for literature and advertising, etc., in our postbox, the attitude here is that unasked for mail is against our freedoms, against civil rights.

Friendship evangelism is at best slow work and is not likely to touch many people, and the response from radio has likewise been disappointing. What is happening? I believe that the way forward involves recognizing that we are not up against pure Islam here; people in Tunisia are Islamic but they are also materialistic. There is a great indifference to religion. The population is very young, and very influenced by French and Italian television and music. One would think that the materialism would lead to a greater willingness to question the values of the past, but in fact it generally only makes for disinterest in eternal issues. In my view, the biggest single hindrance to the spread of the gospel is a lack of hunger for God. For that we must cry out to God to move sovereignly.

Some argue that child sacrifice in the pre-Christian past means that there are spiritual bondages to be broken. I myself know people who have sacrificed animals, and have put blood on their children when they were unwell. Certainly, if and when such people move towards Christ, some form of renunciation of evil practices such as these will have to take place. I personally am not convinced, however, that child sacrifice in the past is THE reason results are so poor.

Some say that there must be an identification and defeat of demonic strongholds. Tourists have sometimes been known to say that they 'feel' the 'oppression' in my city, whereas, strangely, as a resident I do not feel this oppression. Are they spiritually more sensitive than I? How is it that streets they find oppressive are the very ones I love? They are full of life and character even though I can sometimes see signs of the occult (symbols, etc.) that my friends know nothing about. Could it be that such feelings are a commendable but misguided simplification? We are completely agreed that prayer is needed, so if such feelings lead to regular sustained prayer for my city, then we can expect some results! I would prefer to talk about 'strongholds' within the *person*, and to see Satan defeated as *individuals* reject and renounce his power, and turn to Christ. I do however agree with focusing prayer on named functionaries—in departments of the government for instance. One good effect of the international days of prayer has been that locally we have been encouraged to focus prayer in an intelligent manner on all those in authority, and thus fulfill the command to pray for them.

What is God doing? We have some clues from scripture. In Judges 3:2 it is recorded that some of the peoples were left unconquered so that later generations might learn war. But here we see a peculiar kind of 'warfare' where the progress of a few years is often reversed, and one is back to having seemingly made no progress at all. This then becomes a real test of faith: to avoid skepticism ("nothing will ever change") and press on again, not just out of perseverance but out of a real expectation that God will bring a harvest. It is *faith* that pleases God; He is pleased when His people keep faith despite contrary circumstances. The harvest may delay, but God brings good out of it. It is clear that in the division of labour appointed by the Holy Spirit, some sow and labour without seeing results, while others harvest. The challenge to us today is to sow in hope, to sow believing in eternal benefits and results, to expect results in God's own time.

There is another clue here in the meaning of the term 'glory.' The scriptural picture of 'success' is not of something that takes place in this life; it doesn't contain one hint of triumphalism (despite recent popular songs that encourage this trend). Rather, Christ brought glory to God by going to the Cross. *We* are to take up *our* cross and follow Christ. We can expect that the path forward will take us through suffering. The perseverance of God's servants brings godly character, and proves that His people will continue to serve Him, even when humanly speaking we should give up. Similarly, the meaning of the term 'power' in the Scriptures is linked with "endurance and patience" (Col. 1:11). God has not failed! The accomplishment of God's word is only delayed.

The promise "I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18) is a difficult one. Clearly there was once a vibrant church here, but it has not existed since 1152 AD. Has God's word failed? I have lived that question. I have allowed it to penetrate my being to such an extent that I was ready to believe He *had* failed. I lived Psalms 73 and 77 for months: "Will the Lord reject for ever? Will he never show his favour again? Has his unfailing love vanished for ever? Has His promise failed for all time?" (Ps 77:7-8)

So questioned the Israelites when they were sent into exile. It was *God* who had sent them there. Today, Christ is likewise well able to remove a church from existence (Rev 2:5). Could it be that there never was an indigenous Church in Tunisia? Could it be that the church of the occupying power was *so* sinful, *so* full of divisions, that Christ simply

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removed it? God's word has not failed, but His people did fail Him. We have yet to see the church built according to God's promise. The promise cannot mean that Christ will establish His church in a region and it will never be wiped out.

As I have turned over and over the reasons for the spiritual poverty of this land, I keep coming back to three questions: what is God's responsibility, what is my responsibility, and what is the responsibility of my Tunisian friends.

FROM GOD we await a sovereign move that brings more labourers into the harvest, and that creates a hunger for God in the lives of Tunisians.

FROM OUR TUNISIAN FRIENDS we await a hunger for God, a seeking for God, a willingness to consider that they might have been wrong in what they believe, a readiness to read the Scriptures for themselves.

FROM US God expects that we will study the situation well, and that we will act wisely. It is for us to seek out and use better strategies. In particular, we have to become competent in languages; we have to be ready to explain, teach, and question. We must seek to stay fresh, to be ever in prayer, and become much bolder in our personal witness. It is for us to ask how we can be prepared in view of the fact that the harvest is promised. When God starts to move, what will our approach be? Will we know what scriptures to teach, how to disciple not just individuals but whole families and groups? Will we have worked sufficiently on relationships that we know how to be examples of love and trust to the believers (probably the weakest points among believers in North Africa today)? Beyond that we must not seek to go; we must not ask why God in his sovereignty has not yet moved, or why so few hunger for God. We need to clearly understand our responsibilities and our part, and fulfill them, and leave the rest to God.

To stimulate us, let me put forward one vision of the future. I see multitudes of small groups springing up. When God moves we can expect to see, almost overnight, not just a second home group started, but many, maybe within a few months of each other. Every worker could be involved in at least one of them!

With this, I dream of the day when Tunisia will once again have numerous believers, indigenous Christians who are willing to suffer, even to die for Christ and His church. I dream of Christ giving teachers, pastors and evangelists to His church. I dream of people in high places testifying to Christ, people like Daniel, who are competent, without fault, who love God, and administer the country wisely.

Until then, we struggle and work, seeing the harvest from afar, and getting ready for the time when the floodgates will open, and Christ will build the church He died to bring to birth.

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revolves around work and school schedules. Homework and television fill the evening hours. One father joined a supervisory group at a club for the football team. Both his sons play on teams. Another father encourages his daughter in gymnastics--she is actually more agile than her two younger brothers who are jealous of her ability. Although male babies are still preferred (especially desired by country people), boys do not seem to rule over their sisters as in the past. Parents expect the boys to obey and learn their school lessons.

Attitudes differ over the choosing of a marriage partner. Two sisters reacted differently to the request about engagement to someone known to their family and with ties to their original village. The older one, a university graduate, refused--she wanted to marry someone she knew personally. The younger sister, a hairdresser, accepted--she had no difficulty in becoming engaged to someone whom she scarcely knew. One of my friends remarked that if the young people choose each other, they have to work out their problems by themselves later on. But where the parents choose, they will provide support in working out any marital problems.

The role of older women has greatly changed. They do not rule the younger ones as in the past--most couples form a nuclear family and live in their own housing. One of my friends commented that some of these older women are looking for ways to stay busy, while others are getting sick psychologically from the lack of a specific role in the family.

One of the changing events in family life is the planning for summer holiday outings. Working wives look forward to their vacations and more families are going to the seaside or to other towns. Some of them join up with siblings and their children, while others meet up with friends--often those they know from their schooldays.

As to the proverbial hospitality of the Arab world--it is still important to receive and serve guests, but the time frame is limited. Visits are shorter (because of work obligations) and the women often offer purchased food (cakes, etc.) to their guests because they have no time to prepare home-baked goods.

One of my friends, a middle-aged teacher with a university degree, made further pertinent observations on life today. She noted that, along with the desire for material possessions, came the need to keep a sense of family. The women fight for the unity of the family; they make more decisions about the education of their children; they want more quality time with their husbands and family. Although the men place a greater importance on the building up of their material possessions (house, car), yet they are still interested in the family--they will enter into details about the children and will take them on outings. As educated parents, they read about caring for children and try to apply those lessons. At the same time, because of their work, they leave their children in day care--so actually the children are left more to themselves.

My friend found that the conflict between generations is not openly expressed in popular songs, yet the present youth lack assurance about their future and can be jealous and rebellious. She described them as a TV generation which is lazier and more relaxed--not the fighters for change of her generation. She noticed three categories of parents: the authoritative ones who cause their children to rebel secretly, the poor ones who give

more liberty to their children who are better educated, and the others who relate to their children through discussion and compromise.

My friends gave the following reasons for the changes in family life. Outside influences come from Tunisians who have lived abroad and now return on visits or for permanent re-integration. Other Tunisians travel abroad for their work or holidays. Tunisia is connected to Europe by several TV channels so there is direct daily input from the mass media. There is a long history of encouraging girls' education (since independence in 1956), so now there are many educated women of whom a significant number are employed outside the home. These women like their liberty and are used to expressing opinions. The present system of secondary education provides for boys and girls to study together, young people copy one another. Since there is a large number of youth (influenced by the media and education), there are even further changes to come with this younger generation.

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FROM THE ARABIC LANGUAGE PRESS: Anguish Over the Fate of the Arab Umma

by Bassam Madany

The author, who retired last year after 41 years in the ministry, 36 of it in religious broadcasting, has begun a new informational ministry to the church incorporated in Illinois under the name *Middle East Resources* (not to be confused with the publisher of the same name at this address.). Rev. Madany writes papers and articles on the Islamic challenge for Christian Missions, translates articles from Arabic such as those published here, reviews books, and lectures on the history of the Middle East since the rise of Islam. Although the following articles do not deal directly with religion, he writes. "I do feel that the readers of *SEEDBED* need to hear and read about the anguish of many an Arab writer regarding the fate (*maseer*) of the Arab *umma*. To present the gospel to Arabs and Muslims requires more than a theoretical knowledge of Islam. Muslims are keenly aware that something is wrong. But none dare to point to the root cause: *Islam's inability to cope with modernity!*

Arab Development at the Crossroads, in *Huna London*, May 1990

The following information is based on the report of *Huna London*, published by the Arabic Section of the BBC, on the Cairo Conference on Development, held early in 1990 (UNDP).

One of the most important factors in development is the human element. It is expected that by the year 2000, the population of the Arab world would have reached 290 million, of which 105 million would be below age 15. The work force would be around 93 million. Even though this constitutes an important force, yet it could become a terrible burden should the Arab states fail to set forth the right policies to secure work for all these people. Between 1990 and 1995, there is need to procure new jobs for 2.5 million people per year. Population in itself does not constitute a source of strength. What really counts is the specific qualities of human beings and the training they have received in order to transform this human potential into a positive and productive force.

A dangerous gap is developing in the Arab world: the food gap. The estimate for the food demands in the Arab world by the year 2000 require that we increase wheat production by 200%, animal products by 175% and sugar by 330%. Arable land in the Arab world is estimated at 301 million hectares; by the end of the 80s only 50 million hectares were being cultivated. Another danger which looms strongly in many areas of the Arab world is the steady growth of the deserts and the pollution of water resources.

A Dying Culture, in *Al-Hawadeth*, 10 January 1992

It is enough to hold one, two or three gatherings in Cairo, Casablanca and Muscat (which all took place almost simultaneously) in order to discuss the present status of Arab culture. Most of these meetings limit themselves to a reading of papers dealing with some research done on a certain topic, followed by some comments. What is needed is a more potent medicine. What all Arabs must face--both governments and people--is the cold and brutal fact: our culture is dying.

If the greatness of a culture is to be measured by its ability to produce and to interact with foreign cultures, we may say that Arab culture is not to be envied at all: nothing is being produced! Very little interaction is taking place with foreign cultures. It is as if we tendered our resignation from our cultural activities while motivated by a hatred of foreigners, as we repeat the cliché that we are resisting foreign cultural invasion.

This description of the present status of Arab culture may appear very dark, yet it is accurate and realistic. We have many proofs such as the sad status of Arabic publications. Around 3,000 copies are printed of any specific title in a nation whose population exceeds 200 million people. If every book is going to be classified eventually either as a good or a bad one, it is quite evident that the bad ones far exceed in number the good ones in the Arab world.

There is a marked dearth of creative writing, as well as slight awareness of foreign cultures and languages. The Arab has entered a cocoon while either repeating the slogans of the past or claiming that he is engaged in modernizing efforts, as if such activities can take place in isolation from other cultures.

The reason for this sad situation is the failure of the educational system in our schools and universities. One of the manifestations of this failure is the disappearance of all language studies (including the study of Arabic) in the Faculties of literature at our universities, as we observe at the same time the spread of colloquial dialects. If we were to measure cultural activities by the amount of translations which are accomplished, we may say that translation of foreign works has stopped or is on its way to being halted.

Should someone dispute our above statement, we ask: what does our young generation know of the literary and cultural activities which are going on in France, Germany, England, Italy, the United States, India and Japan? What do we know about the present state of such disciplines as psychology, sociology, philosophy and economics in the USA, for example? What have we translated from Indian literature except *Kalila wa Dumna* of Ibn al-Muqaffa'ah? [A translation which took place around 1000 years ago!]

The picture becomes darker if we inquire about the knowledge of foreign languages among our new generation. I am positive that around 90% of our young people do not know any foreign language, even while many of them keep talking about modernization! There are several Arab countries which no longer import foreign books because they cannot pay for them in hard currencies. In certain Arab countries foreign books circulate only after they have been photocopied, while other countries treat writers and books at their borders as if the former were smugglers and the latter something like opium and *hashish*.

We face a gigantic problem which cannot be dealt with by holding gatherings which are supposed to deal with Arab culture. When culture is dying in a nation, it is the spirit of that nation which is also dying. This is why we should do more than hold meetings lest history accept our resignation, and before we become completely marginalized.

Is the Arab Outlook on the Past and the Future Wrong? in Al-Hawadeth

29 March 1994

We have placed ourselves in an historical *impasse* when we gave ourselves to dreaming that we could regain our past glories; actually history steadily marches forward leaving behind such great empires as Britain and France whose boundaries in the modern times far exceeded our past glories. We imagined that our struggle against Israel and Zionism was against a new *crusade*, and that we needed a new *Saladdin* who would regain Jerusalem for us. Had not the official propaganda portrayed for us the coming of a leader who would mount a white horse, and sword in hand defeat the Zionist or Western enemy?

We have met the Israeli challenge exactly as Don Quixote faced the windmills with his long spear. Since 1948 we have spent billions to purchase weapons which were inferior to the Israeli air force; any officer knew very well that air power was decisive rather than the multiplicity of tanks and soldiers. We have squandered billions on foreign propaganda to convince the world of the justice of our cause, while the absence of democracy, the lack of human rights in most Arab lands and terrorist activities has spoken much louder than all such propaganda. Some Arab regimes have dissipated funds fighting each other on Lebanese soil; such funds could have been well spent on the development of agricultural projects which would have made it unnecessary for us to import wheat from the USA, meat from Australia, and sugar from South America!

The Arabs' Basic Problem, in Al-Hawadeth, 25 May 1994

Rarely does one find Arabs acknowledging that something is wrong within. Their tendency is to blame the other side. This is the villain that is responsible for all the woes which have befallen the Arabs, especially during the last 200 years. It is refreshing when one discovers an article which finally acknowledges—up to a point—that the flaw is within. The following article appeared in the 25 May issue of *Al-Hawadeth*, written by an Arab writer living in Europe, under the title "A Call to Reconciliation."

The worst defeats that we have suffered in our Arab societies are those which are the results of our inter-Arab fights. We struggle for power or for a progressive ideology, and

in the process we break the norms of our societies, our religion and our ethics. Our defeats reach their highest levels when we blame the Zionist aggressor or the oppressive power of the imperialists, without realizing, even for a moment, that *the trouble is within us*. It is high time that we rise up against our weaker selves in order to give ourselves the strength and self-confidence through which we can meet the challenge posed by our enemy.

The power we are talking about is not military or nuclear. Above all, it is moral strength that is urgently needed among the Arab peoples who have so often been deprived of their freedoms in thought and belief, in politics, in personal initiative and in the conduct of their economy.

A Plea for Arab Liberalism, in *Al-Hawadeth*, 29 June 1990

The author, a businessman living in exile (Europe), declares his true identity as a liberal pleading for an end to all types of guided or organized ways of living. Having witnessed the bankruptcy of socialism, he has now become a "*dai'at*," a missionary pleading for the cause of an open society. His dilemma remains, however, since he appeals to the politicians for salvation; they happen to be the very people who hold the Arabs captive. This article represents the feelings of millions of Arabs who have lost hope in the possibility of change in their societies. Its value lies in its exposure of Islam's inability to deliver what it claims to be able to do: organize a just national and world order.

Having contributed a weekly article during the last few months to *Al-Hawadeth*, I feel I am no longer an individualist. I used to believe that I was a lonely *dai'at* of liberalism whose mission was to proclaim its message to our Arab world. We are exhausted with *guided economics, guided politics, guided art, guided families, guided infants and guided ethics*. My experience has taught me, however, that there are millions in our Arab world (some older than myself, some younger) who have been calling for political, social and economic freedom. Actually this initiative of mine is merely a part of other people's initiative. Who are we, the Arabs of today?

We feel defeated in most Arab countries. Despair is creeping slowly, added to the fact that we suffer much from the humiliation brought upon us by the oppressive authorities. Our people are aware of the fact that our national economy is collapsing step by step while we witness the building of prisons to receive more of our citizenry. We are liable to be arrested at all times and to suffer torture. No alternative is found except that of migrating to God's wide world, seeking honor, freedom and a means of earning a decent living.

Is there a way out of this dilemma? I say, of course. Politics is the *maestro* who conducts all those playing on their instruments, whether they play on the string of economics, the educational string, the intellectual string, or the religious string.

[After dealing with the topic of religious radicalism (*usooliyya*) as well as other areas of life, the author blames politics and politicians as the root cause of this extremism.]:

Arab politicians are to be blamed for their inability to properly read the changing realities of our societies. Our politicians resemble a *maestro* who stands before the

orchestra and the audience, lifts up his baton and gives the signal to begin; unfortunately, he can't even read music! He imagines that his baton alone is sufficient to conduct the orchestra. He gets confused and he confuses the orchestra, and the audience sitting in the vast concert hall hears nothing but noise. The problem is not in the musicians, since their number is great and they are well trained; neither is it to be located in the instruments since we have plenty of funds to buy the best; neither can we place the blame on the music since we have the best composers. The real problem is the *maestro* who has actually never learned the art of conducting an orchestra!

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BOOK REVIEW

Price of Honour. by Jan Goodwin. London: Little Brown & Co., 1994, 363 pages. £19.95. Reviewer: D. Smith

Recently Jan Goodwin made a ten-country tour through the Muslim world. Her timely book is a lively and well-written commentary on her own experiences and the personal interviews she conducted with both men and women. A journalist, with long understanding of Asian and Middle Eastern countries, Jan Goodwin noticed the growing Islamic extremism and its powerful influence on the lives of women. Conversations with male militants (often educated in the West and radicalized during their time there) led her to comment; "a neoconservative wave of self-styled religious literalists had begun attacking Islam from within, and by doing so, were changing the world in which they live, especially for women..."

Through her descriptions of the women's world in a number of Islamic countries the author presented changes that bring drastic reversals in opportunities for women. For example, a liberal Afghani woman told her that they now feel forced to dress from head to toe in black- which is not how they dressed before. "These men are being taught that a woman seen in any shape or form is a Western idea, and therefore un-Islamic." This Afghani woman felt that since men are being oppressed themselves by the newly politicized religion, they in turn are oppressing women. She then quoted a proverb in Afghanistan: 'When you can't beat the donkey, beat the saddle.' Women are the saddle.

Jan Goodwin illustrated life for women in present-day Pakistan in her chapter "Pakistan: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back". She investigated several examples of horrific exploitation of lower class women. Further comments on the fate of divorced women of the upper classes also revealed their suffering. The author quoted a Pakistani male doctor friend on the situation of his highly educated sister. "She never goes out. It is considered shameful for our family.. My sister refused to let her husband take a second wife so her husband divorced her and married again anyway. Of course, my sister will never remarry even though she is permitted to, because men in our social circle would never consider marrying a divorced woman."

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Throughout the book it became apparent that the new Islamic revivalists (now found in many countries) are particularly radical where Muslim women are concerned. The author interpreted their actions in this way. "The severe restrictions placed on women by the Islamist movement, such as confinement or complete veiling, have no basis in the Koran or the teachings of the Prophet, but are being stressed because of the role women play in the Muslim world. The honor of the Muslim family is believed to reside in women's chastity and modesty; hence the stress on her being a virgin until her marriage and the very real threat of death if she is not. It is for this reason that the Islamists insist women be completely covered and secluded from the outside world. As Hassan al-Turabi, the de facto leader of fundamentalist Sudan has said, 'Women are the symbolic and substantive key to the new Islamic movements.' New York political scientist Barnett Rubin, of Columbia University, agrees. 'Women have become symbols of men's Islamic commitment,' he says."

This book provides significant insights into the growing influence of Fundamentalist Islam on society throughout the Muslim world. It particularly investigates the position of women in that society. Current newspaper articles and documentaries on Algeria give similar examples. The author's style is easy to read, but some of her true stories are heartbreaking. At the moment only the expensive hardback copy is available.

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