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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—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."