

THE NEW MENACE AND ITS ANSWER

Islam has experienced many an apostatic upsurge during the course of its history. The most powerful of them was the one that manifested itself among the Arab tribes soon after the death of the Prophet. By this we mean the mightily rebellious movement that was nipped in the bud by Caliph Abu Bakr through his matchless courage and strength of will. Then, again, the second great onslaught of apostasy within Islam was the widespread swing towards Christianity at the expulsion of Muslims from Spain which had stolen into some other countries too that were then under the domination of the Western Christian Powers, with the active support and encouragement of the Christian missionaries. Apart from these well-known episodes, there are also some stray instances like that of a few faint-hearted Muslims going over to some other faith in India. But such cases have been very rare, and the fact is that with the exception of the large-scale conversion of Muslims to Christianity in Spain, if it can be described as an apostatic movement, the general opinion of the historians of Islam is that the Muslim *Millat* has never seriously had to encounter a general threat of apostasy.

Whenever an incident of this nature took place in Islam it always produced a two-fold reaction within the Muslim society: (1) intense resentment and anger against the erring party, and (2) the termination of social relations. Anyone who had the misfortune to renounce the faith was the subject

of unqualified contempt and resentment from among the Muslims and he automatically ceased to be a member of the Islamic society in which he had been born and brought up. All contacts and relationship between an apostate and his kinsmen became non-existent immediately. The walking over from the fold of Islam into that of another faith meant indeed the walking over from one world into another. The entire family of the apostate would turn its face against him. Now neither the kinship remained nor the bond of marriage nor brotherhood nor inheritance. A wave of apostasy would produce international repercussions and arouse at once the self-protective instincts of Islam and the Muslims. The intellectuals, religious leaders and preachers of the Islamic country where such a thing occurred would get arrayed as a united whole against the calamity. They would probe into its causes and draw pointed attention to the virtues and the superior merits of Islam. A current of agony and disgust would run through the entire body of the Muslim society that was immediately concerned with it and shake it up at all levels. The elite as well as the common people would make it their one thought and concern. Such was the way in which the incidents of apostasy would react upon the consciousness of Muslims although these were neither widespread nor of much consequence in life.

Now, however, the Islamic World has been confronted for some time with a threat of apostasy which is casting its shadow over it from end to end. In its dimensions and vigour it has superseded by far all the previous threats. No country is safe from its sinister influence. But country is a far cry. There are, in fact, very few families which can claim to have been left unaffected by it. This is an apostasy

that has come into the Muslim East in the wake of the political domination by the West, and it has posed the most serious challenge to Islam since the days of the Prophet.

What does apostasy mean in Islamic terminology? The exchanging of one faith, of one spiritual creed for another; the refutation of the teachings the Prophet had brought into the world, the rejection of the ideals and precepts that have been continuously attributed to him and are accepted in Islam positively as truths. And what course did an apostate adopt? He denied the divine apostleship of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him and his companions) and adopted the creeds of Christianity, Judaism or Hinduism or became an atheist and rejected Prophecy, Revelation and the concept of the Hereafter. This was the sense in which the people of the former times understood the term apostasy. Anyone who abandoned his faith took the way of the Church if he adopted Christianity, and of the temple if he accepted Hinduism, and so on. His apostatic deed would be there for everyone to see; there would be no concealment of it. Fingers would be raised at him and the Muslims would cease to associate with that person. In brief, the apostasy of anyone was not hidden from the public view.

Europe introduced into the East concepts and ideologies that were based on the repudiation of the fundamentals of spiritual belief and the rejection of an Omnipotent Power holding sway over the entire universe, of that Supreme Consciousness which brought world into creation and in whose hands lay the dispensation of it (*Beware! It is He Who doth create and it is He alone Who rules*): concepts which had their origin in the denial of the Unknown, the Supernatural, Divine Revelation, Apostleship and the transcendental

values—this was the common feature of all the branches of thought brought by the West no matter whether they dealt with biology and evolution or with ethics, psychology, politics or economics. However varied their field of study they all had as their meeting ground the materialistic approach to man and his world and the interpretation of the phenomena along materialistic lines.

These ideals and concepts invaded the East and penetrated deep into the inner recesses of its soul. This Western materialistic philosophy was undoubtedly the greatest religion preached in the world after Islam. It was the greatest religion from the point of view of the extensiveness of its scope, the profoundest religion from the point of view of depth to which its roots went and the strongest religion from the point of view of the capacity it possessed for conquering the hearts and minds of men. The educated and intelligent section in the Muslim countries was simply bewitched by it : it delightfully drank it in and assimilated it eagerly. It became a follower of the new faith almost in the same way as a Muslim follows Islam or a Christian follows Christianity, to the extent that it now adores it with all its heart, reveres its ideals and swears by the greatness of its founders and torch-bearers. It propagates its teachings, denounces the creed that may run counter to it and forges links of brotherhood and fraternity with the other followers of the new faith. Thus, this new faith has become a sort of international family.

The Religion of Irreligiousness

What, then, this new faith is—however shy its portagonists may feel in giving it the name of a faith ? It consists of, as we have said earlier, the rejection of that

All-Knowing, Well-Informed Being who is the Creator of the Worlds, the Owner of Destiny and the Architect of Life of Futurity, the Last Day, the Heaven, the Hell, Divine Reward and Punishment, Prophecy and Apostleship and the Holy Law, of the truth that God has ordained for all mankind, the obedience to the Holy Prophet and made all salvation and enlightenment dependent on that loyalty, of the principle that Islam is that final and eternal message from the Divine which enfolds all that is good in this world and the next, and embodies a programme of life which is higher and superior to every other system, and of the fact that the world has been created for man and man for God.

The ruling classes of Muslim States everywhere today are generally the followers of this new creed, although they may not all be belonging to the same category so far as ardency and strength of spiritual allegiance are concerned. There is no doubt that in these classes are found individuals who bear faith in God and are believers in Islam but the dominant feature of them all is alas! nothing else but materialism and the Western philosophy of life that are rooted in atheism.

I say again that it is this apostasy which is now-a-days engulfing the Islamic World from one end to another. It has made its onslaught from house to house, family to family. The schools, the colleges, the universities have all been overrun by it. There will hardly be a family fortunate enough not to include a follower of this creed among its members. Approach any Muslim family, talk to its members in confidence, question, scratch them under the surface and you are sure to find someone who will not be believing in God or the Hereafter or in the Apostleship of the Prophet or in the Quran

as a Divine, eternal message and a complete code of life. Or, he will just say that he has given no thought to these questions because he does not attach any great importance to them. And his will be a lucky case.

A Forsaken Issue

This, indeed, is apostasy but it has managed to evade the notice of the Muslims. The reason is that its victim does not go to the church or the synagogue, nor does he proclaim his conversion. The society, consequently, remains blissfully blind to it. It does not take exception to the apostate. It neither criticises him nor punishes him nor does it enforce the other social sanctions. The apostate retains his place and rights in the society and even gets a chance to dominate it.

It is here that the most vital issue confronting the Muslim World lies. It is an issue that affects the entire Islamic *Millat*. A fast spreading apostatic wave is sweeping over the Muslim society and yet no one cares. Even the *Ulema* and the religious leaders feel no anxiety about it. In the past when a critical question faced the theologians they used to cry out in desperation: "An issue and no Abul Hasan ! (That is, an issue of vital importance to the *Millat* has cropped up and there is no one with the wisdom of Hazrat Ali to solve it)." Now I say, "An issue and no Abu Bakr ! (Apostasy is consuming the Muslim *Millat* like wild fire and there is no one with the faith and fortitude of Hazrat Abu Bakr to put it down)."

But remember that war is no solution of the problem, nor will it be wise to inflame public opinion over it. The problem cannot be solved by anger or by the use of force.

Islam is not acquainted with the Holy Inquisition. It also does not allow for vindictiveness and violence. The matter calls for patience, perseverance, sagacity and resolution. We will need immense study, thought and wisdom to deal with it successfully

Why Irreligiousness Succeeds

But how did this new faith infiltrate into the Islamic World ? How did it come to acquire the strength to engulf the Muslims within their homes; what can explain the mightily hold it enjoys over the hearts and minds of men ? All these questions require careful examination.

In the 19th century Islam had begun to show signs of fatigue and decay. In matters of faith, religious endeavour, knowledge and learning it had indeed touched the lowest point. Islam, in fact, knows no old age and no decline. Like the sun, it is ever young, ever new. It was Muslims who had fallen a prey to senility and degeneration. They had become narrow of outlook, their thinking had become stereotyped—it had lost originality—their minds had grown fossilised, they had lost enthusiasm for religion, and—exceptions apart—the ability to present it in an effective manner.

In addition to this, no attempt was made to establish contact with the young educated classes and to influence their minds although the future belonged to them. It occurred to no one to impress upon them the basic truths that Islam was an eternal, evergreen faith, the faith of humanity, that the Quran was a miracle of a Book, permanent, unchanging, deathless, whose wonders knew no limit and treasures were boundless, that the Holy Prophet was the prophet for all times and the leader of all men, that the Islamic *Shariat*

was a marvel of legislation, endowed with the ability to march hand in hand with life and answer all the demands it may make upon jurisprudence. Faith and morality and the spiritual values were the only foundations on which a civilised, enlightened society could be built. The modern civilisation, had only the means and the channels. The ends and the real springheads were contained in the teachings of the prophets. And a healthy and balanced system of civilisation could come into being only when there was a harmony between the ends and the means.

This was the time and the situation when the West made its assault on the Islamic World with its whole armoury of thoughts and ideas that had been designed and hammered into shape in the minds of the foremost thinkers and philosophers of their time and garbed in such philosophical phraseology that they gave the impression of being the very essence of human wisdom and learning, although quite a good deal in them was purely empirical and had no basis in fact. The Western thinkers had taken a lot for granted and drawn conclusions that were in a measure just hypothetical. The systems of thought they had built up were an amalgamation of fact and fiction, of knowledge and ignorance and of firm reality and poetic imagination—yes, poetry, for you must not imagine that poetry is confined only to verse and rhyme; it is practised also in the realms of philosophy and social sciences.

These ideologies came under the shadow of the political conquest by the West, and the people of the East bowed down before them emotionally and intellectually too. The Eastern intellectuals welcomed them with open arms. Some of them of course accepted them intelligently and consciously but their number was few. With the majority it was a case

of unthinking acceptance, dazzled as they were by the material superiority of the alien rulers. They saw and they surrendered. Their minds were hypnotised and belief in the Western ideas became synonymous with progress and enlightenment and the most important criterion of learning and wisdom.

Thus it was that this new apostasy spread its wings over Muslim East without any hitch or opposition. Neither the father objected to the downfall of the son nor the teacher to that of the student. The religious leaders also felt no qualms about it. It was a silent revolution. The apostates did not take their way to any church or temple; they did not prostrate themselves before any idol nor made sacrificial offerings at any polytheistic altar—signs which in the past gave an indication of the spiritual metamorphosis.

The apostates of old used to walk openly out of the Muslim society and associate themselves freely with the society of those whose religion they had accepted. They used to declare boldly their change of faith and submit cheerfully to what they had to bear as a result of it. They did not insist upon clinging to the benefits accruing from membership of the society they had in fact forsaken. But the present-day apostates who turn their backs on Islam do not at the same time also walk out of the Islamic society in spite of the fact that of all societies it is only Islamic society which is based entirely on spiritual beliefs since it cannot come into being without the presence of a particular set of religious doctrines. These modern apostates continue to avail themselves of all the possible advantages of being the members of the Islamic society. This is a unique situation for Islam.

As they have turned and twisted the moral and spiritual

values so also have these ideologies sown the seeds of paganish sentiments and feelings in the Muslim world upon which Islam has declared an open war. For instance, take paganish factionalism which is founded on race, country and nation. It is being venerated with fanatical enthusiasm and reverence. The human family is cut into pieces in its name. It has been raised to the status of a religion and given a complete control over people's thoughts and emotions. It is indeed the most powerful rival to religion judged by the extensiveness and the intensity of its influence. It gains ascendancy over one's entire existence. When it sweeps over a society it pushes the work of the Prophets into oblivion and reduces religion into a soulless programme of rituals and ceremonies; the organic unity of mankind about which God had declared: *Lo! this your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me* is destroyed and the human race is divided into a number of warring camps.

Why is Islam Opposed to Factionalism ?

Islam had dealt a deadly blow to this spirit and administered a clear warning to its followers against the dangerous possibilities it contained. Factionalism is the very antonym of a universal faith since the basic oneness of humanity cannot endure even for a brief while in its presence. The negation of factionalism is an undisputed feature of the Islamic *Shariat*. There are innumerable provisions to this effect in it. Anyone who has an awareness of the inner nature of Islam—in truth, of religion—will have no hesitation in realising the truth of the assertion that religion can have nothing to do with racial or national prejudices. It is beyond dispute that a majority of the ills that are poisoning the world-atmosphere today and

dragging humanity to the verge of destruction are the direct results of national factionalism. Naturally, therefore, a man who had come to the world only to weld mankind into one whole, to bring it under the banner of a single faith, to call into existence a new society based on the consciousness of God Almighty, the Nourisher of the World, and to give it peace in place of war, love in place of hatred, unity in place of division could not but wage a relentless war against it till it became a thing of the past.

Wave of Nationalism in Islamic Countries

But thanks to the political and cultural domination of the West, the Islamic World which owes its very existence to the Prophet has now wholeheartedly adopted the creed of Nationalism as if it were a proved scientific truth from which there can be no escape. Almost all the different peoples who go to make the family of Islam are today the ardent admirers of factional prejudices which their religion had unceremoniously buried. They are doing their best to revive them including even those paganish national practices which are openly amounting to idolatry. Among some of them the pre-Islamic era of their history which Islam emphatically condemns as paganish and steeped in *Ignorance* is being recalled as a thing of pride—and paganism is a word nothing more detestable than which exists in the eyes of Islam. The Quran declares the deliverance of Muslims from it as one of the choicest favours of God and calls upon them to be duly grateful to Him for that :

And remember Allah's favour unto you. How ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the

brink of an abyss of fire.

Nay, but Allah doth confer a favour on you, inasmuch as He hath led you to the faith, if ye are earnest.

He it is Who sendeth down clear revelations unto His slave, that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and lo ! for you, Allah is full of Pity, Merciful.

Muslim Standpoint

Such being the case, a Muslim should be filled with repugnance and disgust at the sight of paganism—whether modern or ancient. Have you ever seen a person released from prison who does not look back at the period of his imprisonment with anguish and displeasure or a man having been cured of a foul disease, and who does not shudder at the thought of his illness? Or, has there ever been a man who has not thanked God at the dawn of the day after having experienced a terrible nightmare during the night? Why, then, should it be different with paganism which is many times worse than a term in prison or an illness or a nightmare? Why should a person having been freed from it by the grace of the Almighty not tremble at the thought of it and offer earnest thanksgiving to his Maker for delivering him from a curse which contains innumerable misfortunes of this world and the next? Says a Tradition of the Prophet: “There are three things and if they are present in any one he will taste (the joys of) faith: firstly, that God and the Prophet be dearer to him than anything else, secondly, that his love for any one (or anything) is only for the sake of God, and, thirdly, that he dreads returning to the state of paganism like being thrown into the fire.” (—*Bukhari*). Says God in denunciation of paganism, its rites, its customs, its practices

and its heroes.

And We made them patterns that invite unto the fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped.

And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the hateful.

Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they did follow the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was no right guide. He will go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and will lead them to the Fire for watering-place. Ah, hapless is the watering-place (whither they are) led. A curse is made to follow them in the world and on the Day of Resurrection. Hapless is the gift (that will be) given (them).

Revival of Paganish Era in Islamic Countries

Due to being over-awed by the Western philosophy and its peculiar mode of approach to life many Muslims in Islamic countries have begun to recall the pre-Islamic period of their national existence with pride and pleasure. They are being drawn intellectually and emotionally to the customs and practices of that period as a part of their national heritage. They want to resuscitate them and to give a place of honour and privilege to the kings, leaders and other noteworthy personalities of that period in their history as if it was a golden age which Islam snatched away from them. God bless our souls! What a colossal ingratitude and lack of appreciation of the worth and value of Islam and the Prophet it is! It would mean that all dislike for paganism and idolatry and the contempt for their senseless practices has disappeared from the hearts—and

these are things which are hard to imagine with respect to a conscientious Muslim. It will be no wonder if because of these follies the Muslims are totally deprived of faith; the blessing of Islam is withdrawn from them and some heavenly curse is sent down in place of felicity. The Quran has warned :

And incline not toward those who do wrong lest the fire touch you, and ye have no protecting friends against Allah, and afterward ye would not be helped.

Moral and Spiritual Chaos

Besides nationalism, another calamity that is bringing ruin upon the Islamic World is the blind admiration for the material things of life by its upper classes. They are ready to sacrifice all other considerations and values in the pursuit of their worldly ambitions. There is at work among them a strong tendency to prefer this material world to the Hereafter and to avail themselves whole-heartedly of its pleasures. The appeasement of the sensual appetites has become the chief object of their existence with the result that moral perversion, drinking, debauchery and other vices have freely crept into them and they have obtained, more or less, a complete freedom from the moral obligations imposed by religion as if they have no connection with it or that the Islamic *Shariat* has been repealed. With a few exceptions the ruling sections of Muslim countries present a picture very much like it everywhere.

The Biggest Danger

This, in brief, is the moral and spiritual state of the present-day Muslims. A wave of paganism is sweeping

across the Muslim world and carrying away with it the glorious heritage of Islam. Never has Islam experienced a danger so powerful and so all-pervading. And the tragedy is that there are few who are willing to take stock of this dismal situation and fewer still to place all that they have at stake in order to combat it. We remember that when agnostic tendencies raised their head in Islam under the influence of Greek philosophy there sprang up a number of outstanding men to put them down with all the unique resources of their mind and heart and with their social prestige. Similarly, when the sects of *Batiniyah* and *Mulahada* made their appearance, the crusaders of Islam jumped into the arena to take the issue against them with pen and speech. Thus, Islam, on account of these timely services, continued to command such a strong position intellectually and logically that it could beat off any storm that arose.

The Real Problem

The real problem before Islam now is not that of moral degeneration or slackness in matters of prayer or other supererogatory observances or the disregard of the religious practices or the imitation of the foreigners. These are important things, no doubt, but the real and foremost issue which has worked itself up like a mighty tidal wave and is striking directly at its roots is one of belief and unbelief. It is that whether Islam will survive in the world or be cast away like an old garment. The battle that is being fought today in the Muslim World is between Western materialism and Islam, the last of the messages from God. On one side there is agnosticism and on the other the Divine Law. I believe this is the last struggle between religion and

irreligiousness after which the world will swing full-scale towards one side or the other.

The Holiest of Holy Wars

The *Jehad* of today, the greatest need of the present hour is to repulse this storm of atheism, nay, to go ahead and make a direct assault at the heart of it. The chief task of religious renovation in the modern times lies in the revival of faith among the young men and the educated classes of the *Ummat* in the basic tenets of Islam, in its moral and spiritual scheme of things and in the apostleship of the Prophet. There can be no better deed of worship today than to release the educated young men of intellectual and psychological confusion and frustration they are going through and to satisfy them mentally with regard to Islam. The basic characteristics of paganism that have dug themselves into their mind must be weeded out to make place for spiritual truths of Islam.

For a full century the West has been preying on the hearts and minds of the Muslims. It has played havoc with its scepticism, doubt and disbelief. The transcendental truth have been trampled underfoot by the materialistic concepts of political science and economics. We have watched all this like a mere spectator, heedless of what it was leading to. We sat pretty on what our ancestors had left behind to us and did not realise that it was essential to bring it into conformity with the changing pattern of time. We also made no effort really to understand the thought-process the West had released. We never examined the Western philosophy and its way of life critically. Our time was wasted in superficial discussions and, now, after the

passage of a century, the time has come when the foundations of the faith itself are in danger and a generation has come up which has very little real trust in the spiritual values of life.

Call of Faith

The crying need of the hour is to call the Muslims back to faith. The rallying cry of this new religious endeavour should be "Let us re-create faith in Islam." But mere slogan-raising will avail nothing. We have to think of the way through which to approach the inner selves of the ruling sections of the contemporary Muslim World so that they can be brought back to Islam.

Selfless Preachers

Today Islam needs workers who may be ready to dedicate their entire resources and abilities, their learning, their time, their money and their energy to its cause, and pay not any heed to the attractions of worldly advancement. They must be wholly free from malice, bearing no grudge against anyone. They should serve, but take no service from others; give and not take. Their conduct shall of course be different from that of political workers who are motivated mainly by the lust for power. Sincerity should be their habit, and freedom from every kind of self-seeking vanity and prejudice their chief mark of distinction.

New Institutions

Furthermore, we require such academies which may produce a literature forceful and inspiring enough to bring the educated youth back to Islam in its wider sense,

emancipating them from the bondage of Western ideology which they have thoughtlessly accepted mainly under the stress of the times—a literature that may lay down the foundations of Islam anew in their minds and provide healthy, wholesome food for their souls. For this task there are needed devoted scholars in every nook and corner of the Muslim World who may not leave the intellectual front of the battle till the last shot is fired.

For my part, I want to state clearly that I have never been one of those who believe in the separation of religion from politics or who seek to interpret religion (Islam) in a way that it may fit into every pattern of life. Nor do I belong to that category of theologians who include politics among the 'condemned tribe of the Quran.' I am second to none in my desire to see the development of proper political consciousness and leadership among the Muslims everywhere. I believe that a theocratic society cannot be established without ascendancy of religion resting on a political structure based on the precepts of Islam.

Past Experiences

But the question is one of precedence, of first things first, and of the exigencies of time. So far our time and our energies have been directed towards political and agitational activities. This was done primarily on the assumption that the condition of the *Ummat* was sound so far as faith was concerned. The leadership was in the hands of the Muslims themselves and the ruling classes were alive to their responsibilities towards Islam and eager to bring about its victory in the world. But now the state of affairs is just the reverse of it. The *Ummat* has suffered

a serious degeneration both morally and spiritually without being actually aware of it. Speaking in a general way, its educated and privileged sections have almost been weaned away from the faith by the Western ideas and they are, so to speak, openly in revolt against the basic ideology of Islam, thinking that what they have borrowed from the West represents the *sine qua non* of truth and progress and unless the society is reorganised in the light of the material concepts there can be no hope for the future. They are pushing forward the Western way of life with all the enthusiasm of new converts and bringing the whole of the Muslim *Ummat* very close to atheism. It is a different matter that some of them want to hurry through the process while others believe in a more graduated course. The modes of their approach are also different. But so far as the destination is concerned it is the same with all of them.

Two Divergent Groups among the Theologians

With regard to this section, our theological class—if the term be correct for there is no clerical or priestly class in Islam—is divided into two divergent groups. One of them is emphatically opposed to it and does not want to have any truck with those who belong to it, but it is also completely unconcerned with the question as to what causes and factors are responsible for producing the atheistic tendencies among the privileged Muslim classes. It abhors to have any contact with them and does little by way of purging them of their erroneous beliefs. The other group associates with them to the full and seeks advantages in terms of worldly gain as a result of its association. It pays no attention to their spiritual redemption. Hence this group

has no call to give or religious pride to display. It seems to have abandoned those sections to their fate and has no solicitude for correction and reformation.

The Group that Really is Needed

There is unfortunately no group among the religious leaders which may devote itself to the reformation of the Muslim upper classes thinking that they are merely the victims of a disease from which recovery is not impossible—a group which may carry the message of religious reclamation to them with tolerance and wisdom and discharge among them the obligation of selfless service. Due to this handicap the Westernised ruling section of our society gets no opportunity to come closer to religion and to the religious atmosphere. The result is that this section spends its life in ignorance and distrust of faith and the distrust is further strengthened by the conduct of that group among the ecclesiastics which comes forward as its rival in the political field or fights against it for political power with religion as the major instrument of its action. Such religious leaders help only to make it more suspicious of religion for it is natural for man to dislike those who compete with him for a thing which he holds dear—may it be belonging to the realm of wealth or of power and prestige or of pleasure and self-indulgence.

The cure of the ills of the Muslim World lies in our capacity to produce a band of dedicated workers who may be above all personal considerations and have no worldly aspirations for themselves. Their entire endeavour should be directed towards loosening the intellectual and psychological knots of the ruling classes of the society through establishing

personal contacts with them and bringing forth for them an effective religious literature, and reforming them through their own piety, sanctity of character, earnestness of purpose, sincerity and selflessness and Prophet-like moral conduct.

Verdict of History

History records that it is men of this class and calibre who have rendered genuine service to Islam during all the phases of its career. The credit for changing the course of the Umayyad rule and bringing Umar ibn Abdul Aziz on the throne of the Caliphate belongs to this very class of men functioning under the inspired leadership of Raj'a ibn Haywah. In India too the revolution of an identical nature that was wrought during the time of the Mughals owed its origin to a similar band of devoted servants of the *Ummat*. A powerful Emperor like Akbar had resolved, so it did seem to all intents and parposes, to cast the sub-continent in the mould of paganism in opposition to Islam after it had remained for four hundred years under the benign shadow of Muslim rule. But by virtue of determined action by an inspired man of faith and endeavour and his illustrious successors the land was won back for Islam—and more firmly than before. Each successor of Akbar proved to be better than his predecessor till there came Aurangzeb on the throne whose reign constitutes a most glorious chapter in the annals of Islam and religious renovation. History, as you know, is always ready to repeat itself—it never tires of the process—the only thing is that there may be some force strong enough to turn its tide, and the only force which can bring back the golden era of Islam is the earnestness, the sagacity and the missionary zeal we have just spoken of.

The Current Crisis

We should face the current crisis with wisdom, courage and fortitude. A woeful tragedy of moral, cultural and intellectual apostasy has struck Islam. It should be the object of serious concern to all those who have any solicitude for Islam. Today the leading sections of Muslim society almost everywhere are on the verge of the dissolution of faith. They have already discarded, in the main, the moral obligations imposed by the *Shariat*, their mental outlook has become wholly materialistic and in politics they are pursuing enthusiastically what must be described as the course of irreligion. There are many among them—to avoid saying a majority of them—who do not believe in Islam as a creed and an ideology. And the Muslim masses, although they possess all the seeds of goodness and virtue and constitute innately the most virtuous segments of humanity, are under the influence and overlordship of these sections due to their educational and economic backwardness. If the present situation continues as it is the apostasy will infiltrate into the masses as well and destroy the faith of the simple minded Muslim peasants and artisans. It has been so in the West and it is going to happen here also in the East if the events are allowed to take their course and the All-Powerful Will of the Providence does not intervene.

Immediate Action

There is not a day to be wasted. The World of Islam is threatened with a most dangerous wave of apostasy—a wave that has spread over the most effective sections of it. This wave is a revolt against the moral and social values that are the most precious treasures of Islam. If these treasures are lost, which are a sacred heritage from the Prophet handed

down from generation to generation and for whose protection the soldiers of Islam have borne enormous hardships and gone through the severest of trials, the World of Islam will also be there no more.

Shall we awake to this great reality, to this mighty threat of the times ? Or shall we not?

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Today the Muslim youth is passing through a crisis of faith. The absence or scarcity of a healthy and forceful literature that can meet the needs of modern educated minds is driving the Muslim intelligentsia to an attitude of doubt and discontent towards Islam. As the leadership of society lies in the hands of this very class and the rest of the people take example by the way it thinks and acts, its inner insolvency and hesitation to believe in abstract truths are quickly spreading to the whole of the community. It is feared that if steps are not promptly taken to meet the developing challenge of Western materialism, the entire world will be plunged before long into utter apostasy and atheism.

In order to meet this urgent need the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications was established in May, 1959, under the presidentship of Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi.

The Academy has begun its career with producing Islamic literature in English, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi and has so far brought out about one hundred and fifty works of which about one hundred were published for the first time and the remaining were reprints.

The Academy's publications have been very well-received all over the world. Most of the publications of the Academy have run into several editions and generated Islamic consciousness among the modern educated youth all over the world.

It is necessary for the success of its mission that all earnest and thoughtful Muslims lend their support and co-operation to the Academy.