

THE MISSION OF THE ISLAMIC <ULAMĀ>

by <ALLĀL AL-FĀSI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC WITH FOOTNOTES AND INTRODUCTION

by

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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‘Allāl ‘Abd al-Wāhid al-Fāsi, the founder of the first political party in Morocco and the dean of Moroccan nationalists, has written voluminously on the history, politics, religion, and social life of his country. Among his better known works is al-Harakat al-Istiqlaliyah fi al-Maghrib al-‘Arabi translated by Hazem Zaki Nuseibah as The Independence Movements in Arab North Africa (Washington: 1954). Despite its title this book is essentially a detailed treatment of the rise and development of Moroccan nationalism up to 1948; the treatment of the same phenomenon in Tunisia and Algeria is rather cursory and in summary form. The whole is written from a nationalist's point of view. Less known but by no means unimportant is al-Fasi's al-Waqq al-Dhati (self-criticism), an expose and critique of Moroccan society, especially since 1956.<sup>1</sup> In this book, which is more of a guide for thought than a programme for action, the author deals with a whole range of national, political, legal, and socio-religious problems of modern Morocco. It is perhaps the first attempt by a Moroccan leader to look within his country for social forces adverse to progress and modernization. If one may summarize the whole purpose of al-Waqq al-Dhati in one sentence, it is to awaken the conscience of Morocco.

Al-Fāsi's discourse on the role of the Moroccan 'ulamā' (scholars of Islam), the translation of which the following pages are meant to introduce, is more modest in terms of content and depth, than his above mentioned works.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it is equally important in two ways. First, it tells us about what an 'ālim' (singular of 'ulamā') thinks of the role of his fellow-'ulamā', and therefore of his own role, in society. Secondly, the Mission of the Islamic 'Ulamā' reveals a significant aspect of the author's political thought, namely his strong--almost emotional--commitment to the renovation of Moroccan society within the framework of reformed Islam. On the surface there is certainly nothing peculiar in an 'ālim's devotion to the rule of Islam; but al-Fāsi belongs to a category within the religious elite of Morocco that is quite different in orientation and conceptualization of society; he belongs to a more liberal tradition in Moroccan Islam. One of the purposes of this introduction is to examine in some detail the origins of this liberalism and the intellectual influences which had come to play on al-Fāsi's thought.

Although the author does not apparently assign to his fellow-'ulamā' a political role per se, the fact that he himself was a prominent and active politician-'ālim' for more than two decades is not insignificant. His participation and experience in the nationalist movement and post-

independence politics have shown, at least to him, the anachronism of the classical idea that the 'ulamā' should abstain from taking part in political life and from holding political office.<sup>3</sup> In fact one of the important aspects of nascent nationalism in the Maghrib is the active part played by the 'ulamā' in formulating and channeling, albeit in religious terms, the grievances of the Maghribi people.<sup>4</sup> Of course this was partly due to the deep entrenchment of religious leadership in social life as a result of a centuries-old tradition in the Islamic world which revered the 'ulamā' as the custodians of knowledge and the conscience of the community. But even more important in the context of Morocco is the fact that by the time of the imposition of French rule the 'ulamā' were, generally speaking, the only group in society which could claim a certain measure of education--an education of a special type, predominantly religious. Yet it is this last fact which best explains the orientation of the initial phase of nationalism which had been dominated by 'ulamā' like 'Abd al-Azīz al-Th'ālbi of Tunisia, 'Abd al-Hamīd ibn Badis of Algeria,<sup>5</sup> and 'Allāl al-Fāsi in Morocco.

Nevertheless by the late 1930's this religious elite was relegated to the backstage of politics in both Tunisia and Algeria; the political scene came to be dominated by the more secular-minded and Western-educated nationalists. The transition was rather abrupt and the transformation of

the nationalist movement a little less than spectacular. Morocco, on the other hand, seems to have made the transition in the early 1930's, and in a gradual manner, if only because there had been a continuity of leadership to the very dawn of independence. While this variation on the part of Morocco may be explained in terms other than personalities, it is still possible to gain more insight by analyzing the development in the political thought of 'Allāl al-Fāsi. It seems that his ability to internalize and in a sense politicize those intellectual influences, which we have just alluded to and which we shall detail shortly, may explain the transformation that had taken place in Moroccan nationalism after 1930.

Born in 1910 in Fez, the cultural and religious centre of the Maghrib for centuries, al-Fāsi went through the traditional system of education which finally led him to the Qarawiyyin university-mosque.<sup>6</sup> This old seat of learning offered its students instruction in all aspects of Islam with special emphasis on history, theology and ethics. However by the early decades of this century a group of 'ulamā' in the institute began to question the curriculum of instruction and called for its revision and the introduction of modern sciences and methods of teaching;<sup>7</sup> they were dissatisfied with the attitude of the more conservative 'ulamā' who sought to preserve the Qarawiyyin as a centre of purely Islamic studies. This controversy around the curriculum--

to which al-Fāsi had become a party in the late 1920's--was in fact rather symbolic of a much deeper and older controversy which started with a modern Islamic reformist movement in Egypt during the last quarter of the last century, namely the Salafīyah.<sup>8</sup> The ideas of this movement and their percolation into Morocco merit a detailed discussion because of their direct influence not only on al-Fasi but indeed on the whole nationalist movement in Morocco.

The founders of the Salafīyah in Egypt were Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) and Muḥammad ‘Abdu (1849-1905)<sup>9</sup> They were both disturbed at the close of the last century by the territorial and cultural encroachments of European imperialism on the Muslim world. However, al-Afghani and ‘Abdu came to believe that the causes for the decline of Islamic civilization and the degeneration of religious and social life was a result of the abandonment of true Islam. To them the reformation and defense of the Muslim society against the West were only possible by a return to and application of the original sources of Islam, namely the Qu ran and the Sunnah (traditions of the Prophet). Both reformers had therefore condemned all beliefs and practices which had no sanction in or were incompatible with these primary sources of religion. This was undoubtedly a direct attack on the Sufi tarīqas (orders) the beliefs of which were believed to be--by the Salafis--superstitious and contrary to the Qu ran.

The repudiation of Sufism was only one aspect of the Salafiyah, perhaps a negative one. More important was the call of Salafis and 'Abdu in particular for the modernization of Islamic institutions, the system of education and the Arabic language. Reforming al-Azhar university-mosque<sup>10</sup> in Egypt was one of those tasks to which 'Abdu had addressed himself continually. To him al-Azhar, apart from being an ancient seat of learning, was Egypt's main source for teachers and religious functionaries. It should therefore be the starting point of awakening and reforming it amounts to the reforming of the Muslim world.<sup>11</sup> He was convinced that any political change in Egypt should be preceded by a change in the hearts and minds of the people.

"Whoever seeks to serve it (al-Azhar) must tackle its failures through the peoples religious sentiment. They have so long been motivated by religious factors that it has now become something like second nature to them. The so-called literary education introduced by Muhammad 'Ali (1805-1849) provided its beneficiaries with some knowledge, but it did not move them. It did not touch them because it was divorced from religion."<sup>12</sup>

We shall see later that the Moroccan Salafis and al-Fasi speak of the reform of education and the Qarawiyyin in similar terms.

The reform of the Arabic language had also drawn the attention of the Salafiyah. 'Abdu and his followers--and

for that matter all Salafis--thought that a proper knowledge of Arabic and an appreciation of its literature are preconditions for an accurate understanding of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.<sup>13</sup> Abdu summed up this idea as follows:

"...to understand the Qurʾān one must cultivate a taste for language through constant application...a proper understanding of the Qurʾān is given only to those whose knowledge of the language has become part of their nature...and a people who does not concern itself with the niceties of its language invites the death of its intellectual life."<sup>14</sup>

It is thus evident that the Salafiyah was seeking to restore power and self-respect to a degenerate and disorganized society and as such its main concern was the problem of power. We shall see later that its politico-religious ideology was admirably suited to the colonial setting in Morocco especially after 1930. The call of the Salafiyah for the restoration of "authentic" religion and a revitalized language was an appropriate weapon to be used by Moroccans against the cultural arrogance of the French colonial mentality. With this background we should now turn our attention to the transmission of Salafi ideas to Morocco where they managed to dominate the intellectual milieu of the 1920's of which al-Fāsi was a product.

It was during the end of the Nineteenth Century and the early decades of this one that the influence of the salafiyah began to be felt in Morocco. The percolation of

these ideas was in large part the work of three Moroccan 'ulamā' two of whom had in fact carried the movement from its original sources in Egypt. One of these was Abdullah ibn Idris al-Sanusi who spent some time in Egypt en route to Mecca to make the pilgrimage around 1870.<sup>15</sup> On his return to Morocco he advocated some of the Salafi beliefs in the royal council of the 'ulamā' in which he was a member. He argued for "the acceptance of the literal and most obvious meaning of the scriptures and strict observance of the sunnah...."<sup>16</sup> Al-Sanusi's ideas were received rather unfavourably by the rest of the 'ulamā' despite the apparent sympathy of Sultan Mawlay al-Ḥasan (1873-1894). He was in fact severely criticized by the majority of council members and in response al-Sanusi decided to leave Morocco and return once more to the Middle East where he subsequently lectured in Damascus and Istanbul.

This apparently was a setback for the Salafīyah; nevertheless al-Sanusi's attempt had undoubtedly left a tradition of reform to be picked up and built on by later Salafis like Abu Shu'ab al-Dukkali (1878-1937). The departure of this Moroccan 'ālim' for Egypt in 1896 to study in al-Azhar coincided, roughly with Abdu's success in modernizing the curriculum in this institute. At this time also the Egyptian press and al-Manār<sup>17</sup> periodical in particular was publishing several articles and commentaries on the views of 'Abdu and

the Salafīyah in general. Al-Dukkali's stay in Cairo must have won him to Salafi views since on his return to Morocco in 1907 he instigated a campaign similar to that of Abdu for the reform of the Qarawiyin University; he had in fact succeeded in adding to the curriculum the subject of tafsir (interpretation of the Qurʾān).<sup>18</sup> He was even able to win over Sultan Abd al-Hafiz (1908-1911) to the Salafīyah.<sup>19</sup>

More important for our purposes than al-Dukkali is his disciple from Fez Nawlay Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi whose influence on ʿAllāl al-Fāsi was both direct and profound. His repudiation of the Tijaniyah tariqa<sup>20</sup> of which he was a former member, was not only due to the influence and ideas of his religious master, al-Dukkali, but also due to his own reading of ibn Taimiyyah,<sup>21</sup> the Fourteenth Century Hanbali<sup>22</sup> theologian whose ideas were considered the philosophical basis of the Salafīyah. Al-ʿAlawi developed an interest in ibn Taimiyyah's theological discourses by reading introductions to them in various books. However these introductions did not meet his quest for more detailed information about the man and his works and he therefore started searching for the original writings of ibn Taimiyyah. It should be remarked here in passing that because of his criticism of Sufism and denunciation of the tariqas, his books were virtually banned throughout Morocco. But al-ʿAlawi was lucky enough to discover on investigation in

Fez a collection of Salafi books--including several copies of ibn Taimiyyah's al-Tawassul wa- Lwasila {intercession (with Allah) and the (its) Means}--which were sent to Morocco by the Egyptian Salafis during the First World War for distribution.<sup>23</sup> Al-‘Alawi naturally saw to it that those books should have the maximum circulation, not only in Fez but in the whole country. By this time also al-Manār and al-‘Urwatn al-Wuthqa<sup>24</sup> (the Indissoluble Bond) journal had reached Morocco in fairly large numbers and they must have confirmed al-‘Alawi and his disciples in their salafi beliefs.

Al-‘Alawi's influence on the Islamic reformist movement in Morocco was not confined to the small group of intellectuals--including al-Fāsi--which congregated around him in Fez. He widened his audience by the public lectures and lessons which he used to give in the Qarawiyin and in which he attacked several abuses of the tariqas and the religious studies. His most vehement attack was directed toward the Tijaniyah which was cooperating at the time with the French in Algeria;<sup>25</sup> the attack on this tariqa was further intensified in 1925-1926 when the Salafis accused it of aiding the French in the Rif War. Al-‘Alawi's influence was even transmitted to the rest of the Maghrib by the articles he used to publish in Algerian and Tunisian newspapers.<sup>26</sup>

As it was the case with Salafis elsewhere in the Islamic world, al-‘Alawi and his circle spearheaded the drive for a

new type of education by founding five schools in Fez between 1921-1925.<sup>27</sup> Generally known as the free schools--because of their modern curriculum and absence of French control over them--these new institutions served as a model for their later counterparts in Rabat, Tetuan, and Marakesh. It is needless to say that religion, ethics, and Islamic history, which were the core of emphasis, were taught in the free schools according to the Salafi point of view. That these schools did contribute to the general spread of education in Moroccan cities is not perhaps as important as the fact that they inculcated in the minds of the young generation of the 1920's a liberal conceptualization of religion and society.

It is perhaps appropriate in summing up the impact of the Salafiyah on the Moroccan intellectuals of this period to quote al-Fasi's own assessment of his master, al-'Alawi, whom he describes as "our illustrious teacher":

"During the Rif War with France (1922-1926) we used to gather around our master {al-'Alawi} working for the success and dissemination of this movement {the Salafiyah}. The treason of some of the leaders of the tariqas during this war had only filled us with even more enthusiasm and strength. Ibn al-'Arabi's group in Fez and that of Shiekh Abu Shu aib {al-Dukkali} in Rabat carried on an intensive reform campaign by their lectures, exchange visits, and articles published in the newspapers of Algeria and Tunisia because al-Maghrib al-'Arabi {Morocco} did not at that time have a single newspaper which was not controlled by the

Protectorate {authorities}. No sooner had the movement gained momentum than the Protectorate began to be apprehensive about it, feeling that it was directed against its stooges, the leaders of the tarīqas. The Protectorate began to summon us for interrogation and we were threatened with imprisonment; in fact our friend Muhammad Ghazi, a prominent leader of the Salafīyah, was soon arrested."<sup>28</sup>

It is thus evident that the major themes which al-Fāsi discusses in The Role of the 'Ulamā'--the "rigid" 'ulamā', the denunciation of the tarīqas and the reform of education--are in fact an echo from the past; they represent a continuity in Salafi thinking and ideas from the 1920's and even earlier.

However, by the mid-1920's and definitely after 1930, there seems to have been a marked shift of emphasis in the political thought of al-Fasi and orientation of the Salafīyah, the leadership of which he had already assumed by this time. While "old" Salafis like al-Sanusi and al-Dukkali were primarily concerned with religious reform, mainly to ensure the proper understanding and application of the Qu ran and the sunnah, the neo-Salafis, led by al-Fasi, reacted differently to the political realities of French rule which was not really established on a firm basis until the end of "pacification" in the late 1920's. The new regime, by the fact that it severely limited the political power of the Sultan whom the Salafis, both "new" and "old" looked to as the vortex and champion of their reformist movement, had

allowed the neo-Salafis a certain measure of political maneuverability which was not available to them before:<sup>29</sup>

"...Before the Protectorate, religious and social reform had to come from the ruling class comprising the Sultan and his retinue of scholars and administrators, and had to be in harmony with the established framework of society. This meant that the reformers had a very limited scope within which to operate: the absolute authority of the Sultan could not be challenged and consequently the establishment of democratic institutions was not conceivable.... {However} the organization of the regime of the Protectorate in such a way as to centralize all power in the hands of the French administration enabled the neo-Salafis to demand political freedom without forsaking their allegiance to the Muslim head {Sultan} of their community."<sup>30</sup>

It was only a question of time before al-Fasi began to see his role and that of the Salafis in political terms. His conviction that a renovated religion is the best and only valid basis for a modern society had led him to seek a close identification between Islam and political life. The confirmation of this conviction and its wedding to political reality came in 1930 with the promulgation of the Berber dahir<sup>31</sup> (decree) which inaugurated a new phase of Salafi activism.

The dahir aimed at institutionalizing a separate judicial system for the Berber population of Morocco; it stripped the Sultan's judicial functionaries—the qadis of the shari'ā courts and the qa'ids (military gouverneurs)—of

their right of jurisdiction over the Berbers. To al-Fāsi and his fellow-Salafis the dahir was not only an infringement of the Sultan's authority but even more important a deliberate French and Christian tactic to divide an essentially indivisible religious community.<sup>32</sup>

During the agitation which immediately followed for the repeal of the dahir, al-Fāsi founded a secret society called al-zawīyah (literally meaning Corner) which became the nucleus of the National Party (1937) and the progenitor of the Istiqlal Party (1944). He was also elected member of the ad hoc committee, composed of the 'ulamā' and intellectuals of Fez, which drafted a memorandum demanding the abrogation of the dahir and the reunification of the judicial system.<sup>33</sup>

With the failure of the Rif Revolt in 1926 and after, the neo-Salafis seem to have also shifted the emphasis of their attack on the Sufi tariqas. It has been mentioned earlier that the old Salafis criticized the tariqas on purely religious grounds. However, after the establishment of colonial rule, the neo-Salafis had fairly succeeded in portraying the tariqas as the political "agents" of the French; it could be assumed that this was a political tactic aimed at discrediting the tariqas' leaders in the eyes of their own mass following and thus capitalize on these masses as a potential political force. A brief word on why the Sufi

tariqas in Morocco had become more vulnerable to Salafi attacks in the post-war period and after is perhaps necessary at this juncture to put their decline in a broader perspective.

Sufism has a long history in the Maghrib, Morocco in particular, which goes back to the Eleventh Century when they were first introduced. But it was not until the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries that the tariqas became a mass organization and a potent political force.<sup>34</sup> Although some Moroccan rulers, like the 'Alawite Sultan Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah (1757-1790) and Mawlay Sulayman (1792-1822), tried to curb their influence, they continued to play a significant socio-political part in Moroccan life until the dawn of this century. Before the imposition of French rule and partly due to the de facto decentralization of the makhzen (sultan's administration), the zawiyas (centres of the tariqas) served as occasional places of refuge for rebels, rest houses for travelers and traders, and sometimes as centres of arbitration between the makhzen and dissident tribes. As such and due to the fact that the tariqas were fairly wide spread in the urban and rural areas, they did fill some social and political needs. It should also be remembered that despite Salafi religious accusations, the tariqas did contribute to the almost endless process of islamization, especially among the rural population; this

fact undoubtedly enhanced their influence and image as the benefactors of religion.

With the establishment of colonial rule--which meant among other things the centralization of political and administrative power and the maintenance of a large measure of security--the tariqas were rendered obsolete as social and political institutions; but, of course, they continued to play their religious role:

"The organization of modern means of transport has considerably reduced their {tariqas} function as lodgings on the road; the pacification of the country has almost entirely eliminated their mission as mediators; the limitation of governmental arbitrariness has restricted their right of asylum."<sup>35</sup>

However for al-Fāsi and other neo-Salafis the fact that the tariqas have become socially and politically anachronistic was not as important as the fact that they tended to "collaborate" with the colonial government. It was therefore during the Rif War that the tariqas had to suffer the most direct and intense political attack by the leaders of the neo-Salafīyah who accused them of aiding the French against 'Abd al-Karīm, the leader of the Riffian Revolt.<sup>36</sup> In assessing the reasons for the failure of the Revolt, al-Fāsi has this to say about the tariqas:

"As for the religious imposters {tarīqas' leaders} who chose to serve the foreigner instead of Islam, they were held under careful surveillance by the Rif leaders.

"The more notorious among them were publicly disavowed by 'Abd al-Karīm, but the people were not yet sufficiently immune to their poison."<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note that the often lucid and logically consistent style of al-Fāsi's writings is occasionally spoiled by the bitter language he uses to denounce the tarīqas and their leaders.

The late 1920's and the year 1930 has thus proved to be a testing ground for the political potency of the Salafīyah; indeed the success of the campaign against the Berber dahir and its skillful and effective extension by Salafi propagandists to the rest of the Islamic world<sup>38</sup> was symbolic of the transformation of the political thought of Salafis. It seems that it was at this point that al-Fāsi became more aware of the need to regenerate the politically latent force of the Salafīyah and use it against colonial rule. To him the movement was no longer a means of social and religious reform alone. Al-Fāsi himself explains this awareness by defining the orientation of the neo-Salafīyah:

"The aim of the Salafīyah, according to its original founder, Ibn Hanbal, was the purification of religion from superstitions and the restoration of its original simplicity. It aimed at reforming the individual in accordance with the principles of Islam which constitute the

ideal system for religious and secular life. It requires an open-minded attitude toward what is new and its assessment in the light of the general interest.... It accepts the principles of religious and political freedom of the individual and recognizes the right of nations to self-determination.... {it} also believes that Muslims should abide by laws derived from the Shari'ah and that Islamic jurisprudence should be the basis for civil legislation..."<sup>39</sup>

Al-Fāsi, however, sees no hope for the realization of these goals within the colonial framework. He therefore argues,

"...It is impossible to achieve these objectives unless the right of ijtihad (interpretation of the Qu'ran and the Traditions) in legislation is exercised by a capable council of deputies to be elected by the people... this {of course} means the adoption of a constitutional system of government based on the will of the people."<sup>40</sup>

Al-Fāsi logically concludes that the struggle for independence is an essential prerequisite for the freedom of choice.<sup>41</sup>

The success of the neo-Salafis to subvert the Berber dahir and their attempt to discredit the Sufi tarīqas on political grounds have demonstrated that the leaders were no longer thinking in purely cultural and religious terms; however, the dahir does not seem to have been so instrumental in transforming the Salafīyah and wedding it subsequently

to the nationalist movement. The process of transformation was already taking place gradually in the minds of al-Fasi and other neo-Salafi; as early as 1926 with the failure of the Rif Revolt al-Fasi seems to have realized that political reform was equally important. One would tend to think that the dahir was a most appropriate issue and moment which gave overt political expression to an inherent political ingredient in the Salafiyah ideology. The dahir was a bridge which enabled al-Fasi to cross, though never finally, from the intellectual to the political end of the Moroccan scene.

When in 1934 the nationalist movement began to crystallize around the National Action Bloc's Plan de Reformes Marocaines,<sup>42</sup> it was a matter of course that al-Fasi would be able to make the transition to politics rather easily. In fact, his basic Salafi beliefs had left a recognizable imprint on the plan itself: The reform of education, religious foundations (habous), the Berber policy, and the recognition of Arabic as the official language were among the fifteen points of the Plan.

It is perhaps fair to generalize that by the early 1930's al-Fasi was able to internalize thoroughly the precepts of the Salafiyah and test their political viability as an intellectual and religious basis for his subsequent political career. One could even go further and argue that most of his ideas and writings cannot be put in any meaningful perspective unless this Salafi frame of mind is taken

into account. There is certainly a general pattern very reminiscent of Salafi thinking which repeats itself time and again throughout most of his books. The translated text attached to this introduction is probably the best example of this pattern and it should be read as a representative specimen of the author's other writings.

That as late as 1959 al-Fāsi should adopt in the Mission of the Islamic 'Ulamā' a tone and line of argumentation typical of the Salafi rhetoric is an indication that the Salafīyah was never completely absorbed in the nationalist movement; but it also indicates that despite all the vicissitudes in his political career, al-Fāsi remained a devout believer in the reform programme of the Salafīyah. We have tried to demonstrate earlier that the Moroccan Salafis like their counterparts elsewhere devoted a good deal of time and effort to the reform of Islamic studies, institutions, and education in general. It has also been shown that this concern for a special type of education was in part a reaction to the more secular education which the French colonial regime tried to institutionalize. However, there is no reason to suppose that when Morocco became independent in 1956 the cultural challenge of the mission civilatise had subsided; indeed, it was deliberately intensified, understandably, by the nationalists in the process of rationalizing the repudiation and end of colonial rule.

It is therefore only natural that al-Fasi should devote considerable space in the Mission of the Islamic 'Ulamā' to the renovation of the Qarawiyin university and its curriculum;<sup>43</sup> to him the 'ulamā' in this institute should continue to spearhead the drive for the reform of education. Significantly most of al-Fāsi's suggestions for the improvement of the content of education fit very well in the general plan suggested by earlier Salafis, i.e. emphasis on the study of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. But because of his awareness of the importance of relating these Islamic studies to their counterparts in the West, he emphasized the need for a comparative approach in teaching religion.<sup>44</sup> It could be argued that al-Fasi's advocacy of this approach to religious studies in the Qarawiyin implies a pre-judgment of the value of similar western studies, since he continually overemphasizes the contribution of Islam to European knowledge. While there is possibly some truth in this, al-Fasi's style of thought is nevertheless very typical of the "open-minded" attitude preached by the Salafīyah.

Another theme which al-Fasi discusses in the Mission of the Islamic 'Ulamā' in terms characteristic of Salafi thought is the problem of reinterpreting the Qu ran and the Sunnah in the light of contemporary developments in politics, economics, and social life. He takes great pains to establish that there is nothing inherent in Islam which makes it a

closed system incapable of meeting the demands of modernization.<sup>45</sup> He would rather put the blame for the stagnation of Moroccan society on as what he describes as the rigid and petrified attitude of some 'ulamā' who have failed to appreciate the need for meeting the material and cultural challenges posed by French civilization and Europe in general.<sup>46</sup> This position essentially resurrects the old controversy between Salafi and conservative 'ulamā' on whether it is possible and permissible to resort to ijtihād (individual interpretation of the sources of Islam), the "gates" of which are believed by the latter to have been closed finally. In fact, al-Fāsi cites Muḥammad 'Abdu on the right of contemporary 'ulamā' to practice ijtihād—an indispensable right of the Salafis if they were to succeed in modernizing the shari'a and using it as a basis for civil legislation.<sup>47</sup> This helps us to understand why al-Fāsi shows a special concern for the content and methods of teaching shari'ā subjects in the Qarawiyin.<sup>48</sup> His concern for the reform of Islamic law stems obviously from his Salafi commitment to the modernization of Moroccan political and social institutions within the framework of Islam.

Despite the brevity and limited subject, the Mission of the Islamic 'ulamā' serves as a convenient summary of intellectual influences which may be traced to the Salafīyah. It is not insignificant that despite his diverse political

experience—his active role in the nationalist movement, his exile in French Equatorial Africa (1937-1946) and his intermittent self-imposed exile in Cairo(1946-1955)—al-Fasi's "public" frame of mind does not seem to have changed in any profound way. As late as 1959 he still speaks in terms reminiscent of the late 1920's. Nevertheless it is misleading to suggest that al-Fasi always thought and acted exclusively within the terms of reference of the Salafiyyah. It has been suggested earlier that by the mid-1930's the Salafiyyah blended into and became part and parcel of the Moroccan nationalist movement. Therefore Salafi leaders like al-Fāsi who were responsible for this intertwining could no longer interpret their role in exclusively religious and cultural terms. Yet it is certainly true that even a cursory examination of most of al-Fāsi's books would reveal the same general pattern of the salafiyyah. In his recommendations for the reform of the educational system, he suggests the establishment of a separate institute for studies in 'questions of doctrine and ethics';<sup>49</sup> this is in fact a corollary of the strict and puritanical salafi concern for individual belief and morality—a concern characteristic of most Islamic reformist movements. In al-Maqd al-Dhati al-Fasi elaborates on this theme by making the reform of the individual a prerequisite to the total reform of society his major point of emphasis. The following quotation from this book will illustrate that the author

remains an authentic descendant of Muhammad Abdu:

"...The renewal of {Islamic thought and life} as well as the changing of our ways, is the responsibility of all reformers, who must devote themselves to cleaning up corruption, enforcing the truth, putting an end to deviation, until Islamic thought returns to its purity and vigor.... Since Islam is not opposed to reason, the true Islamic spirit will not be retreating from the rest of the world but will be seeking out all that is new in knowledge in every field."<sup>50</sup>

Again in his report to the Istiqlal Party's Sixth Congress in 1962, al-Fāsi, the leader of the Party, attempts to reconcile Islamic thought and institutions to the problems and requirements of modernization. He stresses the importance of "continuing the struggle within the framework of the Salafiyah which is capable of renewal...."<sup>51</sup>

Let us now turn to al-Fāsi's Mission of the Islamic 'Ulamā', translated hereafter from the Arabic. It was originally a lecture delivered by al-Fāsi to a conference of more than two hundred 'ulamā' from all over Morocco, held in September, 1959, in Rabat. The conference which was organized by the Ministry of National Education took place at the Faculty of Science of the University.

CHAPTER II  
TRANSLATION

"In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.  
Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good  
admonition, and dispute with them in the better way. Surely  
thy Lord knows very well those who have gone astray from  
His way, and He knows very well those who are guided."<sup>52</sup>

"I would like to thank the Department of Higher  
Education in the Ministry of National Education for organiz-  
ing these public lectures in which the 'ulamā' discuss the  
problems and means of renovating Islamic culture in the  
light of contemporary human evolution and in accordance  
with the spirit of Islamic education as perceived by the  
Great Educator {the Prophet}, peace be upon him. In this  
lecture, I will deal with the role of the 'ulamā' or the  
objectives and methods essential to their {holy} message.

It seems that the role of the 'ulamā' has always been  
the same whether in ancient or modern times; it is closely  
related to the nature of the Prophet's message. The means  
which they use to correct and elucidate distortions in  
human thought are an integral part of this message which  
they explain and defend. It is appropriate here to quote  
a hadith (saying of the Prophet)<sup>53</sup> in which the Prophet  
describes the 'ulamā':

"The 'ulamā' are the heirs of the Prophets. They {however} inherited nothing--not even a dinar<sup>54</sup> or dirham--except knowledge; a great deal would accrue to him who partakes from their knowledge."

Since the Prophets had preached the doctrine and delivered the message, it is the duty of the 'ulamā' not only to preserve this heritage and transmit it honestly but also to defend it by using and innovating different means. The Prophet said the following regarding this {in a hadith}: "This Faith {Islam} shall be delivered by the successors who would defend it against the distortions of exaggeration and the abrogations of ignorance." This hadith has thus defined the duties of the 'ulamā' in three main ways:

1. To correct any deviation from religion which might be caused by overzeal for the Faith itself.
2. To expurgate plagiarisms of liars who infuse in the religion things which do not belong in it and which are contradictory to the concept of Unity (Unity of Allah).
3. To correct the assumption of the ignorant who by seeking to satisfy their instincts, undermine their own beliefs.

This presupposes, naturally, that the 'ulamā' themselves are knowledgable in Islam and are acquainted with other

religious and human ideas of different times. They would have to learn about human beings, languages, historical and technological developments, all aspects of human civilizations and the way these civilizations shape human achievements. The message of Islam, accordingly, becomes a core around which knowledge, scientific discoveries, innovations and constructive methods revolve; then religion and culture become one and the same.

If we study the history of Arabic thought in the early Islamic period—the period of the brilliant renaissance in the sciences—we will find that religion was a strong motivation behind almost every achievement... The revolutionary reform which Islam created in Arab society was in itself a pool of new knowledge to which the Prophet was the first school {the first to understand and teach this new knowledge}. From this school came the first ‘ulamā’ who dispersed themselves to deliver the message and spread knowledge. Shortly afterwards, and due to the rising need for understanding means, objectives, and reasons new Islamic sciences began to crystalize and Arabic thought began to bloom; the use of new arguments and new evidence against adversaries became imperative. Philosophical and abstract sciences began to form and as a result the interaction of different human cultures was made possible under the Islamic States.

Many 'ulamā' and orientalists later on have paid great attention to the impact of Islam on Arabic knowledge; they have agreed that religion {Islam} was not only the direct stimulus for the creation and perpetuation of a healthy scholarly atmosphere in Islamic society but also for the assimilation of previous knowledge. In his book, The Aspects of Arabic Thought, which appeared recently in Beirut, Dr. Kamal al-Yazji, a young Arab writer, confirms this conclusion; in fact he reaffirms what George Bastide, I. Goldzieher, and al-Fārābi<sup>55</sup> concluded much earlier.

Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Uthman al-Tarnabati, a distinguished Qarawiyin alim of the 12th C.A.H. (18th C.A.D.) wrote a book called The Attainment of the Maximum in the sciences—the manuscript of which I have in my private library—in which he explained the reasons for the Muslim contributions to the sciences by giving the following examples:

1. When the readers {those who used to memorize the Qu ran} began to die off, Abu Bakr<sup>56</sup> decreed that the Qu ran be compiled lest it should be lost.
2. Umar ibn al-Ahatab encouraged the people to study pre-Islamic poetry which he believed, rightly, would help explain the Qu ran and the Sunnah.<sup>57</sup> Umar is quoted to have said in one of his Khutbas,<sup>58</sup> "Behold your register, it does not miss." "What is this

register?" somebody asked. Umar said, "Pre-Islamic poetry. It contains the meaning of your Book {the Qu<sup>ʿ</sup>ran}."

3. Uthman recompiled the Qu ran in several books to eliminate the possibility of controversy about the text.
4. Ali ordered the compilation of Arabic grammar because he thought that this act would preserve the language as a means of expounding and understanding the Qu<sup>ʿ</sup>ran and the hadith which are the core of the Shari<sup>ʿ</sup>a.
5. When the companions of the Prophet realized that not all people were capable of interpreting the Qu ran and the hadith, they worked out exegeses for both....
6. Since there was no agreement among Muslims about the authenticity of many hadiths, a new science and method were invented to ascertain how authentic each hadith was.
7. Since the laws governing society were taken mainly from the Qu ran and the Sunnah and because they were too numerous to be memorized, the ʿulamā formulated what is known as the science of fiqh {theology}.
8. When new problems, subject to controversy and conducive to sectarianism, had arisen, new answers were made possible by the ʿulamā who reduced {Islamic} jurisprudence to writing to help others know the truth.

9. In response to the fragmentation of the ummah (community) into sects and factions—a prophecy of the Prophet—the ‘ulamā’ invented the science of kalām<sup>59</sup> {dialectical theology} to refute allegations.
10. Because the idioms and expressions of the Qu ran and the Sunnah were {are} in Arabic and consequently accessible only to those who understood the language, the ‘ulamā’ recorded philology.
11. To make the language of the Qu ran, which is rich in allegories and metaphors, more intelligible to the people, the ‘ulamā’ formulated the principles of rhetoric.
12. Astronomical sciences were also compiled to help in matters of praying and fasting (to determine time and directions).
13. Arithmetic was reduced to writing to meet the needs of accounting, division of inheritance and other transactions.
14. Since the interpretation of the above-mentioned sciences was subject to controversy among intellectuals, the ‘ulamā’ compiled and arabised the science of logic—one of the Greeks’ contributions—to serve as a method of distinguishing false from true premises. It is often said that wisdom should be sought in three parts of the body: the hearts of the Greeks, the tongues of the Arabs, and the hands of the Yemenis.

If you understand this you would then know that using every possible {legitimate} means to find the truth was in fact a tradition of the Prophet, the Caliphs, and the Companions; do not ever think that any of these sciences is taboo because they are essentially a way of finding truth. Accordingly it is pointless to contend that science is contrary to Islam because such contentions are obviously groundless.

There is no doubt that the Qarawiyin<sup>60</sup> ulama are conscious of the necessity of using all means for renovation; they have also recognized the impact of Islam on the sciences. The late Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'ay made the following comment on the contribution of Islam to the scientific discoveries:

"The Holy Qur'an was the main reason for the scientific achievements of the Islamic world; most of the sciences have drawn from the Qur'an in one way or another. The commoners of the early times of Islam pressed the 'ulama' to interpret religion in the light of the new theoretical sciences... to establish a link between them and the Qu ran."<sup>61</sup>

However, I do not subscribe to Al-Rafi'ay's last interpretation about the commoners' pressure on the 'ulama'; indeed the opposite seems to be the case... and, in fact, the author recognizes this earlier.

Nevertheless, the dispute between the Salafi<sup>62</sup> 'ulama' and the theoreticians relates to a different question:

should we stick to the letter of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and thus concede that we can add nothing to our traditional knowledge or would it not be more useful to devise new means capable of solving our problems and improving the understanding of the Islamic community? This difference in the degree of our certainty is obviously a difference in the degree of our knowledge.

The Qu ran which had great impact on the invention and diversification of the sciences, would not disapprove of or frown upon new approaches and methods for the attainment of knowledge. Actually it is the Qu ran which enlightened the Muslim intellect and induced the individual to decypher the secrets of the universe.

By living up to their responsibilities, the early 'ulamā' opened new horizons for Islamic thought and devised an empirical method quite different from that upon which Aristotelean logic is based. Mr. Briffault in his book the Making of Humanity, stated that Bacon had learned the Arabic language and sciences and made little original contribution himself in introducing Europe to the empirical method. Bacon was simply one of those scholars who transmitted Islamic knowledge and methodology to Christian Europe. Briffault also added that the empirical method of the Arabs spread in the times of Bacon...people in Europe were very interested in it.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore the need to explain the legacy of Islam... had induced the 'ulamā' to investigate, above all, the truth of knowledge. On the other hand the message of Islam itself had liberated Arabic thought from all traditional restrictions and limitations; it made it capable of distinguishing between what conforms with rationality and that which is revered simply because it constitutes an inherited tradition.

The scholars of human civilization have agreed that the distinctive feature of Arabic civilization lies in its ability to incorporate and assimilate diverse aspects of knowledge using empirical methods. The Arabs have excelled in innovations but also in intelligent and honest copying. H. Bastide summarizes this concept as follows: "The effectiveness of any civilization is primarily due to the interaction of environment and culture in every stage of human experience. The absence of this effectiveness is conducive to savagery."<sup>64</sup> This means that the efforts of the Arabs were devoted to the employment of human capabilities to develop a high morality; in other words, to move toward a better realization of the self. Nature should act as a catalyst in the process of building a creative civilization. The sciences are useless unless they help reveal the value of human experience; yet science should not be used to falsify any of the human values. The objective is therefore to promote the success of human experience which starts

from observation and depends, ultimately, on the intellect for the evaluation of different phenomena.

The early 'ulamā' set the ideal example; they used culture to give human nature a spiritual content. Some of the early muslim scholars, i.e. Al-Ash'ari, Al-Maturidi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Mālik, Al-Shafi'ay, Abu Hanīfa, ibn Rushd, ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali and ibn Taimiyyah<sup>65</sup> had demonstrated practically how the 'ālim' could and should perform his religious duties. The civil wars of Islam could not alone have defeated the dissident Khawarij or Mu'tazilites... rather it was the 'ulamā' who demonstrated the virtues of knowledge, learning, firm belief and sacrifice... It was the torturing of Ahmad ibn Hanbal by Caliph Al-Mu'tasim<sup>66</sup> which had undermined the cause of the Mu'tazilites and re-established the sunnah on firm ground. The same role had been played earlier—in medieval times—by ibn Taimiyyah and some of his fellow 'ulamā' who preserved the sunnah and ensured its primacy over superstition and deviation.

Whereas the Islamic East had innovated and perfected some of the sciences, the Maghrib {Islamic West} made its distinctive contributions; it adopted from the Islamic culture {in this case Middle Eastern culture} whatever suited its taste and special mark. The Qarawiyyin Institute together with other religious institutes in the Maghrib and Andalusia have played an important role in sifting and refining this new culture. Prominent scholars of science and philosophy

have appeared in the Maghrib, i.e. ibn Rushd, ibn Al-Tufayl, ibn Bajjah, ibn Hazm and ibn al-‘Arabi<sup>67</sup> and many others who explained and disseminated knowledge. In fact their works were the stream from which Western Europe quenched its thirst and developed its present culture... In his dissertation on ibn Bajjah, Dr. ‘Umar Farroukh listed these Maghribi contributions to the Arabic civilization.<sup>68</sup> Among these are the domination of the intellect {rationality} and brevity in Maghribi writings. Their social philosophy was directed toward a realistic society built on cooperation and subject to universal and economic laws...a society that develops according to the facts of nomadism, invasion, trade, and culture. The introduction of ibn Khaldoun is perhaps the best example.

However this social attitude was not confined to the Maghribi philosophers and ‘ulamā’ but was also present among sufis like Abu Al-‘Abbas Al-Sabti and Abu Muhammad Salih, both of whom have interpreted their spiritual experiences in terms of meeting the needs of society. Therefore, the Maghribis have always assessed the role of the ‘ulamā’ not only within the frame-work of research and teaching, but also in terms of dissipation of knowledge and the material and moral betterment of humanity. But not all Muslims have followed the same path always.

The Prophet's prophecy of a community where the ‘ulamā’ would revive the Faith and reform society did not mean that

Islamic society will not degenerate; it simply affirmed the permanence of the Islamic doctrine which is embodied in the Qu ran. It is the believers who need a continuous effort if they wish to remain in the high level bestowed on them by Islam. The reformers can only sow the seeds of reform which will not come to fruition without the involvement and participation of the whole nation; collective efforts will undoubtedly enforce individual efforts and reform could take place only when corruption in society has reached a point beyond which it (reform) becomes an urgent need.

Some of the 'ulamā' have lost track of the correct Sunnah, Arabic thought and Islamic civilization. They contended themselves with false abstractions put forward and diffused by nations hostile to Islam in order to disrupt and weaken society. However, this did not, fortunately, affect the important sources of Islam because the Qu ran had been compiled earlier and no one doubts that its present form is the authentic and original one; similarly, the hadith is available in its abrogated and correct versions. Whatever alterations that have been made were in details and additions which resulted from controversies. These controversies led sometimes to distortions which are mentioned by the Prophet in the hadith quoted above.<sup>69</sup>

Some sociologists of religion argue that the evolution of religions affects even the doctrine and its rituals. But if this is true in actual reality about Christianity where

controversies have questioned the doctrine, it certainly is not the case in Islam. In Islam, according to the ijma a (consensus) of different sects and viewpoints, the core of the doctrine is the Unity of Allah and the Message of the Prophet. Goldzieher has accepted this when he said, "...it is impossible to equate the Islamic beliefs with the basic religious elements in any Christian church."<sup>70</sup> There are no synods in Islam in which doctrinal or religious controversies could be resolved and principles established to be binding on all Muslims; also there is no priesthood or religious hierarchy in Islam and no one single interpretation of holy texts has won unanimity. In the introduction to his translation of The Principles of the Sociology of Religions, Dr. Maḥmūd Qasim challenges Eastide's contention that the Islamic beliefs have undergone a process of evolution.<sup>71</sup> According to Qasim the absence of a religious hierarchy in Islam is mainly because the relationship between the individual believer and Allah is direct; it does not require an intermediary. The author has also pointed to the tolerance among Muslims to prove that controversies did not in fact question the basic beliefs but stemmed, instead, from difference on details which were open for ijtihad (exercise of individual judgment in interpreting Qu ranic texts and hadith).

In recent times many 'ulamā' in the Islamic world have tried to investigate the reasons for the dormancy of Islamic

societies. Among them was al-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abdu<sup>72</sup> who made the following remarks after his tour of the Ottoman Empire:

1. The Islamic peoples have accepted ideas which were alien to Islam; these ideas were introduced by foreigners as well as conjurers. Moreover, the people have accepted {uncritically} all that has been transmitted from earlier times and consequently they deprived themselves of the right to use their own judgment.
2. Another reason for the stagnation was the tyranny of Caliphs and Muslim leaders who denied the people the freedom of thought. They were encouraged in this by hypocritical ‘ulama’ who either commended the rulers’ actions or misinterpreted the Shari‘a to justify political expediency.<sup>73</sup>

Unless they return to the true religion, the Islamic peoples will not restore their pride and dignity. The return will be made possible only by the reopening of the "gates" of ijtihād and the repudiation of tyranny and absolutism. To believe in Allah would obviously require a repudiation of atheism. Muḥammad ‘Abdu once said, "I have often called the attention of the people to two important questions:

"Firstly, the liberation of thought from the shackles of imitation and classical interpretations of religion which

go back to the period before controversies {schisms}. Religion should be viewed as one of the checks and balances on the inadequacies of the human mind.

"Secondly, the reform of the Arabic language."<sup>74</sup>

Abdu also added, "I have also directed the attention of the people to an important issue so often neglected despite its paramountcy in social life, namely to distinguish between the right of the government to obedience and the right of the people to justice."<sup>75</sup>

All these factors—a return to the original sources of Islam, ijtihād and the realization of the distinction between the rights of the State and those of the individual—will make possible a new era of constructive culture described by Goldzieher in the last chapters of his book about the schools of Islamic exegesis, as a product of the Salafiyah movement.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Muḥammad Al-Sabhi confirms Goldzieher's conclusion by arguing that the school of Muḥammad Abdu was different from the revivalist movement in India because the former was an independent and evolutionary development of Islamic society.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, revivalists in Islam, whether Indian or Arabic, have always entertained the same objectives. They sought to restore the original sources of religion, to liberate the people from superstition, to reopen the "gates" of ijtihād and to look for a new consensus based on religious principles reconcilable with the facts of human development in technology and economics.

Unfortunately there was hardly enough time for the Islamic peoples to rethink their situation. Western colonialism, with its material resources, industrial capabilities and subtle rhetoric devastated the Islamic world; the latter was faced with the problem of defending its independence and resisting colonial attacks on its spiritual values. The social institutions of colonialism were by far more destructive than the military and political institutions.

It was the British who started the campaign in India; they organized a movement which sought to replace religion by secular ideologies. They found in Sayid Ahmad Khan<sup>78</sup> an able agitator and collaborator. The missionaries had also prepared a handful of young Indians who endorsed colonialism by glorifying Western culture and degrading that of Islam. The colonialist campaign was extended to the Arab countries; France used the Sufi shaykhs and some of the 'ulama' while Russia had successfully directed native movements in the Soviet Union according to a master plan.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from its role of economic exploitation, which has always been resented and resisted by the colonized, colonialism had succeeded in idealizing and perpetuating the image of the West. Western experiences have become—or rather have been made—a standard according to which things and ideas of the East (Orient) should be evaluated. This is

intellectual slavery which to many Islamic thinkers is even worse than the Crusades.

It was tragic that the colonialist campaign against the Islamic world should have coincided with the apogee of materialism in the West. The controversy between secularists and the Church at the beginning of the Renaissance culminated in the isolation of the Church, ever since, from all aspects of modern civilization. The impact of the Inquisition was not only great on the Christian Church itself, but it was also a hard blow to all religious beliefs. This is because the dispute between the secularist scholars and the religious leaders had been transformed into a struggle between the so-called secular approach and religious approach. And although Islam has never discouraged scientific investigation with its different approaches, Muslims have continued to the present to judge Islamic thought within a Christian (Western) framework; therefore neither Islam nor the 'ulamā' could or should be blamed for this.

The main difference between the secularists and the Church in the West lies in the fact that the Church could not think of a universe devoid of an omnipotent power which is responsible for all different aspects of life; the secularists on the other hand refuse to view the universe except on the basis of the non-existence of any super-power above nature. This is in fact nothing more than an intensi-

fication of the {old} dispute between the proponents of secularism and the Church. However, the conflict had a spiritual impact on the thought of some of the scientists and philosophers who endeavored to reconcile the Church to science. These scholars constituted the different scientific and philosophical schools which started with Descartes and Spinoza and ended with Hegel and Kant. But their efforts did not materialize because they viewed religion as a simple social need.

The 19th Century was the climax of Western materialism; it also marked the rise of the philosophy of egoism and scientific discoveries in the fields of geology, natural science, and applied psychology. These achievements had paved the way for Western thought to accept the concept of historical materialism which was another reaction to the consolidation of capitalism and the decline of old feudalism.

As a result of the devastating attack on Islamic societies (by the West) young people were completely isolated from the Arabic heritage, its culture, and religion; the youth sought knowledge and education in the schools and high institutes of the West which obviously had little concern for the Arabic language, the culture and teachings of Islam. Western education aimed—at its best—at raising the standard of the natives to the cultural standard of the metropole to qualify them for {French} citizenship or at

least associate them with the colonialist in a slave-master relationship.

The Islamic peoples woke up today to the fact that their sons are as far away from their religion as the Spaniards were at the beginning of the 9th Century. Father Ijaro describes their (Spaniards) situation as follows:

"...my Christian brethren have a great appreciation for Arabic poetry and fiction. They study the works of Islamic theologians and philosophers not to criticize them but to copy their style. Today you can hardly find any of our scholars who can read the Latin commentaries on the Holy Books. Alas! our Christian youth are ignorant of any literature or language apart from Arabic; they read and study Arabic books with earnest and enthusiasm. They build complete libraries at great expenses and do not cease praising the heritage of the Arabs. On the other hand if you mention the Christian books they protest that these are not worth their attention. Alas! the Christians have forgotten their language; not even one in a thousand is capable of writing a letter to a friend in correct Latin. But if they have to write in Arabic they would distinguish themselves. Indeed some of them write even better poetry than the Arabs."<sup>80</sup>

It is paradoxical that Father Ijaro's description of his co-religionists should be appropriate to the state of the Islamic peoples at the present moment. The Christian world has changed. Can we change too?

Some of the reasons for the present stagnation are to be found in the thought of some of the 'ulamā'. The retrogression of Islamic studies and the isolation of the relig-

ious institutes from intellectual life in the East and the Maghrib was partly due to the fact that the traditional 'ulama' have failed to listen to reformers like Muhammad 'Abdu, Afghani,<sup>81</sup> [Jamal al-Din al-Afghani] and other contemporary thinkers. This retrogression has created an almost unbridgable gap between classical Arabic studies and the new Western thought. The latter is being taught to young Muslims either directly in Western institutes or indirectly in their Islamic counterparts which simply reproduced Western culture without any criticism. If the present situation persists, and if the Islamic institutes do not take a more positive attitude toward Arabic and Islam, it would not be very long before atheism dominates the towns and the countryside. Everyone will become an imitator of the West which is undoubtedly moving toward the rejection of religion.

Abu Al-Nasan, an Indian 'alim' is worth quoting:

"Let us face reality with contemplation and courage. The Islamic world today suffers from religious and intellectual 'apostacy' which should be studied by those who have any concern for Islam. The educated class in every Islamic country is not only confused in beliefs and morality but also secular in politics. A few of them, if not the majority, do not believe in Islam as a doctrine or a system; yet the entire Islamic peoples are subservient to this class which has been endowed with intelligence, culture and influence. The situation is really conducive to atheism and corruption which will soon diffuse to factories and farms. Actually this is exactly what has happened in

Europe and surely it will happen in the East (Orient) if things remain as they are."<sup>82</sup>

That was the complaint of India. Let us now listen to Dr. Al-Bahi's assessment of the situation in Egypt, "...the liberation movements have been transformed into movements aimed at the containment or isolation of Islam from the real life of the Muslim communities...and apart from the question of the divorce of culture from religion—which permitted uncritical acceptance and assimilation of Western thought—another vacuum has been created in the lives of the masses of peasants and workers. Al-Azhar {University-Mosque} was partly responsible because it isolated itself from current affairs, a policy which was designed or perpetuated by the colonialists...the emptiness in the lives of the intellectuals and the masses had invited the domination of non-Islamic cultures."<sup>83</sup> Dr. Al-Bahi also argues that had Al-Azhar endorsed and encouraged the Salafiyah movement, the confrontation between Islam on the one hand and Christianity and Marxism on the other hand could have been very different.<sup>84</sup> Al-Azhar's failure is only symbolic of the failure of Islamic institutes elsewhere in the East and the Maghrib.

What should we therefore do to fill this vacuum? The answer is simple and clear. The Islamic institutes should regain their influence and responsibility in the protection

of religion and language; the 'ulamā' in these institutes would have to play the classical role which has been assigned to them by Islam. In the same way that the early 'ulamā' had coped with intellectual developments and innovations—by logically reconciling these with Islam—, the contemporary 'ulamā' should direct their attention to the revitalization and modernization of Islamic institutes so that they may open new horizons of knowledge for the young. The message of Islam in the early days had defined the nature of knowledge as well as, and consequently, the role of the 'ulamā'; similarly, the present situation in the Islamic world calls for a redefinition of knowledge and its objectives.

The primary objective is, however, to end the existing isolation between the intellectuals and the masses on the one hand and authentic Islamic knowledge on the other. This would, of course, require an end to the isolation which separates the 'ulamā' from contemporary scientific {modern} life.

The Islamic world witnesses today a surging movement for the modernization of education curricula which have been damaged by colonialism. This reformist movement is active in the Maghrib, Tunisia and the rest of the Islamic countries. But the original institutes {i.e. Al-Azhar} have either drawn inward for fear of criticism or simply ignored the whole problem. The role of these institutes

requires that they should occupy a prominent position within the system of national education; indeed, they are flexible enough and adapted to entrench their activities deep in the national culture.

Higher education should address itself to two things: a healthy revival of the Arabic language and the establishment of Shari'ā and theology institutes. This will facilitate the growth of a unified code of Islamic laws which should embody legislation on matters of justice and behavior. Besides, the revival of comparative religious and ethical studies would further the development of a dialectical capable of refuting allegations and distortions. Although the Arabic curricula are continually improving in the Middle East, their counterpart in the Maghrib still suffer from the lack of content and style. It is therefore imperative that the 'ulamā' and the linguists should pay more attention to Arabic and in particular the problem of arabisation.

Theology, on the other hand, should be studied in the Shari'ā institutes according to the plan suggested by Dr. Abdel Razaq Al-Sanhuri which runs as follows:<sup>85</sup>

...Theological studies should take a comparative approach with special emphasis on two points: firstly, a detailed study of the history and development of Islamic theology in the period preceding the four major mathāhib {singular: mathhab—school of theology}. Secondly, all

theological schools—Shi'ah, Zahirite and Mhawarij—should be studied so that different currents of legal thought could crystalize into general themes. These themes could then be compared to the principles of modern Western theology in such a way that similarities and differences become clear. The above approach will elucidate the basic prepositions of Islamic theology, its details and logic.

Whenever the need for the adaptation of Islamic theology is felt to be pressing it should not be neglected; those parts of it which are flexible enough to co-exist with the facts of modern living should remain unchanged. In both cases theology would remain authentic and devoid of all foreign elements. According to our analysis the following aspects of Islamic theology need more research and investigation:

1. The history of Islamic theology with a special emphasis on the pre-mathāhib period.
2. Reassessment of the classical interpretations of theological principles.
3. Comparative analysis of the different schools of theology in Islam.
4. Comparison of Islamic theology with modern Western legal codes.

The objective behind a new approach in these studies is to revitalize theology and draw some general conclusions

as a basis for modern Shari'ā laws and this, of course, requires a detailed and scholarly treatment.

Another specialized institute should also be established to deal with questions of doctrine and ethics, i.e. the basis and logic of the Islamic dogma, the social and practical implications of ethical behavior, the sociology of religion, social psychology, etc. However, what the Islamic institutes need most, apart from programs and research, is a strong commitment on the part of educationalists to their message of creating a new generation responsible and capable enough to reconstruct what has been corrupted. This new generation could hardly achieve anything unless the 'ulamā' themselves set a good example to be followed; practice is the best means of education.

It is needless to say that the role of the Qarawiyyin 'ulamā' is great. It is not the betterment of salaries and pensions but rather an undertaking to preach and practice Islam with open minds. The 'ulamā's fulfillment of their role is indispensable to a new revival of Islam because it will determine the direction of Maghribi Islam. May Allah guide our 'ulamā' and leaders toward this achievement."

## FOOTNOTES

Introduction

1. This has been translated into French and serialized in the Moroccan weekly Al-Istiqlal, now defunct.
2. The major primary sources for this introduction are al-Fāsi's books in Arabic and therefore the translations of quotations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
3. Al-Fāsi has been appointed for some months after independence Minister of State for Islamic Affairs; he was criticized by some of the 'Ulamā' for accepting the post their argument being that there is no need for such a post in an Islamic state.
4. Mekki ibn 'Azzūz, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Th'albi and other Tunisian Islamic reformers were among the founders of the Old Destour Party in 1920. See Nicola A. Ziadeh, Origins of Nationalism in Tunisia (Beirut: 1962). In Algeria the activities of 'Abdel Hamīd ibn Badis and the Association of the Algerian 'Ulamā', founded by him in 1928, in the fields of education and socio-religious reform are an example of the involvement of the religious elite in this early phase of nationalism. J. R. Cooley in Baal, Christ and Muhammad: Religion and Revolution in North Africa (New York: 1965) quotes the following from a conversation with Ahmad Tawfik al-Madani, a venerated 'ālim and Algeria's Minister of Rabus in 1963, "We struggled to revive the true Muslim religion and rid Algeria of superstition and obscurantism... We fought the influence of the marabouts who aided the French. In every possible way we sought to revive the Arabic language in Algeria and make it a living force. This was the three-fold aim of the early phase of Algerian nationalism...." p. 162
5. Ziadeh, op. cit., p. 123
6. The Qarawiyin was founded as a mosque in Fez in 850. For its evolution to a university-mosque, see Roger Le Tourneau, Fez in the Age of the Marinides (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962). See also Tom Landau, "The Marauine at Fez," in Muslim World, Vol. 48, April, 1958, pp. 104-112.

7. al-Fāsi: al-Sarakat al-Istiqlaliyah fi al-Maghrib al-‘Arabi, (Cairo: 1948).
8. The word is derived from salaf, meaning predecessors; usually al-salaf al-salih meaning the good (pious) predecessors.
9. The literature on al-Afghani and ‘Abdu is voluminous, especially about the former. An excellent recent study of both reformers is Elie Kedourie, Afghani and ‘Abdu: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam (London: Cass, 1966). See also Osman Amin, Muhammad ‘Abduh, translated by Charles Wendell (Washington: American Council of Learned Societies, 1953). A good summary of Afghani's role as a revolutionary is given in Sylvia G. Haim, Arab Nationalism (Berkeley: 1962), p. 6.
10. Al-Azhar was founded in 970, more than a hundred years after the Qarawiyyin.
11. ‘Abdu quoted in Jamāl Muḥammad Ahmad, The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 37.
12. Ibid., p. 37.
13. Hashīd Rida: Tarikh al-Ustatz al-Imam (A biography of Muḥammad ‘Abdu) (Cairo: 1931), Vol. 1, quoted by al-Fasi Translation, p. 14.
14. Jamāl, op. cit., p. 40.
15. Al-Fāsi: Muhadarat fi al-Maghrib al-‘Arabi, Institute of Higher Arabic Studies (Cairo: 1955), p. 113.
16. Ibid., p. 113
17. Al-Manār was the official Arabic journal of the Egyptian Salafis. It was published in Cairo by Abdu's disciple and biographer Hashid Rida. The first issue appeared in 1898 and the journal continued up to about 1930.
18. Muḥammad Ibrahim al-Kittani, Tala‘i al-Yacza al-Maghribiyyah aw Abu Shu‘aib Wa al-Salafiyyah, MS, quoted in Jamil Abun-Nasr, "The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco: the religious basis of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement," in Saint Antony's Papers, Middle Eastern Affairs, No. 3, 1963, p. 98.
19. Ibid., p. 98.

20. al-Fāsi, Muhadarat fi al-Maghrib al-ʿArabi, op. cit., p. 144.
21. See note 65 in Translation, p. 55.
22. Ibid.
23. Abun-Nasr, op. cit., p. 99
24. al-ʿUrwatu al-Wuthqa was the first Salafi journal published by Afghani in Paris in 1884. See Ziadeh, op. cit., p. 63. Abun-Nasr, drawing from conversation with al-ʿAlawi in 1960, states that both al-ʿUrwatu and al-Manār started to have some circulation in Fez during and after the First World War, op. cit., p. 99.
25. Abun-Nasr, op. cit., p. 102.
26. al-Fasi: al-Harakat al-Istiqlaliyah, p. 134.
27. J. P. Halstead, "The Changing Character of Moroccan Reformism 1921-1934," Journal of African History, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1964, p. 438.
28. al-Fasi, al-Harakat al-Istiqlaliyah, op. cit., p. 134
29. Abun-Nasr, op. cit., pp. 99-100.
30. Ibid., p. 100.
31. To support his interpretation of the Berber dahir as a "divide and rule" tactic, al-Fasi quotes the minutes of a meeting held on October 8, 1924, by a committee formed by the residency to report on the judicial system. "It is harmless to destroy the unity of the judicial system in the French Zone because since the objective is to **strengthen** the Berber element, concrete political advantages would accrue from such policy...", al-Fasi, op. cit., p. 142.
32. al-Fasi, ibid., p. 147
33. al-Fasi, ʿAcida wa jihad, (Rabat: 1960), pp. 9-10, quoted in Abun-Nasr, p. 104.
34. There is possibly a correlation between the growth of the influence of the tarīqas and the Almohad (1147-1269) jihads in reaction to the presence of the Spanish and Portuguese (Christian) forces in the north-eastern Coast of Morocco.

35. LeTourneau, "North Africa: Rigorism and Bewilderment,"  
In Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization, ed. G. von  
Gruenbaum (Chicago: 1955), p. 250.
36. al-Fāsi, al-Harakat al-Istiqlaliyah, p. 117.
37. Ibid., p. 134.
38. An international press campaign against the dahir in  
1930 was organized by Shakib Arslan, editor of la Nation  
Arabe in Geneva; Ahmad Balafrej and other Moroccan  
students in Paris who published a booklet entitled  
"Tempest in Morocco" portraying the dahir as an attempt  
to Christianize the Berbers. In Egypt several Islamic  
organizations picketed the French Embassy and al-Azhar  
'Ulama' petitioned King Fuad. The First Islamic Con-  
ference, held in Jerusalem in December, 1931, listened  
to and endorsed the Moroccan statement against the  
dahir, presented by al-Makki al-Naciri and Muhammad  
Benounah. See al-Fasi, op. cit., pp. 147-148.
39. Ibid., p. 136.
40. Ibid., p. 137.
41. Ibid., p. 137
42. The National Action Bloc generally known as Comite  
d'Action Marocaine, was founded in 1929, as a loosely  
bound committee which did not become important until  
the promulgation of the Berber dahir. See Douglas  
Ashford, Political Change in Morocco (Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 35. Al-Fasi is  
listed by Charles-Andre Julien, L'Afrique du Nord en  
marche, (Paris: 1952), quoted by Ashford, op. cit.,  
p. 37, as one of the ten persons who formulated the  
Plan.
43. See Translation, pp. 47-49.
44. Ibid., p. 48.
45. For an opposite view see Manfred Halpern, The Politics  
of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa  
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965),  
pp. 25-37.
46. See Translation, pp. 43-45.
47. Ibid., p. 38.
48. Ibid., p. 48.

49. ibid., p. 48.
50. Al-Fāsi, al-Maqd al-Dhati, op. cit., pp. 89-90
51. Al-Fāsi, Manhaj al-Istiqlaliyah (nabat: 1962), p. 45.

#### Translation

Footnotes with stars are included in and translated from the Arabic text.

52. The translation of these **Qur**anic verses is taken verbatim from A. J. Arberry's The Koran Interpreted, The Macmillan Company, New York.
53. This singular form of the word is often used to refer to the body of transmitted actions and sayings of the Prophet which was compiled in the third century of Islam (9th A.D.?). For the history and development of hadith science and criticism, see H. A. R. Gibb, Mohammedanism (New York: 1964), pp. 72-87.
54. Gold coin, used in early Islam. Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, and, interestingly, Yugoslavia, use the same word to refer to their monetary units; dirham is a smaller denomination.
55. Abu Nasr Al-Fārābi was an Islamic philosopher who wrote in the late 9th and early 10th century. He wrote on politics, psychology; music, and commented on Aristotle. Al-Farabi spent some of his life at the Hamdanid Court in Syria; he died in 950 in Ciaro. See E. I. J. Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam (Cambridge: 1962), pp. 122-142. See also Farroukh Omar, Tarikh Al-Fikr Al-'Arabi (A History of Arabic Thought) (Beirut: 1962), pp. 269-291.
56. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali are the first, second, third, and fourth Caliphs of Islam, respectively.
57. The 'custom of the community' but the word is usually synonymous with hadith and thus the Sunni school, because of its emphasis on the hadith as a source of legislation.

58. The khutba is the imam's (leader of the prayer) sermon in the Friday prayer.
59. The "science" of kalām flourished in the Umayyad period as a result of political and religious controversies, especially among the Shi'a and the khawarij who used it as a dialectic to substantiate their contentions and systematize their arguments. See Farroukh, pp. 141-165.
60. See above footnote 6.
- \*61. Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'ay: Tarikh Al-Adab Al-'Arabi (A History of Arabic Literature) Vol. 2, p. 118. No date or place of publication is given.
62. See Introduction,
- \*63. 'Ali Sami Al-nashar, Manahig Al-Bahth 'Aind Mufakri Al-Islam (Research Methods of Islamic Thinkers). No date or place of publication or number of pages is given.
- \*64. Bastide, Georges, Mirages et certitudes de la civilisation (Arabic translation). French original was published in 1957 in Paris by Presses Universitaires de France.
65. Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur Al-Muridi were the first medieval Islamic philosophers to challenge the Mu'tazilites, a theological school of the third century of Islam which advanced the idea that the word of God (the Qu'ran) is created. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Malik, Al-Shafi'ay and Abu Hanifa are the founders of the four major schools of theology (mathāhib). Ibn Rushd (Averroes b. 1126) represents the Platonic tradition in Islamic political philosophy. Ibn Sina (Avicenna b. 980) jurist and philosopher, was famous for the integration of Greek philosophy in Islamic theology and mysticism. Al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) main contribution to Islamic philosophy and theology was in the rationalization and consolidation of Sufism in Islam. Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328) was famous for his defense of the Hanbali school about which he wrote voluminously. See Rosenthal and Farroukh. See also H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., Chapter 7.
66. The Abbasid Caliph who ruled between 833-842.
67. For brief summaries of the ideas of ibn al-Tufayal, ibn Bajjah, ibn Hazm, and ibn al-Arabi see Farroukh, op. cit. For ibn Rushd see Rosenthal op. cit.

- \*68. Omar Farroukh, Ibn Bajjah, p. 11 (in Arabic, no place or date of publication is given).
69. See above, p. 2.
70. No citation of pages or book title is given.
- \*71. Muḥammad Gasim's translation of The Sociology of Religions, by G. Bastide, p. 7.
72. See Introduction, pp. 5-7.
- \*73. Rashīd Rida, Tarikh al-Ustaz al-Imam (Biography of Muḥammad 'Abdu), Vol. 1, p. 11
- \*74. Ibid.
- \*75. Ibid.
- \*76. I. Goldzieher, Le Dogme et la loi de l'Islam: histoire du developpement dogmatique et juridique de la religion musulmane, translated to the French by Flex Arin (Paris: 1958). Goldzieher (1850-1921) was a German orientalist with special interest in Islamic theology and law. He is famous for his two volume work Muhammedanische Studien (Hildesheim: 1890), reprinted in 1961. French translation by L. Bercher.
- \*77. Mohammad Al-Sabhi, Al-Fikr Al-Islami Al-Hadith wa silatuhu bil ist'amar Al-Gharbi (Modern Islamic Thought and Its Relation to Western Colonialism) p. 84 ff.
78. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) was an Indian modernist of the Islamic reform movement of Aligahrah. See W. C. Smith: Islam in Modern History (New York: 1963), pp. 71-72.
79. It is interesting to note that the author does not exclude Russia as a colonial power.
- \*80. Majallat Al-Muslimun (Muslim Journal), No. 5, Vol. 6, p. 7.
81. See Introduction, pp. 5-7
- \*82. Majallat Al-Muslimun, No. 5, Vol. 6, p. 7
- \*83. Al-Bahi, Al-Fikr Al-Islami (Islamic Thought), p. 461.
- \*84. Ibid.
- \*85. Al-'Alam Al-'Arabi (The Arab World Journal), Vol. 2, p. 23.

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- \_\_\_\_\_. Al-huriyah (Freedom) (Rabat: no date). Originally a lecture on "different" types of freedom with emphasis on the same concept in Islam.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. Nida al-qahirah (The Call of Cairo) (Rabat: 1959). Speeches delivered by al-Fasi, some of which from the Arab Voice of Radio Cairo roughly between 1947-1955. Some of the author's correspondence from his self-imposed exile in Cairo with nationalists in Morocco is also included.

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