

# THE NEAR EAST: THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

AN ESSAY BY

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By the Near East I mean the cradle of Western civilization. Take the fundamental generic components of that civilization and trace them back across the ages to their lands of origin, and there you have the Near East.

Thus if no fundamental component can be shown to originate in a given country X, then X is not part of the Near East. The concept therefore is neither political, nor geopolitical, nor geographic, nor strategic: it is essentially cultural-genetic.

If a circle is drawn on the map with Beirut or Damascus or Jerusalem as its center and with a radius of about nine hundred miles, this circle will pretty nearly comprise the whole of the Near East. It will include the following ten cities: Athens, Istanbul, Antioch, Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cairo and Mecca. Western civilization is an offshoot, in diverse modes of relevance, of what was revealed, apprehended, loved, suffered and enacted in these ten cities or in their hinterlands <sup>[1]</sup>

This cultural-genetic relatedness between the Near East and the West has been the theme of wonder and reflection literally for thousands of years. Nobody forgets his origins, and so the Western world has never tired of brooding upon the great mystery of the eastern shores of the Mediterranean where it was born. Is it a pure myth entirely devoid of any significance that Europa was a lovely Phoenician princess who was carried off by no less a god than mighty Zeus himself?

The fact that malevolence abounds in the world and may misinterpret or misquote or distort what we say will not deter us from facing our situation in the Near East squarely and honestly. There is abroad in the Near East today a new critical spirit. It is dissatisfied with the given and is not afraid to voice its dissatisfaction. There is health and hope and freedom only in the daring knowledge and confession of the truth, whatever risks that may involve.

Our subject is not easy, not because of present complications, but because in itself it raises the deepest issues. This study for the most part only opens up horizons for thought, only sets up signposts for further inquiry. Two lights alone guide us: truth and love. In their company alone we propose to walk, and if we stray from the right path it cannot be the fault of our lights, but our own. It can only be because we have not loved enough to deserve a fairer measure of the truth. But surely he who sets his heart in all purity and love upon the vision of the truth may hope that he will be granted a glimpse of it. It is this faith that sustains us.



There are in the Near East today some twenty states and principalities. Greece, Turkey and Israel are the only non-Arab states. Iran (Persia), another non-Arab state, does not fall properly within the Near East according to our conception, although, being distinctly a borderline case, it presents a gradual transition from the Near East to the Asiatic realms beyond. All the remaining Near Eastern states or principalities are Arab.<sup>[ii]</sup> In the geographical area commonly known as the Fertile Crescent there are the Republics of Syria and Lebanon, and the Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq. In the Arabian Peninsula there are the Kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and the principalities of Muscat and Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrein, as well as Trucial Oman and the Aden Colony and Protectorates. In North Africa there are Egypt and the Sudan. The other North African countries--namely, Libya (which is scheduled to attain independence on January 1, 1952), Tunisia and Morocco (which are under French rule), Algeria (which is incorporated into France proper), and Spanish Morocco--although they are parts of the "Arab world," do not fall within the Near East. It is apparent, then, that the Near East is that unique region which connects the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Nine of the Near Eastern states (or ten if you include Iran) are members of the United Nations. Seven of the Near Eastern states form the League of Arab States, but only six of them are members of the United Nations. Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan are loosely linked together by the practically obsolete Sa'adabad Pact of 1937. Turkey and Greece have been recommended for full membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Besides, several bilateral treaties link one or the other of the Near Eastern states either with another state in the same region or with some other members of the international community.

We shall exclude from the purview of our study the thematic treatment of Greece, Turkey and Iran. It is not difficult for the thoughtful reader to determine for himself how, where or to what extent the diverse parts of our inquiry apply to them.

Of all the countries of the Near East, Arab and non-Arab, the first to attain her modern form and structure was Egypt. The westernizing reforms of that great soldier-leader, Mohammed Ali, resulting in some modest industrialization and in an emergent middle class, antedate the reforms of Ataturk and Reza Shah by well over a century. If only Egypt's strategic importance were not what it is, and if as a result Mohammed Ali's ferment had worked itself out normally without inordinate interference from outside, it might be possible that Egypt today would present a different aspect so far as social and economic advance was concerned, and be in a better position to play a more effective part in the maintenance of peace and security in the Near East.

Nevertheless, fate (which is here another name for the unalterable facts of geography, or better of geopolitics) would not have it this way, and the development of Egypt's sovereignty has been both slow and checkered: the product of a long process of insurrection and negotiation which even now is not entirely at an end. From the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 until the British declaration of the Protectorate during World War I, the country had no respite from foreign invasion and occupation, or from rivalry and conflict of the Great Powers, particularly France, Britain and Ottoman Turkey. Nor were matters happier after the acknowledgment, by her rivals, of Britain's position of supremacy in Egypt, or even after the subsequent abolition of the Protectorate and the declaration of independence in 1922. Britain's unswerving insistence upon maintaining a foothold in Egypt caused subsequent negotiations for a treaty to fail on three successive occasions; and when, at last, the Treaty of 1936 was concluded, it continued to place obligations upon Egypt which Egypt is still struggling to remove. A readjustment of Britain's position in Egypt and in the Near East in general is clearly indicated (and has in fact already begun with respect to Palestine): the only question is as to its modality, as to the legacy of friendship or bitterness it might leave in its wake.

Politically Egypt leads in the Arab world. There is a significant Arabic literary movement in Egypt, and the Egyptian press dominates the Arab reading public everywhere. Egyptian universities draw students from all over the Moslem world, and there is an attempt to stamp out the curse of illiteracy.

The modern Sudan originally became known to the outside world through the invasion of it by Mohammed Ali's forces in 1820; and from then until the end of the century Egyptian forces supported by British troops were engaged in the pacification of the country. It was in 1899 that the Sudan was finally occupied in full. The Anglo-Egyptian Agreements of that year (January 19 and July 10) established the Condominium. These Agreements reflected on the whole the military aspect of Britain's participation in the administration of the Sudan, carefully circumventing the thorny issue of sovereignty by providing for the simultaneous use of the British and Egyptian flags and the dual process of appointment or removal of the Governor-General, in whom the supreme military and civil command of the Sudan was to be vested. Nor were the provisions concerning the Sudan in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 more final in nature than the Agreements of 1899 which they mainly reaffirmed.

Egypt's claims for the incorporation of the Sudan in some form under the Egyptian Crown are based on four facts: (a) the general community of culture between the Sudanese and Egyptian peoples (language, religion, race, general cultural patterns); (b), the general historical interactions between the two peoples, especially the role played by Egypt since the time of Mohammed Ali in the conquest and pacification of the region; (c), the desires of certain sections of the population (e.g. the Ashigga Party) to enjoy their autonomy under the

Egyptian Crown; and (d), fundamental considerations of national welfare and security--for the Nile, which is the very existence of Egypt, passes first through the Sudan. This fourfold argument is precisely what is meant by the pregnant phrase, the unity of the Nile Valley, which is absolutely fundamental to Egyptian thought.

From the viewpoint of what is abiding and natural, there is no doubt that this unity of the Nile Valley must reassert itself sooner or later in closer living ties between Egypt and the Sudan. Again the only question is as to the modality of this relationship. If there is a modicum of fundamental confidence and trust (which raises profound questions concerning men and cultures), and if other fundamental issues are honestly faced, not only as between Britain and Egypt, but as between the whole Western world and the East, then a working formula embodying the essential interests and rights of all concerned can be found. Not to believe in this is to worship utter darkness: to despair of the power of man, coming back to himself with a purified heart, to rise above and reconcile conflicting interests. And the more one broods upon Britain, Egypt and the Sudan, in their positive relationship to one another, the more one grows in the conviction that their interests, for all their present clash, are nevertheless essentially reconcilable.

One question must be raised in passing. Any student of geopolitics knows that population problems are among the history-determining issues, and will be particularly during the coming decades. At the present rate of increase the population of Egypt will be doubled by the end of the century. How will this population pressure, in an already overpopulated country, be relieved? Where is Egypt's "living space" if it is not in North Africa and especially along the Nile? Long-term policy planners must ponder this question very deeply.

The two Kingdoms of the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, are slowly emerging from their original state of isolation, while the other principalities of the Peninsula remain more or less remote from the actual life of the region. The two sovereign Kingdoms are far yet from being full participants in the life of the Arab family of nations. They are indeed members of both the United Nations and the League of Arab States, but their contributions to the efforts of the former organization have been on the whole negligible. Nor is there much social interaction between them and the rest of the Arab world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does exercise some influence upon the political developments of the Arab States. It has been a moderating factor in many a tense situation. However, the absence of an enlightened and articulate public opinion, and of civil and political institutions commensurate with what obtains elsewhere in the Arab world, has restricted the impact of Saudi Arabia upon Arab affairs almost entirely to the governmental level; and even there its scope has been limited.

The Saudi Arabian monarch has played an important role in the first half of the twentieth century. There are so many inscrutable factors, both internal and external, in the situation that it is quite impossible to foretell what the fortunes of his Kingdom will be in the coming decades. One thing is certain: the wealth accruing to the country from oil is bound sooner or later to induce significant changes in the otherwise changeless Peninsula.

The nationalist sentiment in Iraq, frustrated immediately after World War I, gave rise to the rebellion of 1920; and since then Britain has sought to meet piecemeal the Iraqi demands for full sovereignty, first through a period of probation under the Mandate, and subsequently through the declaration of independence and the conclusion of a series of treaties providing for certain military concessions. Here was another instance of the selfsame pattern of Anglo-Arab relations which prevailed since World War I: Britain devising formula after formula to reconcile her imperial interests with the shifting scene, a scene which would have been far more docile were it not for the tenacious attachment of the Arabs to their ideal of independence and for the internal relative weakening of Britain herself.

So strong has the nationalist sentiment in Iraq been for the last 30 years, and so preoccupied have the Iraqis been with the problem of independence, that there has been relatively little concern with the equally crucial problems of internal organization and social-economic reform. More so in Iraq perhaps than in the other Arab countries, nationalism pure and simple has been erected as a creed, a sole doctrine which dominates social thought and a single force which sways the public.

During the last three decades there has been on the average more than one cabinet change per year in Iraq. Three basic reasons explain this apparent political instability: the existence of powerful contending forces--racial, religious and social; the existence of what I might call a crisis of leadership in Iraq since the death of King Feisal; and the absence of an adequate socio-economic-ideological content in the nationalist movement, so that the support of the masses, in so far as it existed, was more based on sentimental than on objectively satisfying and enduring grounds.

I spoke of "apparent instability," for it will be apparent that the reigning Hashemite house has been the mainspring of stability in these decades. Nothing seems to be more firmly established in Iraq than this house and the love of the people for their boy-monarch. Feisal II has every opportunity to prove one of the leading world figures during the second half of this century.

The story of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is the story of the late King Abdullah. From the earliest stages of its history, when Transjordan, originally a part of the vilayet of Syria, was established as an Amirate and placed under the Mandate in 1922 and then

recognized as an independent government under British tutelage in the following year; through the next 25 years of growth in self-government, during which period the succeeding stages of development were registered in successive treaties and agreements with Britain; up until the attainment of fuller independence, the transformation of the Amirate into a Monarchy, and the annexation of parts of Arab Palestine west of the river Jordan--during all this development the fortunes of the state revolved around the central figure of the Hashemite ruler.

The Amirate and the Kingdom owed their relative stability and limited progress to Abdullah's personal authority. His rule also spared the country (however good or bad this may have been) costly and periodic clashes with the dominating foreign power. He practiced perfectly the maxim that politics is the art of the possible. So intertwined were the fortunes of Jordan with the person of the slain King, that it is unlikely that his place will be filled by a successor of the same caliber. But it is important to note that the vacuum created by Abdullah's assassination will probably be much more felt in the conduct of Jordan's foreign relations than in the internal administration of the country.

Syria and Lebanon alone of all the Arab Near East had to contend with French domination. The nationalist situation in Syria was from the beginning intense, owing to the important position of Damascus in Arab life and to the many frustrations suffered by Syria at the hands of the Allies. Greater Syria was dismembered, the southern and northern parts being put under different administrations. Quarrels with the French never ended, and the policy of a national home for the Jews executed by the British administration in Palestine served at once to inflame Syrian nationalist feeling and to imbue it with a necessary anti-Western tinge. The nationalist movement came to look upon the West not as a friend, not as a liberator, but as a schemer and intriguer bent upon division, domination and the settlement, against the will of the native population, of countless Jews on Syrian soil.

The preoccupation of Syria during three decades with her national struggle for freedom and independence reflects itself today in the young republic, not so much in specifically anti-foreign sentiment as in the absence of dominant planning and strong leadership. It is difficult for the foreigner to appreciate the effect of these decades of resistance and struggle in which national emancipation seemed the only purpose for common endeavor. A whole generation has been schooled in the negative--if necessary-- discipline of resistance, and it must take some time before the more positive virtues of responsibility, planning, statesmanship and strong government can perfect themselves.

Youthful leadership is today gradually finding itself. The three coups of 1949 did not cancel one another: they were more like three successive ripples emanating from one and the same impulse, an impulse partly arising from the Arab disaster in Palestine, partly from the inadequacy of the old leadership in face of the strenuous demands of the moment, partly

from the urge of youth to replace this outworn leadership. No strong government has so far emerged from these events: nevertheless a new constitution has been enacted, and several moderate reforms have been introduced. Real endeavors have been made to improve the agricultural and other economic conditions of the country. Education and the army have shared the greater attention.

But the most promising fact in Syria today is the increasing activity of a few political parties which have more than the "creed of full independence" to commend them to public support. Perhaps more than anywhere else in the Arab world genuine political parties and social movements, with clear-cut platforms, social and ideological convictions, and effective organization, are gradually feeling their way towards the light. When positive, constructive plans are elaborated (and they are bound, I believe, to ensue sooner or later), and a strong leadership arises with an orientation towards the future and a grounding upon a creative conception of freedom, then Syria, by reason of her economic, human and spiritual possibilities, may play a fundamental role in Near Eastern and Arab affairs.

For about a century now the Lebanon has enjoyed some kind of autonomy. In the sixties of the last century six European Powers--France, Great Britain, Prussia, Austria, Russia and Italy--established in agreement with Ottoman Turkey an organic statute according to which Lebanon was to enjoy autonomy within the Ottoman Empire under a Christian governor to be nominated by the Porte and approved by the six Powers. Even during World War I this autonomy was at least nominally respected by the Ottoman Turks who did not draft the inhabitants of Lebanon into their army.

After World War I Lebanon was enlarged and placed under a League of Nations mandate, with France as the mandatory. The Republic of Lebanon was declared in 1926, but France remained the dominating power. The struggle for complete independence went on until in 1943 Parliament erased from the constitution every text in any way diminishing the independence of the country. Subsequent events confirmed this independent act.

The Lebanon has a positive vocation in the international field. It is not political. It is spiritual and intellectual. It consists in being true to the best and truest in East and West alike. This burden of mediation and understanding she is uniquely called to bear.

Some writers, whatever their motive, have depicted Israel as destined to reconcile East and West. But how can one reconcile two things by being outside of them? The West is unthinkable apart from Christianity and the East apart from Islam. Israel is grounded neither in the one nor in the other. Lebanon--little and fragile as she is--is the only country, not only in existence today but perhaps throughout history, where East and West meet and mingle

with each other on a footing of equality. The vigorous Moslem citizens of Lebanon bring in the integral contribution of the East, while the Christian citizens are in deepest spiritual and historical communion with the West. If this situation can endure, there is a wonderful possibility of creative confrontation.

The Lebanon could not be true to East and West alike unless she stood for existential freedom. In the end this is alone her justification. This means freedom of thought, freedom of choice, freedom of being, freedom of becoming. Whoever is about to suffocate must be able to breathe freely in the Lebanon. Here the possibility of access to the truth, the whole truth, must be absolutely real. Existential freedom interprets man as being subject only to the compulsion of truth. He is determined, but unlike the mob which is determined by every darkness and wind of doctrine, by the misguidance of every passing principality, his is the determination of truth.

Now the "middle term," the principle of mediation, is, according to Aristotle, the mark of reason. In this sense mediation is moderation. To be able to perform her moderating and mediating function between East and West, the Lebanon must be and feel secure in her existence. The narrow nationalist may grudge her her being; to the superficial aesthete she may be an embarrassment. But the Arab world, of which she is an integral part, and the West, in which she profoundly participates, must both see in a strong, self-respecting, peaceful, independent, free and secure Lebanon a blessing to everybody. Only the love of truth can really see this. Thus the secure existence of the Lebanon measures the degree of love abroad.

Everything that strengthens the Lebanon as thus conceived must be good. To swerve from her basic idea is to court disaster. Her basic idea is not political; on the contrary, her political existence is derivative. If she succumbs to the political temptation, to the manifestation of power, she will move from one defeat to another. The principle of international politics is power; but Lebanon's power is reason, truth, love, suffering, being.

Two things dominate the Arab mind in general: independence and unity. There is a deep-seated mystical element in both of these feelings. The only analogous situation I can think of is the radical sense of unity and independence which determined the history of the German peoples in recent decades. Independence springs from the Arab sense of difference from others, a sense that has been sharpened in recent centuries by the relative isolation of the Arabs from the rest of the world. Unity takes on many modalities: from the mild form of general community and consultation enshrined in the Arab League to the extreme form of complete political unification desired by certain nationalist movements, particularly in Iraq and Syria. But regardless of its modality, every Arab feels an immediate mystical unity with every other Arab. The elaboration of the ultimate causes and the real structure,

limitation and promise of these two creative Arab persuasions is one of the most fascinating philosophical-cultural tasks to be undertaken by the loving and understanding mind.

The Arab League is an expression of the degree and modality of unity that prevails among the Arab States. However, the common aspiration for unity among most Arab intelligentsia (and to some extent among most Arab peoples) is greater than the actual unity among the Arab ruling circles. Thus there has been some popular dissatisfaction with the League on account of its failure to represent adequately, or even to promote, the existing unity among Arab peoples.

The League has been severely tried during the first years of its existence (it was founded in 1945). To take the single example of Palestine: the average Arab is not convinced that--notwithstanding "foreign interference" and Zionist preparedness--the Holy Land would have been lost to Israel had the Arab League been more adequate to meet its tasks. To ascribe every failure to the League itself is very sentimental; for the League cannot rise above the combined stature of its members.

The basic disunity from which the Arab League suffers is the result of several factors: the social and existential discontinuities in the Arab world itself, the dynastic rivalries, and the subterranean inter-Arab tensions, heightened by the focusing of world interest upon the Arab world. To these there has recently been added a more tangible and perhaps more serious factor of disunity: the physical existence of Israel on the only land-bridge which connects the northeastern and the western parts of the Arab world. The social, economic and strategic significance of this factor cannot be overestimated. The Arab League also suffers from the absence of daring, enlightened leadership. The crisis of leadership in the Arab world is as sharp in inter-Arab relations as in the purely national sphere.

But regardless of its political limitations, the Arab League can play a more active role in the economic, cultural and social life of the Arab world. There is ample room for the coordination of the energies of the various Arab countries in the socio-economic realm; nor is such inter-Arab cooperation as likely to be handicapped by the various internal and external factors of disunity as is the strictly political cooperation.

There will always be an Arab League, regardless of what guise it may take, or by what designation it may be known. For there will always be a measure of community among the Arabs which, particularly under the exacting conditions of present life, will call for appropriate expression and embodiment on the socio-political international level.



The rise of Israel is certainly a great historic event whose total consequences it is impossible now to foretell. But it is safe to affirm that as a result the Near East has now entered upon a new critical stage of development. The fate of the Near East is now intertwined with that of Israel.

The existence of Israel presents a real and serious challenge to Arab existence. It is a test of Arab patriotism, dynamism, wisdom and statesmanship. It constitutes a virtual touchstone of Arab capacities for self-preservation and self-determination. Both those Arabs who have been complacently contented with what has been termed "Arab renaissance" for the last 30 years, and those who have remained placidly indifferent to the fate of their countries, have been deeply shaken as a result of the recent events. There is abroad a grim sense of destiny.

There is today an internationally recognized state in the Near East called Israel. This new state quickly succeeded in becoming a member of the United Nations, while such older states as Italy or Ireland have not yet been able to join the world organization. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have been flocking into Israel, and the process of their absorption into the economy and community life of the new nation is in full swing. All this undoubtedly constitutes an historical achievement of the first magnitude.

Yet this achievement, great and real as it is, cannot by itself guarantee the future. To establish a state, or, for that matter, any institution, is one thing; to ensure its continued existence is entirely another. For no matter how difficult the act of establishment may be, I think it is clear that the effort at self-perpetuation will prove incomparably more exacting. Entirely different moral qualities are requisite for the accomplishment of that task. In the struggle for establishment you treat the others as alien forces, to be crushed or pushed back or at least prevented from encroaching upon you; your relation to them is external, summary, destructive, negative; under no circumstances can you allow internal, positive intercourse with them on a basis of equality. But in the struggle for enduring existence you must come to terms with them; you must take their existence positively into account; your idea must be softened and modulated and trimmed to accommodate their idea; you must enter into interacting relationship with them, based on mutual respect and trust. Whether the leadership and the ethos of Israel are adequate to the requirements of existence, of course only the future can disclose.

For it must not be forgotten that Israel is not yet at peace with her immediate world. Her Arab and Moslem environment has not yet recognized her. She has no dealings whatsoever with her surroundings. Besides this radical political and economic estrangement,

there is a profound intellectual and spiritual chasm between Israel and the rest of the Near East. Two entirely different economies, two entirely different religions, two entirely different languages (at least two languages whose kinship is the outcome of distant origination from a third source and not of immediate interaction, as e.g. between Arabic and Turkish or French and English), two entirely different mentalities, two entirely different cultures, two entirely different civilizations, face each other across this chasm. I do not know of a single other instance in the world where there is such radical existential discontinuity across national frontiers. The “ingathering” of the Oriental Jews may soften this discontinuity a bit, but not to the extent of making it at all comparable to the graded transition that obtains almost everywhere else in the world. Thus Israel is only geographically part of the Near East, and therefore her fundamental problem is not how to establish herself—a relatively easy matter, considering the world forces, both positive and negative, which aided her—but how to integrate herself, economically, politically, spiritually, in the life of the Near East; how to promote friendly, creative, sustained and sustaining, trustful, peaceful, internal relations with the Arab and Moslem worlds. Self-establishment by force is fairly easy—at least it is possible; but self-perpetuation by force is, in the nature of the case absolutely impossible. At least history has not known an instance of a nation at permanent enmity with its immediate world.

I think the Zionist idea, reinforced by an organizational genius of the first order, and sharpened by the sufferings of the Jews in recent years, has proved itself exceedingly potent in summoning forth world-wide sympathy and support. Whether this same idea, in the next crucial phase of its development, is resourceful and resilient and humble enough to create genuine, internal relations of confidence and cooperation between itself and the Moslem-Arab world in the midst of which it has chosen to plant itself is altogether beyond my ken to prophesy or even to conjecture. But one thing can be said with certainty. If the present arrogance, defiance and ambition are to persist; and if Israel is to be again and again confirmed in her feeling that she is to be favored—just because the United States, owing to the position of the Jews in this country, to certain well-known peculiarities in the American political and social system, to widespread ignorance in the United States of real conditions in the Near East, and also to a certain genuine, well-meaning goodness of heart on the part of the American people will at the crucial moment always decisively side with Israel against her immediate world—then, I am afraid, there will never be peace in the Near East, and the United States cannot be altogether innocent of responsibility for that situation.

The fair account of the historical genesis of Israel, including the diverse factors that played a decisive role in this genesis, is yet to be written: and may not see the light of day before decades. Although I was a firsthand witness of and participant in the crucial events of 1947 and 1948 in the United Nations, it is not my intention to go into this matter here.<sup>[iii]</sup>

But on the profoundest possible plane a thoroughly grounded investigation (which I will touch upon in barest outline here) into the deep significance of Israel will have to inquire into four issues of prime importance. In this way, and from the nature of the case, as we shall see, Israel opens up vistas of thought that no other state can evoke.

The first fundamental issue is political. We have touched upon it already. It may be formulated thus: how a completely alien state that is suddenly thrust upon, and that is not wanted by, its immediate environment can survive, especially if this state has created for others the very problem (Arab refugees) it meant to solve for its own people. Here questions of diplomacy, strategy, external pressure, European and American interests, the psychological situation, the possibilities of explosion, and the balancing of the economic against the political, will all have to be responsibly discussed. I entitle this issue the political challenge of Israel.

The second fundamental inquiry may be formulated as follows: whether the concentration in one state of the factors at once of language, race and religion is not a challenge to the modern conception of the state, which is free of the necessary determination of any of these factors, and certainly of the three of them taken together. There is no other state in the world today—nor has there been for centuries--which is nationally characterized by a race, a language and a religion none of which nationally characterizes any other state. (I am aware of the recent disquisitions on the subject of race, but it can be shown that the conclusions therein reached, whatever their real scientific value, do not affect my present employment of the term which has--it can be fully demonstrated--a perfectly objective residual significance in the present discussion.) Israel as a state alone is Hebrew, Israel alone is Jewish, Israel alone is Judaic. No state is alone Moslem or Christian or Protestant or Catholic. No state is alone Aryan or Mongolian or Negro. And no state, except Israel and perhaps Ethiopia, has a national language of its own unconnected (in the sense of interaction) with any living language. This unique concentration of the three factors of race, language and religion is thus a challenge to the modern conception of the state, and in any case is bound to generate a tremendous exclusiveness and intensity of feeling (issuing in the most radical form of nationalism) that must find an outlet in some dynamism with incalculable consequences. I may term this the philosophical challenge of Israel, because it relates to the very conception of the state.

Far deeper than anything economic or political or philosophical are the two theological challenges of Israel. The one stems from the Old Testament, the other from the New.

The Old Testament theological challenge has to deal with the great mystery of Ishmael and Isaac. Whoever broods with a pure and loving heart upon this mystery and contemplates in its light the present spiritual situation between Jews and Arabs in the Near East must experience a profound emotion of wonder. What we behold is something not purely

immanent, not something just human or historical or economic or political: there is a significance splashing irresistibly and mysteriously upon us from the beyond. The Arabs call themselves the sons of Ishmael; but Abraham loved Ishmael, and Sarah's counsel that he cast out Ishmael and his mother was "very grievous" in Abraham's sight (Gen. 21: 11).

There is a most necessary philosophico-theological inquiry to be undertaken, perhaps in several volumes, into this question: to show how, just as there is a great so-called "Jewish problem," so there is and there has been in an entirely different sense a profound "Arab problem." (Is it without significance that the United Nations ever since its foundation has been preoccupied with the Arabs as much as with any other people: problems of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Morocco?) To dismiss the present conflict between the children of Isaac and the children of Ishmael, who are all children of Abraham, as just another ordinary politico-economic struggle, is to have no sense whatever for the lawful and holy and ultimate in history. When history shall finally reveal its secret (of which we here and now already catch a real glimpse), the present confrontation between Isaac and Ishmael may turn out to be (the beautiful smile of the cynic is obvious at this point) one of the major keys unlocking that secret. The rise of Israel therefore presents a great challenge: that of the mystery of the two children of Abraham after the flesh.

The New Testament theological challenge may be formulated as follows: how is present-day Israel related on the one hand to the "old Israel" which, according to Christian theology, was once and for all dissolved by Christ, and on the other hand to the "new Israel," namely, the Church, which was founded by Christ? I believe no deeper question can be asked about Israel than this one, and here again we dimly perceive the distant vista of an important investigation yet to be attempted. The word "Israel" is mentioned 74 times in the New Testament. Is this fact (see especially Acts 13: 23 and I Cor. 10: 18) entirely unrelated to what exists in Palestine today? Christian theology has pondered most responsibly the mystery of "Israel" in relation to Christ. Are we to believe that its conclusions can have no bearing on present-day facts? Jerusalem is made a political center. But can the world ever forget the salvation wrought in Jerusalem? Zealots and politicians, whether Western, Jewish or Arab, would of course mock at these questions; but according to the truth, which is quite independent of all zeal and all politics, the challenge of love we are trying here to glimpse holds every determination in its hands, including above all that of Israel.

## IV

In our study of the Near East we cannot stop with the political: we must press on to the deeper modes of human existence. Man does not exist only as ruler and ruled; man exists also as dealing with material nature and its forces, and as living with his fellow men. There is also man's own view of himself and of whoever is above this passing show. The last word about the Near East is not political: it must take full account of the material, social and spiritual problems besetting our existence. Therefore we turn now first to the examination of our economic and social situation: as to its realities, its possibilities and the prerequisites necessary to transform these possibilities into actual fact. In all this we cannot be humble enough, for only humility is proper to the truth.

All the countries of the Near East, and particularly the Arab countries, are economically and socially underdeveloped; in fact some of these territories are among the most underdeveloped in the world. On the other hand, in some sectors high levels of development have been reached. In this cradle of Western civilization the past rose to far greater levels of achievement than the present. The monuments of Arab architecture still standing intact and the remains of ancient Roman cities and of irrigation systems overrun by the desert are evidences of levels of prosperity and development from which these lands have fallen during the past millennium of decline and darkness. Thus we are not only behind others; we are behind ourselves. It follows that what was possible once is in some respects certainly possible again.

The measure of present underdevelopment and poverty can be seen from a comparison of the per capita incomes of the countries of the Near East with those of the advanced countries. The following figures of per capita incomes of the countries of the Near and Middle East are based on the latest estimates of the United Nations; those of the advanced countries of Europe and America are also compiled by the United Nations, but are based on reliable statistics of the countries themselves.

## PER CAPITA INCOME IN DOLLARS

*Arab Countries*

Lebanon	140
Syria	100
Egypt	100
Iraq	90
Saudi Arabia	60
Yemen	40

*Other Near and Middle East Countries*

Israel	389
Greece	130
Turkey	125
Iran	85
Pakistan	51

*Some Countries in America and Europe*

United States	1453
Canada	870
Switzerland	849
United Kingdom	773
Denmark	689
France	482
Czechoslovakia	371
Argentina	346
Portugal	250
Italy	235

The estimates of per capita income in the Arab countries are perhaps lower than is actually the case, but they indicate the low standard of living of the peoples of these countries as compared with the advanced countries of Europe and America. The standard of living of the majority of the people in the Arab Near East is even lower than is indicated by figures of per capita incomes. Being averages, these figures do not reveal the true extent of poverty in the region. The inequality of wealth and income is such that the majority of the people live on a bare subsistence level while a minority lives in luxury. Vigorous social consciousness and responsibility simply do not exist. It is perhaps safe to estimate that 10 percent of the population receive more than half the national income and so live on a level comparable to that of people in Western Europe, while the common people constituting 90 percent of the population have an average income which is only half the per capita income for the whole population.

The basic cause of the poverty of the countries of the Arab Near East lies in the semi-feudal agrarian structure of their economy. This economy is predominantly agricultural, as shown by the fact that over two-thirds of the population derive their livelihood directly or

indirectly from the land. In spite of the considerable growth of manufacturing industry in recent decades, particularly in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, the proportion of labor employed in industry is still very low; in fact, all the indications are that it has fallen with the growth of population and with the decline of handicrafts and the shift to mechanized factory production. The backwardness of the agrarian structure limits agricultural productivity and so keeps down the living standard of the majority of the people. To this basic cause of poverty must be added a special cause in the case of Egypt, namely the pressure of population on a limited area of cultivable land.

The semi-feudal structure in agriculture still predominates in most Arab countries to a smaller or greater extent. It manifests itself in the existence of large landholdings owned by a small number of landlords who are mostly absentee owners and who constitute a rentier class drawing comfortable incomes from the land but taking little or no interest in its utilization. The extent of large landholdings varies from one country to another. In Egypt statistics of land ownership show that .4 percent of the landowners with holdings over 50 feddans each (one feddan is approximately one acre) own 36.8 percent of the total area, while 72.2 percent of the owners with holdings of one feddan or less own only 13.1 percent of the area. In Syria it is estimated that about half the land is owned by large landowners. In Iraq, where this semi-feudal agrarian structure is superimposed on an old tribal structure, the proportion is still higher.

Besides the class of absentee landlords, there is the class of poor share-tenants and landless agricultural workers who cultivate the land and constitute the great majority of the rural population. The share-tenants, who are usually burdened with debts contracted at excessively high interest rates, have no incentive to improve the land. The difference between this semi-feudal sharetenancy and individual farm ownership is illustrated most vividly by the contrast in Lebanon between the mountain farmer who owns his land and the share-tenant of the plains. The mountaineer who won his title to the land scarcely a hundred years ago has transformed the barren and rocky mountain terrain into fruit orchards and vegetable gardens. He is literate, healthy, clean and progressive. His counterpart on the plains has done nothing to increase the productivity of the soil and remains in a state of poverty and degradation. The plight of the landless agricultural workers is even more pitiful than that of the share-tenants.

This semi-feudal agrarian structure is not only a basic obstacle to the development of agriculture in the Arab Near East but is also a limiting factor in the development of manufacturing industry. The low productivity and low purchasing power of the rural population, constituting a large majority of the people, limit the growth of manufacturing, which cannot develop large-scale low-cost production in the absence of a sufficiently large market.

The capital resources internally available for economic development are small, except in those Arab countries which receive substantial income from their oil resources. The governments are financially weak not only because of low national incomes but also because of the corruption and inefficiency of the taxation system. Their financial resources are generally insufficient to provide the basic social services needed by the people and to undertake projects of economic development. Expenditures on education are limited and consequently illiteracy remains high.

The growth of industry and trade in recent years, though still limited, has brought into being new social forces that are beginning to challenge the domination of the landlords. The industrial working class is organizing itself into unions and is beginning to have influence in public affairs. A new class of business and industrial enterprisers is rising and taking an increasing interest in economic and social development. The intellectuals are leading in new movements of national revival of much wider scope and greater depth than the old purely political struggle against foreign imperialist domination. But all these nascent social forces are still weak and without adequate leadership. The future therefore is docile in the extreme.

The possibilities of economic development in the Arab countries of the Near East are limited by a number of factors, the most important of which are natural resources, capital resources, labor efficiency and in some cases the growth of population.

Except for oil, the Arab countries are poor in natural resources. As far as is known there are no important coal and iron ore deposits. There are no non-ferrous metals worth mentioning. There are almost no forests. The most important resource is agricultural land which is of high fertility in most of the Arab countries. But the limiting factor in this case is water. The Arab territories receive little rainfall and are mostly desert and semi-desert. Nevertheless, large rivers, such as the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates, as well as small rivers flowing from the mountains of Lebanon and Syria, provide considerable water resources for irrigation and hydroelectric power. Where irrigation is highly developed, as in Egypt, agriculture is highly productive. There are vast possibilities for irrigation development in Iraq and Syria which would enable them to support twice their present populations at an appreciably higher living standard. But a large investment of capital over a long period of years would be required for this purpose.

The oil resources of the Arab Near East are concentrated in the Persian Gulf area. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, and to a lesser degree Bahrein and Qatar, have very rich oil deposits which constitute about one-third of the world's known reserves. These countries are at present receiving considerable income from the concessionary companies exploiting these resources and are expected to receive more as production increases and higher royalties are agreed upon.

The second general limiting factor is capital. The capital resources that are currently available in the Arab countries or that may be mobilized in the future are small. The present rate of capital formation would enable economic development to keep up with population growth and, except in Egypt, to raise per capita incomes and standards of living at less than one percent annually. The possibilities of an increased rate of capital formation are very limited except in the case of those countries with large oil revenues, namely Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It has been estimated by a United Nations group of experts that the countries of the Middle East, including the Arab countries, are saving on the average about 6 percent of their national incomes and that they need to invest at the rate of 15 percent of their national incomes in industry and agriculture in order to raise their per capita incomes annually by 2 percent. This estimate is roughly applicable to the Arab countries. With increased income from oil and increased efforts in the mobilization of internal capital resources it would be possible to increase the rate of national savings to 10 percent on the average. Capital from foreign countries will still be needed to the extent of 5 percent of the national incomes of the Arab countries taken together, if their per capita incomes are to be raised by 2 percent annually. This would amount to an annual capital inflow of \$175,000,000. An annual increase of 2 percent in per capita income represents a fairly rapid rate of development and would result in an increase of 50 percent in 20 years.

A third limiting factor is labor efficiency. A technically efficient and trained labor force in agriculture and industry is necessary for economic development. This means a greater degree of literacy, better education, improved public health services, increased technical training and a government extension service for the improvement of agricultural techniques. The Point Four Program has a real and important contribution to make in this field. However, the introduction of new technology into agriculture, industry, public health and government administration is very difficult and complex. It cannot simply be imported from the West but requires much cultural readjustment and assimilation.

The growth of population is a special limiting factor where, as in Egypt, the pressure of population on a limited area of cultivable land makes it difficult to increase per capita income and so raise standards of living. It is believed by some students of Egyptian economic development that in the last 50 years the standard of living of the majority of Egyptians has fallen because of the growth of population at a rate greater than the increase of national production.

The question is not whether it will be possible to promote the economic and social development of the Arab Near East in the next 50 years but whether it will be possible to achieve such a rapid rate of development as would not only keep pace with population

growth but also raise living standards sufficiently to transform the life of the people from misery and despair to decency and hope. The question is further whether material conditions comparable to those obtaining elsewhere, such as in America, Europe, Russia or certain parts of Asia, can be developed in the Arab Near East so as to support a vigorous culture that will make a real positive dent upon the world.

To attempt an answer to these questions, one must at least consider certain prerequisites of rapid economic and social development in the Arab Near East. I would like to suggest four internal prerequisites and two of an external character.

The first internal prerequisite is land reform which would give the cultivator a stake in the land and transform the agrarian structure from its present state of stagnation and hopelessness to a state where free and progressive farmers acquire the incentives for raising the productivity of the soil and developing a new way of life in rural communities. The rural population constitutes the large majority of the people in Arab countries, and as long as they remain in their present degradation there is little hope for developing strong, prosperous, forward-looking and stable nations in the Arab Near East.

The second prerequisite is an efficient government administration. In the Arab countries, local private enterprise cannot be relied upon to undertake the tasks of rapid economic and social development because its resources and experience are limited. On the other hand, foreign private enterprise (even if interested) either will not be trusted because of past experience or will not be allowed to make the high profits which it would require in return for the risks of foreign investment. The conclusion is that government enterprise, or at least government participation and guidance, is necessary in many fields of development where neither local nor foreign private enterprise would be available or acceptable. It is therefore essential, if governments are to undertake programs and even specific projects of development, that government administration attain a high degree of efficiency.

The third prerequisite is wise, enlightened and strong national leadership. Without it no basic reforms can be carried out, efficiency in government administration cannot be ensured and maintained at a high level, capital cannot be mobilized and directed to the most productive fields of development, and the necessary efforts and sacrifices by the people will not be forthcoming.

Fourthly, one of the most important prerequisites of economic development in the Arab Near East is a social and economic order in which freedom and equality of opportunity are ensured to all members of the community; where special economic, social and political

privilege has been eliminated; and where every person will receive the rewards of his own efforts and exertions. Rapid economic and social development consciously planned and directed requires for its success the participation of the people in a democratic national movement involving sacrifices and rewards that are fairly distributed in an environment where freedom, justice and responsibility abound.

These four prerequisites of land reform, efficiency in government administration, wise and strong national leadership and an environment of freedom and equality of opportunity will enable the Arab countries to embark, each in its own territory, on a vigorous policy of economic and social development. To be fully successful, however, such a policy would require not only separate action, but also cooperation among all the Arab countries. Such economic cooperation is necessary in order to promote territorial division of labor, establish a wider market as a basis for industrialization and counter the economic threat of Israel.

One final requirement which is essential for the rapid economic development of the Arab Near East is foreign, and particularly United States, economic assistance. Foreign economic assistance in the form of technical aid, grants and loans would be needed at least in the first ten years of a large-scale program of development in order to set the wheels in motion, to acquire badly needed capital equipment and to help make the basic capital investments in such fields as irrigation, hydroelectric power, communications and basic social services in public health, education, agricultural extension and rural credit. But even if foreign assistance is not available on the required scale, the Arab countries can and should make all the efforts and sacrifices necessary for shouldering the burdens required for their economic and social development.

## V

In the present politico-ideological situation--with Communism eating into the body of the great Eurasian continent until only the fringes of that immense land mass remain outside its clutches, with even those fringes and the lands beyond considerably softened in diverse ways from within, with the Near East occupying the most strategic position in the world, and with the well-known Soviet-Russian aspirations in the direction of the Persian Gulf--the question of the relationship between the Near East on the one hand and the Communist and non-Communist worlds on the other is of the greatest importance.

The total impact of these two worlds upon the Near East today can best be gauged by the performance of a radical intellectual experiment. Truth reveals itself most clearly at the limit, and in the inner relationships between cultures and peoples war is one of the limits.

Let us assume, then, for the purposes of this experiment, that war has broken out between the Communist and the non-Communist worlds. With this assumption, the experiment consists in answering seven questions for each Near Eastern country on a comparative tabulation sheet. The situation is so transparent that it is perfectly possible to reach truthful answers within a very small margin of error. The questions are:

1. What is the attitude of the government towards the war?
2. What is the attitude of the people, as distinct from the government, towards the war?
3. Whatever the answers to the previous two questions, what is the possibility of Communist sabotage and fifth column activity?
4. In case of a Communist invasion and the elimination of Western influence from the Near East, who in each country in question will really miss the West?
5. In case of the Sovietization of the Near East, what is the possibility of the rise of underground resistance movements?
6. In case the West succeeds in pushing back Communism from the Near East (some time limit here must be assumed, say five or ten years of Sovietization), what will be the attitude of the people to the returning West?
7. What tentative blueprints can be made of the shape of things to come after the Communist onslaught is swept back?

This experiment is purely hypothetical, but the questions raised are exceedingly critical. They touch the very heart of the situation. Nothing is likely to illuminate the student of these matters more profoundly than an honest, thorough, objective execution of this experiment. If the West wants to know where the Near East stands, let it face up honestly to this experiment. Let it further summon its deepest genius to inquire at each stage why the results of the experiment are what they are. In all this the West must make four precise distinctions: what is proper for propaganda and expediency, namely for “kidding” people along in times of crisis; what is the real truth; what is the Near East’s responsibility for this truth; and what is the West’s responsibility for this truth.

## VI

“Whither the Near East” is ultimately, for the most part, “whither Islam.” This question raises the profoundest issues, which I shall try to face as truthfully as I can. First it is important to note that the question concerns not only the Moslems, but the entire world. For Islam is a vigorous force in the world and therefore much depends on its development. Just as the Moslems must inquire “whither this or that system or culture,” including their own, so the non-Moslems must in this amazingly shrunk world ponder deeply and with absolute responsibility “whither Islam.” Certainly the Near East cannot be understood apart from this problem. We have all become one another’s neighbors, and no man can remain indifferent to where his neighbor is tending.

And for the Christians of the Near East it is obvious that this is a peculiarly crucial issue. The fate of Islam is in a certain sense their fate. For Islam is more than a religion: it is a total outlook. Thus for the Christians of the Near East, Moslem culture, whether Arab or Turkish or Persian, is in a deep sense their culture. They have always shouldered civic, economic, political and intellectual responsibility with their Moslem brethren. Therefore they cannot be too deeply interested in the development of their common heritage.

In varying degrees of metaphysical depth men have brooded on this issue: Toynbee has done so in England, as well as Gibb and his assistant Hourani; so has Massignon in France and so have Hocking and Hitti in the United States; and many others elsewhere. In the Near East, Taha Hussein in Egypt and Zurayk in Syria wrestled with it somewhat. But I do not expect the final word on this matter, on the plane of theory, to emerge before many years. We are at the earliest stages of a most important cultural-historical- existential investigation. In the nature of the case, the utmost that can be done now and for some time to come is to clear the ground, lay the foundations, indicate the vast scope of the problem, suggest the sort of questions that must be gone into, and define the moral and intellectual prerequisites for any inquiry that will really face and yield the truth. It is enough if the mind is whetted in absolute love and humor and seriousness to face the issue; for truth has a way always of revealing itself in time to the inquiring mind.

The following outline only raises issues. Its suggestion of “solutions” (an awful word) is meager. But the very raising of an issue is itself of the utmost importance. The proper facing, the adequate description, the real understanding, the living appreciation, the honest and full apprehension—in short, the being--of these issues is a matter of the distant future. Whether it will be a Toynbee or a Gibb or a Hourani or a Hussein who will finally wrestle with these

great questions to their uttermost depths I do not know. One thing I know: that the whole truth of these matters is known somewhere, certainly in the quiet bosom of eternity, and that it takes only a purity of heart and a single and sustained determination of the will to find it.

1. Nothing is more important than to contemplate the desert and the mode of being proper to the desert, and to understand how this mode of being differs radically from that of the most temperate zones, such as Europe, where there are rain and snow and green mountains, where there are sharpness of transition and variety, and where nature is prolific with forms of life.
2. The “whither” we are seeking raises the prior question of the complete significance of the mentality of the badu, who are the inhabitants of the desert.
3. The existence and persistence throughout Arab history of overwhelming numbers of lower classes and the absence of the middle class. Hence the phenomenon of the masses and of the mob. To please them you must in the long run cater to their imagination and desires: you must become one of them. The all-absorbing, self-avenging, overwhelming phenomenon of the mob: in the end they dominate, not you.
4. Hence the great difficulty of being a leader, really leading and not in fact following. The ultimate tribulation of leadership in the Moslem-Arab world: you must conform. In the light of this difficulty the achievement of Mohammed appears utterly superhuman.
5. Hence also the phenomenon of the court poet. To rule you must employ a rhetorician or a poet or be one yourself. The incredible magical power of the Arabic language to rouse and satisfy the masses. The “whither” we are seeking raises the entrancing question of the nature, mystery, significance and “whither” of the Arabic language.
6. In one great agony of his life, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) distinguished between that which is proper to the masses and that which is proper to the intimate circle. The tragic existential significance of this distinction. The batiniyyah (esoterism) that follows from this dualism must mean that not everything that is hid shall be revealed.
7. An inquiry into the discontinuities, gaps, divisions, interruptions (geographical, social and historical) in Arab society. The distinction between the unity of community and unity by reason of an identically inherited pattern. The “whither” we are seeking raises the question of the essence of community.
8. The bearing of this on the possibility in Islam of compromise and modification and on real awareness of others. Distinction between real change (appropriation, assimilation, inner adjustment) and apparent change (repeating, copying, “using”).

9. The strength and the weakness of the immense mixing of races that has occurred in Islam. The geographical determinism of this phenomenon.
10. The ontological significance of the pull and the lure which the past exerts on the Arab. His prodigious memory and his vivid imagination. The dreams of reenactment of exactly what happened in the past. The “whither” we inquire into can never be determined without knowing the bearing of all this on decision, creation, freedom, indetermination, the will, the future, real change, the perception of the objective realities of the world.
11. The phenomenon in recent decades of “the Orientalist.” How much good and how much harm has Orientalism done? Why a corresponding phenomenon of “the Occidentalist” did not arise?
12. The dearth of great works of reason, great summations. The important works of Moslem-Arab and Christian-Arab philosophers and mystics did not transform life and literature: they influenced West more than East. Connectedness and unity of reason soon overwhelmed by imagination, language, fatigue. Breath of reason short. If reason is the creator of the world, is there any future, whether to Christianity or to Islam, without reason being properly enshrined in the hearts and minds of men?
13. If instinctive nature is given, can it nevertheless be controlled by reason? The order of the emotions.
14. The question of fatalism, for after all the “whither” may have no meaning at all.
15. The significance of the repudiation by Al-Ghazzali of cause and effect. Cause and effect in Arab life and its bearing on the “whither.”
16. No deeper confrontation occurred in Arab history than that between Al-Ghazzali and Ibn Rushd in the two tabafuts. Here for the first time East met West internally within Islam. It has never happened since.
17. The Christian and Moslem doctrines of revelation (alwabi).
18. The problem of the pluralization of history. Is there an absolute beginning? If not, where do we start? Is it possible to compare cultures on an absolute scale? No deeper question can be asked and therefore we cannot be too careful in answering it.
19. Now the “whither” means asking, questioning, wondering, reflecting on oneself, tearing one’s clothes, beating upon one’s breast, “where am I going?” This requires fundamental self-criticism. But so far striking absence of a strong line of reformers, critics, thinkers, prophets, rebels. There is room for a hundred Mohammed Abdou’s:

- kindled by one another, building upon one another, absorbing and reflecting one another, criticizing, reinterpreting, creating, departing from one another, accepting profound spiritual responsibility. The “whither” is a function of the joy of free, grounded, responsible reflection and self-criticism
20. Nature and destiny of man; the individual human soul; immortality; reason, nature, rebellion, vision, joy; freedom of thought, of being and of becoming.
  21. There is an amazing ignorance of Christian literature, doctrine and life, despite the fact that Christ and His Mother are deeply revered by Islam. There isn't a single Moslem scholar in all history, so far as I know, who has written an authentic essay on Christianity; whereas Christian scholars, both Arab and non-Arab, have written authoritative works on Islam, and on other religions too. Inquiry into the mystery of this estrangement. There will always be fear, uncertainty, embarrassment, uneasiness, lack of joy, lack of freedom, a predisposition to self-defense, until this intellectual and spiritual balance is redressed.
  22. Islam explicitly grounds itself in the Judaic-Christian tradition and conceives itself as completing and sealing that tradition. There is room here for a responsible investigation into what it has adopted and what it has rejected from this tradition, and into the sort of Christianity Islam came in touch with. Since the Christian tradition persists independently of Islam, and in all likelihood is not going to be displaced, it is obvious “whither Islam” is inseparable from “whence Islam.”
  23. In this connection the infinite importance of the history of the seventh and eighth centuries, particularly in regard to the relationship then and afterwards between Islam and the Graeco-Roman-Christian-European synthesis.
  24. Three central Christian doctrines are repudiated: the Incarnation, the Cross and the Church. Significance of this repudiation for the “whither.” Suffering then is not of the essence, personal sin need not be atoned, the divine does not take the form of an actual total man. The fact of the Church raises the tremendous question of the difference between the Christian and the Moslem conceptions of history.
  25. Contemplative existence in Islam and in Christianity The recent growth of contemplative orders in the West. Inwardness, interiority, contemplation, pure vision, asceticism, in Islam.
  26. An inquiry into the ontology of Moslem art.
  27. An inquiry into the possibility of the separation of state and religion in Islam.

28. “Whither Islam” must depend in part on how much the Christian and Moslem worlds can in this materially and existentially interdependent world sit together and inquire, on the deepest possible plane, through their scholars and thinkers, in all patience, humility, love and openness, into the truth of Christianity and the truth of Islam, and into their common spiritual and temporal problems. Nothing is more crucial for the future of Islam and indeed for the history of the world than to provide objective, political, social and existential conditions under which this intellectual and spiritual getting together can fruitfully take place.
29. The growth in recent years of Western interest in Islam and the Moslem world. The phenomenon of institutes of Islamic and Near Eastern studies in the United States. No greater service can be done the cause of truth, understanding, peace and concord between East and West than the promotion of these institutes. Distinction, however, between dedication to truth alone and the utilization of historical, sociological and economic information for political and commercial purposes. Truth the only savior of the world.
30. There is room for 20 first-class universities in the Near East, where the disciplined mind can range all subjects in absolute freedom, joy and responsibility. No greater service can be done the Moslem world and in the end the cause of understanding between East and West than the promotion of liberal education in the Near East where the humane tradition, both of Islam and of the West, can be vigorously brought to the fore, and where freedom of thought and inquiry and a complete trust in the life-giving power of the truth penetrate the atmosphere on every level of existence.
31. On the level of the universal, and therefore of truth, peace and understanding, the following five great achievements of the Moslem world in the ages of its greatest brilliance cannot be stressed enough: the humble receptivity of important thinkers and seekers to the truth of cultures outside their own; the great achievements of Arab science, especially in mathematics, physics, astronomy and medicine; certain brilliant achievements of Moslem theology (al-kalam); the wonderful line of Moslem-Arab philosophers; and perhaps on the deepest level the unbelievable spirituality of certain sufis. The “whither” we are seeking is in my opinion largely “whether” these five solid achievements can be rediscovered, reappropriated, reinterpreted, developed and perfected. If only Ibn Rushd and Jalal-al-Din Al-Rumi can be loved, understood and transcended!
32. The greatest single intellectual thing that can happen in the Arab world is a responsible movement for publishing in Arabic one or two hundred volumes of the world’s finest classics, both from the Moslem-Arab and from the Western traditions.

33. An inquiry into dependence and independence: on every level--political, geopolitical, economic, cultural, historical, intellectual, spiritual. Meaning of justice and equality in an order of interdependence. The Aristotelian principle of the priority of actuality.
34. The complex relationship between the existentially strong and the existentially weak. The free obligations of the existentially strong.
35. The Logos, the Word, the intermediary between God and man in Christian and Moslem theologies. The significance of the rejection of the Trinity.
36. Is a Christian Arab possible? Is a Christian Arab culture possible?
37. Has there been sufficient love and concern for the Moslem-Arab world? Have sufficient tears of love been shed in its behalf?
38. Where are these things fully and responsibly discussed and faced: discussed not spectatorially, but with a view to the truth, and faced not inquisitively, but in absolute love? Can objective material and human conditions be developed whereby the mind will be able to articulate the truth of these questions in a manner that will live for a thousand years?

These are the topics that the question “whither Islam” seems to me to involve. It is very well for people to be “interested” in the Near East. It is very well to think in terms of independence and of economic and social advance. But politics and economics will lead absolutely nowhere until these deeper issues are faced. Well-meaning good will need not wonder why it does not always succeed: it must first open up these horizons and acquire an existential grounding in them. The degree of superficiality with respect to the Near East, both in the Near East and in the Western world, is simply astounding. It is an expression of the crisis of the West.

## VII

The Western world is responsible for the situation in the Near East on every level of that situation. In the end this is an exemplification of the Western principle that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Near Eastern existence is largely derivative from or a reaction against Western existence. One can set up a one-to-one correspondence between the problems and great crises through which Western civilization has gone during the past centuries and the reflections these problems and crises induced in the life of the Near East. The Near East mirrors, by deposit or by reaction, the problems of the world. Whatever face the Arab East shows today is fundamentally a reflection of the face

which the West has shown it; and whatever weaknesses the Arab East exhibits are largely an expression of the weaknesses of the West. In a deeper sense the problem of the Near East is the problem of the West.

On the one hand there is a reflection of some of the virtues of the West: the beginnings of a new administrative structure, of social and health services, of an improvement in standards of living, of great public works (e.g. in Egypt and Iraq) and of a revival of learning (largely due to Western schools and books). In all this we see reflections of the great dominating ideas of the modern West: order, health, worldly happiness, science, social consciousness.

On the other hand the Arab East shows another face: the existence of a million Arab refugees, deep divisions between the various Arab states, estrangement between the Arabs and their neighbors (hostility to Israel, suspicion of the Turks, indifference to the Persians), the growth of tension between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the lack of progress towards social justice (it is not certain that social organization today is more just than what it was before the coming of the West), and above all a universal and profound hatred of the West (although this does not prevent friendly personal relations and the desire to obtain new and efficient tools of thought and action from the West).

To say that all of this is due simply and purely to the West is of course nonsense. There is fundamental superficiality, negativity, unreality, darkness, distortion and error in the Near East which made all this in the first place possible. Unless these defects are brought to the surface and remedied there is no hope for us. East and West can come together in peace only if they repent together under transcendent judgment. With these qualifications, of what can we accuse the West?

1. Lack of unity. The strife and rivalry of the Western Powers. This led not only to the weakening of the West, but also to the divisions and rivalries among the Near Eastern states. I do not agree that Western lack of unity is a good thing for us, for I refuse to believe that the West can only reach agreement upon our corpse.
2. Lack of responsibility. Failure to accept the fact in all honesty that they were responsible for shaking the whole life of the Near East. No long-term planning; day-to-day opportunism; hence no stable political life in the Near East. In particular, the instability due to the alternation in British policy between interference and noninterference: interference when a Western interest is at stake (e.g. oil and Suez), and refusal to do something –under the pretense that the states are independent--when what is involved is merely the welfare or interests of the peoples themselves. All this bespeaks halfheartedness in facing up to one's responsibilities.

3. Lack of sincerity. There has been from the beginning an element of hypocrisy in Western policy: Napoleon's claim to be the protector of Islam, the use of Christian missions for political ends, the use of minorities by all Powers, a façade of morality given to the mandate system when as a matter of fact it was decided upon for quite other reasons, the invoking of moral principles to justify their own actions and the ignoring of them when they were inconvenient, and so forth.
4. Lack of understanding of the deeper issues at stake. In particular, failure to understand that all political problems in the Near East are interwoven with religion, so that a true attitude to those problems can rest only upon a basis of true doctrine, and a false attitude to them will have disastrous effects upon the whole relationship between the great religions. The West did not offer the highest goods of its positive tradition, but the false gods of modern Western civilization: nationalism, materialism, Communism. Thus the Near East has been given the choice between embracing the falsehoods of Europe and falling back upon its own inadequate past.
5. Lack of love. Strategy, commerce, exploitation, securing an imperial route: these were why the West for the most part came to the Near East, not because it loved us. Add to this the immense racial arrogance of modern Europe. The West has not been true to itself, and therefore it could not have been true to us.

This sad, privative face is of course not the authentic face of the West. But it has called forth in the East its exact unhappy image. One can show that if there is lack of unity, lack of responsibility, lack of sincerity, lack of understanding and lack of love in the Near East, the Near East caught on these things largely from the West. The disturbing rise of fanaticism in the Near East in recent years is a reaction to the thoughtlessness and superficiality of the West. When you are not loved, what is there to prevent you from hating yourself and the world? There is no escape from the fundamental metaphysical principle that actuality is in every way prior to potentiality, and that the latter takes on the form of the former.

In all this we are really touching upon the great present crisis in Western culture. We are saying when that culture mends its own spiritual fences, all will be well with the Near East, and not with the Near East alone. We are saying it is not a simple thing to be the heir of the Graeco-Roman-Christian-European synthesis and not to be true to its deepest visions. One can take the ten greatest spirits in that synthesis and have them judge the performance of the Western world in relation to the Near East. The deep problem of the Near East then must await the spiritual recovery of the West. And he does not know the truth who thinks that the West does not have in its own tradition the means and power wherewith it can once again be true to itself.

## VIII

Those who live and die in the Near East (and in certain parts of it more than others), namely, those who suffer our existence from within, are granted the opportunity--which very few of them seize--of beholding something eternal, of seeing right before their eyes the deepest problems of humanity almost in shimmering physical embodiment. Elsewhere these problems certainly exist, but they are usually resolved one way or the other, rightly or wrongly, or else they are judiciously covered up. But with us they remain in eternal suspension, as though there must be one place in the world to remind us all of the essential problematic character of human existence, of the utter folly of "resting in peace" when we have cleverly covered up our problems or supposed that we have "solved" them.

The great moments of the Near East are the judges of the world. The Near East is of course today utterly unworthy of them. But it is these moments alone, properly understood, that can bind East and West together, in judgment and in truth. What is the ultimate trouble with the world today? It is the loss of the dimension of transcendence, the fact that the world hugs itself in happy self-sufficiency; it is--to use the concept of a certain modern philosophy--the belief that the world is self-creative. But the one message deposited by the Near East in the whole of its history is the absolute negation of this belief. There is an original transcendent order, full of meaning and power, open to the faithful and pure: an order creating, judging, disturbing, healing, forgiving. The Western world today is disturbed by the challenge of Communism. But this is nothing; for Communism will pass away, and so will "heaven and earth," but the vision and world of the Near East will never pass away. In fact, Communism with its radical immanentism is a challenge only because the transcendental challenge of the Near East has long ago overcome the West and will never let it go. Only as the West comes to the cradle of its civilization, recognizing in all responsibility, truth and love the relics of its origins; and only as the Near East regains a glimpse of its own lost transcendent visions, casting aside all doubt, negativity and childishness and clasping hands with all those who first drank from the well of its life: only as these two movements reach for and meet each other can peace and righteousness come, not only to the Near East, but to the whole world.

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[i] The apparent exception of Rome is greatly mitigated by the fact that the deepest things did not arise there; that what did arise there was actually rooted in the Near East; and that the codification of Roman law was the achievement of the eastern Mediterranean. Rome was faithful but not original.

[ii] The word "Arab" denotes neither a race nor a religion. For the most part its connotation today is "Arabic-speaking." The overwhelming majority of the Arabic-speaking peoples (or Arabs) are Moslem, just as the overwhelming majority of Moslems are non-Arab: so the two terms do not coincide. Although there are vast diversities of culture among them, the Arabs have certain general cultural traits in common. They also have common aspirations. Whether all Arabic-speaking peoples constitute a single nation depends first on the meaning of the term "constitute" and second on the "Arab" adaptation of the European concept of "nation." All this of course is independent of the question whether they should constitute a nation.

[iii] I might mention in this connection, however, two recent books, "My Mission in Israel," by James G. McDonald (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), and "The Forrestal Diaries," edited by Walter Millis (New York: Viking, 1951), which are of special interest to the student of this subject.