

THE "CHRISTIAN PROBLEM" AND THE PHILIPPINE SOUTH

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Historically, the fact that the people of Mindanao and Sulu were able to successfully resist all attempts to subjugate them only increased the obsession of the Spanish colonial government and of the church hierarchy to conquer the south and to convert the people to Catholicism. Thus was created the "Moro Problem" which, in the mind of colonial officials, was simply the problem of creating effective strategic and tactical programs that would ensure the ultimate subjugation and conversion of the Muslims.

I

The American colonial authorities inherited the "problem" from Spain at the turn of the century. Initially, the Americans resorted to force in their desire to complete the subjugation of the Muslims. In the bloody clashes that ensued, the fierce resistance of the Muslims exacted a heavy toll on American lives. Writing in 1914, an American official confessed that in spite of all their resources, the Americans had not yet been able to establish a decent state of public order in the little island of Jolo. Benefiting from the Spanish experience and realizing the bankruptcy of crude methods of physical force, the American colonial administrators resorted to the use of techniques more subtle and

¹ Worcester, Dean L. *The Philippines: Past and Present*, New York: The McMillan Company, 1914 p. 12.

efficient than guns or bombs. This new orientation was defined by Najeeb Saleeby as follows: "By Moro problem is meant that method or form of administration by which the Moro and other non-Christians who are living among them can be governed to their best interest and welfare in the most peaceful way possible, and can at the same time be provided with appropriate measures for their gradual achievement in culture and civilization, so that in the course of a reasonable time they can be admitted into the general government of the Philippine Islands as a member of a republican national organization."²

All American colonial efforts in Muslimland through such agencies as the Moro Province, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, and the Commission for Mindanao and Sulu, were geared towards the solution of the Moro Problem, as these were guided by the spirit and the exhortations of Saleeby's definition. This concept, upon closer look, was virtually a go-signal for assimilation because of the four major assumptions that it contained, namely:

1. Christian-dominated institutions were healthy while their non-Christian counterparts were sick. Thus for non-Christians to be admitted into the general government of the Philippines, they first had to "rise to the level" of Christian society.
2. The goal to bring non-Christians into the Christian mainstream presupposed the mainstream as the desirable standard. In pursuance of this goal, programs were designed to provide the Muslims with resources so as to enable them to participate in Christian-dominated economic, social and political structures.
3. Ultimate national unity was envisioned along the line of Christians and non-Christians living together in Christian-dominated communities with the expectation that everyone would conform to the norms of the Christian community.
4. The main barrier to national unity and progress was the inability of the minorities to join the mainstream. For as long as the Muslims would not join the mainstream, the country would always be divided and the Muslim was to be regarded as a social burden and a national problem.

The Saleeby school of thought has unhappily been echoed and re-echoed by Muslim and Christian leaders alike. It was in this light that

² Saleeby, Najeeb M. *Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion*, Manila. Bureau of Printing, 1905 p.

the Commission on National Integration was created. Republic Act 1888 which created the CNI charged it to "effectuate in a more rapid and complete manner the economic, social, moral, and political advancement of the non-Christian Filipinos or national cultural minorities and to render real, complete, and permanent, the integration of all said national minorities into the body politic."

The same regrettable ideas found in Saleeby's definition are implicitly assumed and explicitly reiterated by R. A. 1888. The minorities are still the problem while the desirable mainstream has semantically been replaced by the phrase "body politic." Sadly, the term integration has become a polite euphemism for assimilation. In the past two years the focus on the inability of the Muslims to join the mainstream, and the compelling need to bring them into it, has led to the creation of many government agencies to implement the national integration policy. In spite of all these efforts, the problem has escalated to destructively alarming proportions.³

In the light of the violence and the hostility that continue to exact a lamentable toll in lives and property in Muslimland, we can conclude that government policies and programs have not succeeded in creating a community of understanding between Muslims and Christians.

Many Christians believe that if they could only know what the Muslims want, then the satisfaction of these demands could solve the problem of national unity. These Christians are aware that the government has given many concessions to the Muslims. Consequently, they cannot understand why, in spite of these concessions, there seems to be no end to the tensions and the hostilities in Mindanao. What instead is becoming discernible is an escalation of the conflict. Above all, they cannot understand why Muslims are fighting each other instead of presenting unified demands to the government. If Muslims don't know what they want, how can the government come out with the appropriate response?

This type of thinking can be better understood in the light of the fact that for so many years, Christian Filipinos have been told that they had a Muslim problem. This orientation views the Muslims, not the Christians, as the problem. Christian Filipinos have also been taught that the Philippines is an open society, the show window of democracy in Asia. Any blockage of Muslims from entering the main-

³ Magsino, Florencio F. "Imperatives for Progress in Muslim Mindanao." *The National Security Review*, Dec. 1973 p. 53-56.

stream was not caused by Christian unwillingness but by Muslim inability. A study of history as well as the nature of the relations between the Muslims and the Christians of the Philippines will, however, point to the opposite view. Christian society is deeply implicated in the Muslim problem. Christian institutions created it, Christian institutions maintain it, and Christian society condones it.

It is therefore important that policy makers pay more attention to Christian institutions which are the cause of the problem, rather than to Muslim society, which is the victim of the problem. If national unity has not been achieved, it is not because Muslims did not want it; it is because Christians refused it. In this light, Muslim tendencies toward separation simply recognize a fact, which the Christian community created.

Because of the focus on the Muslim as the problem, millions of pesos have been poured into Mindanao and Sulu with the hope that more schools, more roads, more scholarships and other benefits would hasten national unity. National unity, however, is not a simple question of roads, schools, bridges, and scholarships. The major issue is not whether Christians and Muslims should live together but *on what terms they should live together*. Should it be as equals in an atmosphere of mutual respect, with the common desire to link each other's hopes and aspirations? Or should they live together like wild animals in a jungle where only the strong survive at the expense of the weak?

Finally, because of the view that Muslim society is the fundamental problem, Christian society and institutions do not get the critical attention that they desperately need. Instead they have become the models that minority societies have to emulate. In simple words, programs meant to solve the Muslim Problem failed because they were assimilationist. Whether by ignorance or by design, it now appears that the goal of national integration can only be achieved at the expense of minority cultures. In the area of race and ethnic relations, assimilation as a technique of dominance is well known. In the words of an authority in ethnic relations,

"Dominant peoples, jealous of their way of life and eager to preserve it, have often looked upon assimilation as the solution of their problems, and have sought to impose their culture upon the foreign elements in their midst. Assimilability has thus sometimes been regarded as the crucial test to be applied to those who would enter the society."⁴

⁴ Berry Brenton. *Race and Ethnic Relations*, Boston: The Reserved Press Cambridge, 1958, p. 427.

A review of government policies and programs for Muslim Mindanao would show that many of them were designed by Christians, intended for Muslims in a Christian-dominated set-up. More often than not, the Christian designer does not start his work by clear deliberate recognition and neutralization of his personal involvement in the issue. Thus his researches and generalizations are, from the outset, doomed to be deflections or mere justifications of the point of view and premises of the group with which he identifies himself. It was perhaps the activities of this type of designer that led a respected Muslim thinker to ask the following questions:

1. Why have lands been given to ex-Huks, ex-prisoners, ex-soldiers, etc. in Muslim traditional lands at so much expense to the government but none to Hadji Kamlon and his small band of followers when the problem of Kamlon was itself initially a land dispute?
2. Why did the government have to spend millions of pesos and lose so many soldiers when a few thousands and a two-night trip by boat could have given Kamlon a modest farm in Cotabato?
3. Why was Edecor established in the midst of Muslim communities when it could have been established in Davao or in the eastern part of Mindanao?
4. Why did Christian colonists still desire to go to traditional Muslim areas when there was still room in other parts of Mindanao?
5. Why, during the term of the late President Magsaysay, was there an attempt to have as many Christian officials as possible in predominantly Muslim municipalities?⁵

These questions were answered by a Colonel in an article written for the National Defense College of the Philippines' official publication. He identified as a reason the failure to overcome prejudices nurtured through the centuries as the main cause for the snafu of government programs. This admission, however, shows only a portion of the total picture.

III

Policy-makers on the Muslim problem since the turn of the century may be categorized under two schools of thought, both of which have

⁵ Majul, Cesar A. "The Historical Background of the Muslims in the Philippines and the Present Mindanao Crisis." (Pamphlet printed by the Convislam Press, 1973) p. 16.

not helped the Muslims at all. The first kind, I would call conservative, the second, liberal. Representatives of these two schools of thought can still be found in the many government agencies that are at present concerned with the plight of the Muslims. Unhappily, both species are not yet extinct.

The conservative focuses on Muslim disregard for law and order as the main problem; his response is domination and he tends toward punishment. The liberal concentrates on the inability of Muslim societal institutions to fully participate in a Christian-dominated society. He tends towards paternalism but refuses to acknowledge that a major overhaul of Christian institutions should be done in order to take away the fetters that prevent Christian society from taking in Muslims as peers and equals.

The liberals and the conservatives agree that the major source of Muslim problems is the exploitation by Muslim leaders of the Muslim masses. In their responses, however, they differ in that the conservative would advocate the replacement of corrupt Muslim leaders by Christian officials. Because it was anomalous to allow Christian leaders to rule in predominantly Muslim communities, the conservatives began programs that would bring a lot of Christian settlers into the Muslim areas — the first step towards the eventual taking over of political control from Muslim leaders. Under this scheme, it was envisioned that a time would come when the Muslims would become the numerical minority in Moroland. The stage would then be set for the legitimate take-over of political power through accepted means . . . elections. The liberal would rather develop his own leaders from among the number of ambitious Muslims who are either malleable or unscrupulous. Since the turn of the century, a lot of Muslim leaders have been developed by the liberals. These leaders have risen to the top of Muslim society not because of the support of the Muslim masses but because of the links that tied them to the central authority in Manila. The number of Muslim leaders that were developed was very much more than the number of positions intended for them. A time came when the competition for the same scarce but privileged positions became so intense that these Muslim leaders began fighting each other. Eventually the political picture in each Muslim province was characterized by the emergence of two or more warring Muslim groups. The appearance of these conflicting Muslim groups can be understood in the light of the following observation:

"Domination is made all the easier by the fact that minorities do not present a united front, but, instead are invariably rent by cleavages, jealousies, and rivalries. As a matter of fact, dominant groups are not unknown to make use of such cleavages, and to encourage them, the better to maintain their own position. 'Divide and Rule' is a device well-understood in the area of race relations."⁶

Another problem area that would need re-examination lies in the links that have been effected between government planners and agencies on the one hand, and vested interest groups on the other, in the belief that a combination of public funds and facilities with private expertise, or vice versa, could develop the necessary action programs needed to help the Muslims. The danger in this coalition, however, would lie not only in the biases of these 'experts' but also in the motives of the interest groups involved. In the words of scholars in inter-group relations —

"Yet, not infrequently action groups are interested parties having at least primarily the concern of this or that social group which subsidizes them. Their sense of urgency comes from being so closely tied with the actualities of a living world full of immediate frictions and tensions; they are after immediate short-cut solutions here and now."⁷

This coalition can especially be detected in the field of education where government funds have been used to assist many missionary schools. On the whole, *these schools have tended to reflect rather than to set the norms of society*. Lamentably, Philippine schools still attach a lot of emphasis upon submission to external authority. To my mind, national unity requires a very much higher level of internalized personal controls. For better inter-ethnic relations, it is imperative that the schools develop in the body politic a new orientation toward cultural minorities that is more and more based on internal controls.

Internal controls have been defined as the "internalized patterns that regulate and influence human predispositions and emotions and thereby condition overt behavior."⁸ By external authority I mean institutionalized patterns and structures such as government, that regulate and influence groups as they pursue social values and social goals.

So far I have only dwelt on the involvement of Christian society and institutions. If I have not touched on the Muslim involvement,

⁶ Berry, Grenton. *oop cit.*, p. 441.

⁷ Sherif, Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif. *Groups in Harmony and Tension*. New York: Octagon Press, 1966 p. 9.

⁸ Betelheim, Bruno and Morris Janavity. *Social Change and Prejudice*, New York. The Free Press 1964 p. 25.

it is because this has been the object of national attention for so many years now. At this point of the conflict no one group can claim a monopoly of vices and virtues. It is wise for us to bear in mind that it takes two to have a conflict.

IV

The "Moro Problem" can be better made clear if we view the problem from two inter-related dimensions: the active and the reactive. Conflict usually starts when an individual or group initiates an action against another individual or group. If the latter feels that his interests are threatened by the initial action, he responds with a reaction which is intended to counter the real or imagined threat in order to eliminate it. If either the initial action or the initial reactions does not satisfy the tactical or strategic aims that they originally were designed for, then there is the possibility that the conflict will be continued along more intensified lines and in varying forms. Sometimes a temporary cessation of activities is achieved if an unstable accommodation is reached by the two parties. The accommodation however has to become stable and permanent if a lasting solution to the problem is to be achieved.

The desire to subjugate the Muslims and to convert them to Christianity inspired the successful Muslim effort to resist subjugation and conversion. Spanish military expeditions only triggered off what are now considered piratical raids and retaliations. In the not-too-distant past, it was the influx of Christian Settlers to traditional Muslim lands and their desire to win political and economic power that set the stage for violent confrontations. The Muslims have not emigrated by the thousands to Christian places. The Muslims do not have plantations, mining and timber concessions, and other pecuniary interests in Luzon and the Visayan islands. The Muslims have not established Islamic schools in predominantly Christian towns. It would now seem that those who constantly cry out against Muslim aggression are in the same bankrupt position as the Americans were in Vietnam. Clearly, the Muslim involvement in the Moro Problem is only reactive in nature.

What are the Muslims reacting against?

Muslim representatives in the defunct Congress of the Philippines, past and present Muslim functionaries in the CNI, Muslim student protest groups, as well as Muslim delegates to the recent Constitutional Convention have all singled out unwanted government and societal

practices, lumping all of them under the terms *prejudice* and *discrimination*. Prejudice is a pre-judgment in the sense that it is a judgment concerning objects and persons not based upon knowledge and experience. For those who believe in the decisiveness of economic factors, prejudice has been defined as "a social attitude propagated among the public by an exploiting class for the purpose of stigmatizing some group as inferior so that the exploitation of either the group itself or its resources may be justified."⁹

Prejudice refers to subjective feelings while discrimination refers to behavior which is normally manifested in differential as well as preferential treatment of individuals according to the status that these individuals possess in society.

In a study of ethnic attitudes in five Philippine cities, it was found out that the most rejected people were the Muslims followed closely by the Chinese. According to the researcher, of the relationships that were investigated to which one could accept others, being neighbors was the most open relationship with few being excluded. Chinese however were rejected by 35 percent, while Muslims were rejected by a shocking 54 percent. Other ethnic groups were rejected by between 6 and 24 percent. The study further revealed that lowland Christian groups among themselves make distinctions: Ilocanos are the most potent, Tagalogs the cleanest, Ilonggos the most proud and extravagant, and so on. However, with regard to Chinese and Muslims, the distinctions were much sharper and the discrimination had more emotional weight. Chinese clannishness was strongly rejected. Muslims were accused of not contributing to national development . . . Catholicism (which the Muslim naturally does not share) should be the major source of national pride.¹⁰

The researcher observed that a great gap exists between protestations of national unity, at the level of national or regional leadership, and attitudes of ordinary people across ethnic boundaries, particularly those that set apart Chinese and Muslims. Of the 1,700 samples taken, close to half even refused to recognize the status of Muslims and Chinese as problematic and worth dealing with at the national level. Lastly, the researcher concluded that "if ethnic problems have not impressed themselves on the national consciousness, it is difficult to mount a concerted attack upon them. One can only chip away at bits and pieces in the

⁹ O. C. Cox as quoted by Berry, *op cit.*, p. 378.

¹⁰ Bulatao, Rodolfo A. *Ethnic Attitude in Two Philippine Cities*, QC. The UP Social Laboratory, 1973 p. 169.

psychological walls that divide groups, puncturing a stereotype here and opening a communications channel there."¹¹

It is however in the area of discrimination where both government policy planners and Muslim leaders have over-concentrated their attention and activities. Aside from government neglect in infra-structure projects in Muslim Mindanao, the allocation of government positions to the disadvantage of Muslims have been alluded to in various articles and speeches. "While they have to a certain extent resulted in concessions given to Muslims," these attacks on discrimination have also managed to increase prejudice towards the Muslims. Thus, one constantly hears of Muslims being called 'spoiled' minorities. The concessions rarely directly benefit the common Muslim because of the selfishness of Muslim leaders and because in the feudal set-up in Moroland, the Sultans, the Datus, and their families are given priority even if their need for help is not as urgent as that of the masses. Consequently, whatever manages to reach the common Muslims are just crumbs that fall down from the tables of their more powerful and richer brothers.

This is not to present the impression that all of the concessions given by the government are bad. To the extent that these concessions will help in alleviating the miserable conditions of the Muslim masses, these concessions should be welcomed. Steps should be taken, however, to prevent the development of Muslim physical and psychological dependence upon dole-outs. If Muslims have to be meaningful participants in nation-building, the attitude of self-reliance should be fostered. Objects of national charity are never in a position to positively contribute to the solution of national problems. Instead they become easier prey to exploitation and oppression, not only by their own leaders but also by forces from outside the Muslim communities.

The millions of pesos spent to redress the imbalance caused by discrimination will solve only a small portion of the problem. It is imperative that a bigger amount of money and more attention be spent in order to overhaul the attitudes of the majority and to minimize if not eliminate the prejudices that the majority still harbors for the minorities in their midst. It will be worthwhile for government leaders to direct their attention to Christian society so as to identify and repair institutional points of resistance that continue to defy efforts to forge real national unity. This is not saying that the Muslims do not have

¹¹ *Op cit.*, pp. 172-173.

their prejudices. In any contact-conflict situation, minorities, too, are not without their prejudices.¹²

Because of the long history of conflict between Muslims and Christians in the Philippines, the Muslims have developed their own prejudices toward the Christians. It has been observed that whenever economic, political and cultural interests and institutions of national or ethnic groups clash, a set of negative traits is attributed by one group to the other and is standardized as a result of the conflict.¹³ The stereotype of the Moro as *juramentado* has a counterpart in the stereotype of the Christian as rapacious and opportunistic. Social scientists have however observed that "it is the relationships between groups, and not primarily the truth or falseness, which give stereotypes their functional significance. Once established, stereotypes tend to persist so long as the relationship between the groups in question remains functionally similar."¹⁴

V

Within Muslim society, there are many problem areas that need to be investigated. Because of limitations, I will confine myself to three areas, namely: Muslim institutions, Muslim leaders, and the Muslim masses.

What is wrong with Muslim society? In the observation of Said Halim Pasha which Dr. Mohammad Iqbal concurred, it was deplored that during the course of history, the moral and social ideals of Islam had been gradually de-Islamized through the influence of local character and the pre-Islamic superstitions of Muslim nations.¹⁵ In the Philippines, the process of localization overwhelmed the ethical ideals of Islam to such an extent that today, the Muslim societies of Mindanao and Sulu have institutions that are more Maranao, Maguindanao, or Tausog, rather than Islamic. The feudal relations, the arrogance of power, the indifference to poverty, the widespread existence of usury, the havoc of family feuds, the perpetuation of economic dynasties, the insane obsession with power politics, and many more, are glaring manifestations of un-Islamic patterns that have developed in Moroland. All of these things are blatant negations of Islam.

¹² Melchor, Alejandro. "P406 M for Mindanao." *The Daily Bulletin*, May 25, 1974 p. 1.

¹³ Berry, *op cit.*, p. 375.

¹⁴ Sherif & Sherif *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁵ Sherif & Sherif *op. cit.*, p. 89.

Far from helping the cause of Islam and of the Muslims, these despicable practices have only encouraged vicious attacks from anti-Muslim propagandists who have falsely identified Islam with social, moral, and political degeneration. Some of the detractors of Islam have even gone so far as to identify the cause of social decadence in Moroland with the tenets of Islam itself and thus they claim that Muslims will remain in a state of inferiority so long as they retain their faith in Islam. These malicious attacks have also been unleashed at Muslim societies in North Africa and the Middle East, causing concern among Muslim intellectuals and in some cases driving a few of them to seek refuge behind either the secular thinking of capitalist apologists or the un-Islamic concepts of Marxism.

Discerning Muslim intellectuals have answered these attacks. Far from being outlived, it was claimed that Islam had never been fully lived. Whatever was wrong with Muslim societies was not due to the tenets of Islam but was the direct result of the discarding of its principles of progress and social justice. Said Halim Pasha who, in the words of Iqbal, was following a line of thought more in tune with the spirit of Islam pointed to the inability of the Muslims to accurately decipher their Islamic duties, as the main cause of societal decadence in the Muslim world.¹⁶

The decline of the Muslim world has been deemed to have started when politics was given more important than religion.¹⁷ This hierarchy of priorities lamentably still exists in Mindanao and Sulu. One can only sympathize with the Muslim intellectual who correctly observed that one of the misfortunes of the Muslims in recent years has been that they have more than their normal quota of politicians and only few social reformers.¹⁸

While it is unfair to blame the Muslim political leaders for all the woes of Moroland, we have to admit that they are responsible for many of these ills. The systematic shortcomings of the bureaucracy that they were part of and the predatory values of their native society combined with their own weak characters to make these Muslim leaders guilty of the many crimes that they have so often been accused of. Sadly, the

¹⁶ Iqbal, Mohammad. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore: Javid Iqbal, 1962 p. 156.

¹⁷ Halem Pasha, Said. "The Reforms of Muslim Society," Pamphlet published by Begume Aisha Bawany Wakf, Lahoe, 1967 p. 14.

¹⁸ Greenbarim, G. E. oon. *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1962 pp. 184-275.

admirable concepts of Islamic leadership have only been studied and talked about but never practiced and emulated.

On the other hand, the average Muslim has to free himself from the physical and psychological handicaps that iniquitous social relations and distorted propaganda have burdened him with. He has begun to regard himself as part of a national burden that the rest of the country has to bear. The deeper this idea sinks into him, the greater the chances for him to lose his self-respect. This attitude will lead him to accept a social system which discriminates against him and bestows prestige on some other groups. The many and varied reactions of people to minority status have been studied by social scientists. In these studies, one weakness of minority groups has been identified with the absence of unified demands because of the continuing inability of minorities to forge a united front. For the Muslims of the South, the only road to unity is through a re-discovery of the eternal truths of Islam.

It is now clear that government policies and programs have to undergo a radical re-orientation and to develop new perspectives. Points of institutional resistance to the taking in of Muslim into the country's mainstream as peers and equals, should be identified and either eliminated or minimized. Attempts to end discrimination should go hand in hand with efforts to reduce, if not eliminate prejudice, to transform antipathy into sympathy, and to convert bigotry into benevolence. It is in this area that Muslims and Christians can work together as peers, committed to the solving of common problems within a common framework.

VI

The Moro Problem should be approached from two separate but inter-related dimensions — the active and the reactive. Following this view, Christian strategy and tactics should focus on the active portion of the problem which is in Christian society and culture. Programs could then be designed and put into operation with the end in mind of rectifying the shortcomings in Christian culture. Corrolary to this, Muslim strategy and tactics should be focused on Muslim society with the objective of doing away with the anti-Islamic accretions to Muslim culture, repairing the damaged psychology of the Muslim masses, and doing away with societal obstacles that prevent national unity from becoming a reality.

It is in the solving of the Muslim portion of the problem that inspiration should be drawn from the lofty spirit and the glorious tra-

ditions of Islam. Only on this condition can Muslims participate in the general task of nation-building. In the words of Hakim "the universal brotherhood of men, transcending all castes and creeds and colors, must be striven after. All avenues of economic tyranny must be blocked and social justice restored. The diversity of humanity must be woven into a pattern of unity. The weak must be protected from the tyranny of the strong. There should be justice between employer and employed, between man and woman."¹⁹

For Islam, spirituality has a twofold aspect: it is a personal relation of man to God, but towards humanity and society it signifies social rights and responsibilities. No man is fully spiritual who seeks only his own personal salvation in isolation from society, Religion is not incessant prayers and meditations alone; it is also actual social life lived in accordance with the ideal. Islam therefore seldom deals with the individual as individual; he is always visualized as a member of a family and a community, who earns his livelihood by honest labor.²³

All of the anti-Islamic undertones in the Muslim societies of the South should be done away with. The obsession with and the abuse of power should not be countenanced. The Prophet said that it is the duty of every man to remove evil actively when he sees it and, if he cannot do so, to protect against it in words, and if he cannot do even that, to detest it in his heart, which is the least manifestation of faith. He also said that if in a society some people do evil and others do nothing to prevent it, then all of them would be engulfed in ruin, the good as well as the bad, because the good had only been passively good and had done nothing active to prevent evil.

With regard to the indifference to poverty exhibited by the financially fortunate among the Muslims, the point should be presented that in Islam, the greater one's possessions, the heavier becomes his responsibility. The concept of *Amanah* or trust enjoins him to dispose of his possessions in a manner that would contribute to the better good of the greater whole of society. Property thus becomes theft if the capitalistic explanation of it is accepted, and the use of property on the principle that the owner can do what he desires with it is tantamount to robbery.²¹ In Islam, the mere fact of possession does not confer

¹⁹ Ahmad, Imtiaz. "An Essential Prerequisite," *Seminar*, New Delhi, February, 1974.

²⁰ Hakim, Zhaifa Abdul. *Islamic Ideology*, Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1961 p. XVIII.

²¹ Hakim, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

upon the possessor the right of disposing property in any manner he likes.

The institution of usury which is one of the main pillars of capitalism, is repulsive in Islam and thus forbidden. The Holy Qur-an specifically condemns usury in many verses (3:129), 2:275), (2:276), (2:278-279). The Holy Prophet in his last sermon also declared interest unlawful and as an example, he ordered cancelled the interest due to his uncle Abbas. It was also in this sermon that the vengeance of blood was forbidden (Fyzee, 1963:38-39), a fact that Muslims should give serious thinking to so as to eliminate the destructive and divisive effects of *maratabat*.

The spirit of Islam is against the creation of an anarcho-acquisitive society in which men are left to the promptings of self-interest. To prevent wealth from accumulating in the hands of a few, and to diffuse it before it assumes threatening proportions, *zakat* was instituted. *Zakat*, interpreted either as tax or almsgiving is derived from an Arabic term meaning 'purity'. In the Holy Qur-an (73:20), (9:18), (9:11), (98:15), the commandment to pay *zakat* occurs simultaneously with prayer or *salat*. To underscore the inseparability of *zakat* from *salat*, the Caliph Abu Bakr said in public that he would wage war against those who discriminate between *salat* and *zakat*. Since the main recipients of this institution are the poor, the idea behind it is the spirit of sharing one's blessings with his less fortunate neighbors without creating a feeling of condescension on the part of the giver, or producing a debt of gratitude on the part of the receiver. *Zakat* then should be distinguished from the ostentatious contributions coming from the fat purses of people whose main interest in giving would be the publicity they would receive or the generous tax deductions they would be entitled to, or both. In the light of the foregoing, the economic dynasties that have cropped out in the Muslim South should be condemned as anti-Islamic.

The problems of the Muslim societies of Mindanao and Sulu should be approached from the Islamic viewpoint, utilizing Islamic analyses, and invoking the sanctions of the eternal verities of Islam. The end in mind is the reconstruction of Muslim society along Islamic lines with the idea that only when the Filipino returns to Islam can he participate meaningfully and functionally in the solution of national problems.

In the framework of Islam, the Muslims who live as subjects in a non-Muslim state are deemed to have entered into a tacit contract

with the government of that state and to abide by its laws.²² When the early Muslims were compelled by persecution to migrate to Abyssinia, which was a Christian state, they were ordered to live there as law-abiding citizens. So long as the other party does not violate a covenant and does not intrigue openly or secretly to prepare for aggression against Islam, Muslims are bound to observe and respect the tacit agreement. Hopefully in the Philippine situation, a reconstructed Muslim society and a morally rehabilitated non-Muslim state can join hands together for national progress.

The task of reconstruction in the Muslim south has to be led by a vanguard of Muslim intellectuals who are conscious of the fact that they are participant-observers and parts of the total situation. The observation of Rasheeduddin Khan, Muslim intellectual and Dean of the School of Social Science of the Jawaharlal Nehru University on the problem of Muslim intellectuals in a non-Muslim state can be helpful. He said —

For us, the so called 'neutral', 'quantification-based', and supposedly 'detached' and coldly 'objective' studies are sterile exercises into academic nonsense. These may satisfy the animated ignorance of the outsider and the non-involved indigenous observer. Or it may serve the excited fancy of the highly pampered and the clandestinely financed foreign area-experts and their chameleon charactered local clients justifying their uncritically borrowed models, concepts, categories and tools of research by expensive adventures into dubious and distorted empirical studies."²³

Continuing in the same vein, he maintained that Muslim minorities cannot afford the luxury of wasting precious time, scarce talent, and inadequate resources on social research that is of little or of no value to the challenges of contemporary times. Thus he claimed that Muslim minority intellectuals cannot be mere on-lookers or detached experts because for them, everything going on in their country is part of their experience and an integral component in the very structure of their lives.

For Said Halim Pasha, if the task of modern Muslim thinkers is so far from easy, it is because it calls for a lot of perseverance, self-denial, courage, and above all, faith — a faith that never wavers — in the cause of Islam; a faith ardent and absolute, which shall arm Muslims of intellect to become champions of Islam, with confidence

²² Hussain, Mirza Mohammad. *Islam and Socialism*, Lahore. Muhammad Ashraf, 1947 p. 28.

²³ Hakim, *op cit.*, p. 210.

in themselves which they must have in order to perform their heavy task. Finally, Halim Pasha says that the task calls for high moral qualities without which Muslim thinkers can claim no right to exist at all.²⁴

To conclude, for as long as government policies and programs are instruments of ethnic majority domination, for as long as we cling to our prejudices and stereotypes — for so long will we have a divided country. The national community can survive only if its institutions are changed. It is in this light that the merits of Islam should be appreciated by the leaders of the country because it is only through this avenue that Muslim societies in Mindanao and Sulu can be reconstructed.

²⁴ Khan, Rasheeduddin. "Perspective and Prospects" *Seminar* New Delhi, February 1974 p. 18.

²⁵ Halem Pasha *op cit.*, p. 44.