

## The Secular Dilemma of Islam

A complex revival of Islamic social, cultural and religious forces is directly opposing the leadership of Western nations. The believing Muslim is terribly offended by the challenges which come to him from the influences of the secular West.

Islam is a system that doesn't divide life into sacred and secular. It is holistic. It makes a total claim upon all of life. So the majority of Muslims resist secularization and continue to think in traditional lines. At the International Islamic Conference, London, April 1976, Islam was presented as a total system of values and as the one source of belief and conduct. At the World Conference on Muslim Education, April 1977, at the King Abdul Asiz University at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the assembly called for an end to the secularizing influences of Western education and for a reclassification of all knowledge from an Islamic point of view.

Islam, as a complete way of life, integrates all educational, economic, political and social institutions on the conviction that Allah is sovereign Lord and that the believer must submit himself completely to his will as revealed in the law, the Shariah.

Islam's holistic approach to human affairs is clearly demonstrated in the current political turmoil in Iran and Pakistan. Islam is a theocracy, and, therefore, Islamic states are dominated by the dictates of the Qur'an. In Islam there is not a state-church, but the church is the state. Religion, state and culture are one. With this in mind, we can understand why Iran's real power is not in Tehran, but in the holy city of Qum. At his seminary Khomeini teaches the need for the Islamic mullahs to become involved in politics, as Muhammed himself had done.

Iran's new draft constitution attempts to transform the nation to an Islamic republic, in fact, a Shi'ite Muslim theocracy. Article 5 of the proposed constitution upholds the power of the mullahs over the people and promotes the theologians' right to rule. It gives religious and political authority to a "virtuous, brave, judicious, and administratively skilled theologian who is abreast of the times and is accepted and recognized as leader by a majority of the people."

So Islam, by its very nature, is antidemocratic. Its claims are totalitarian. In practice, freedom of religion is nonexistent in most Islamic dominated nations.

In Pakistan the blame for the problems of social instability, poverty and ethnic conflict is laid on the adherence to Western ways. And Pakistan's new rulers now seek to transform not only foreign policy, or to change the legal system to traditional codes of Islam law, but every area of life. All public announcements now begin with an invocation to Allah, classified advertisements call for job applicants to be "practicing Muslims." This discriminatory action is creating real hardship for the Christianity minority. Television programming is becoming more subdued and dancing is decried as a Hindu practice.

Pakistan's President General Zia-ul, Haq is determined to pursue his own version of true Islam, reinforced by the worldwide tide of Islamic militancy. The General is supported by the Jama'at-i Islami, a fundamentalist Islam party dedicated to the laws of the Qur'an.

Zia, who is related to the leader of the Jama'at-i Islami leader, defines the state of Islam in terms of Islamic law - even to the point of using traditional punishments such as floggings or the amputation of hands.

Pakistan's traditional Muslim leaders, the uluma, believe that their role should be to advise the president and, in this way, control the destiny of their nation at their pleasure. But Westernized leaders oppose the overbearing ulumas and are eager to adopt ways that aid the economic and social development of their poverty-stricken country.

These modern Muslims point out that Pakistan was not created so much as a nation for Muslims as for a people who shared political, social and economic hardships in India. One of Pakistan's jurists, Muhammed Munir wrote: "The wealth of the non-Muslims in Lahore represented the sweat and labour of the Muslims, and it was with a view of doing away with this inequitable position that the Muslim demanded a state where undominated by the Hindu he could improve his lot and enjoy a position of economic independence. The present argument that Pakistan was demanded in order (for them) to lead lives in accordance with the injunctions of Islam was then in nobody's mind." Will the traditional Islamic view of life have the power to withstand the secularizing impact of the West? Time will tell whether or not the Islamic masses will continue to submit themselves to their Koran-inspired religion. However, Islam's holistic view of life, and the militancy of its adherents, are strong obstacles to the spread of the Gospel. Even the modern Muslim, who is indifferent to his faith, will not readily leave Islam lest he be cut off from his cultural roots and his Islamic society.