THE EDITOR'S DESK

Over the centuries, the civilization of the Middle East has reflected primarily the physical and human characteristics and needs of the area itself. As it has experienced the impact of external influences, brought in by armed invaders and conquerers, by peaceful merchants and travellers, and by members of its own society, it has been added to and enriched. Yet the basic amalgam of Middle Eastern civilization has continued to prevail, sometimes with a new veneer, but always along the same essential lines. No matter how much new rulers or reformers have tried to drastically alter the amalgam, in the end it has been the inherited structures and processes of society and government which have determined its major characteristics.

So it was following the Arab conquest of the Middle East in the seventh century and after. The Arab religion of Islam and the Arabic language gave the area a distinctly new tone, and pre-Islamic Arab tribal traditions added new ways of doing things. At the same time, however, beneath the surface the Arabs were influenced more by the pre-existing civilization than they were changed by it. Excellent examples of this are provided by Professor Charles Wendell, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, who demonstrates in 'Baghdâd, *Imago Mundi*, and other Foundation-Lore' how much the great 'Abbasid capital came to reflect, in its architectural and human arrangements, the traditions left by the Sasanian Empire as well as by the other great empires which preceded those of the Arabs elsewhere in the Middle East.

This is not to say that the pre-Islamic traditions of the Arabian peninsula were not particularly pervasive, even in non-Arab areas. Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb, in concluding his study of 'The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World', demonstrates the extent to which Arab tribal attitudes toward marriage and the family predominated until modern times, through the instrument of the *Shari'a*. He also shows how difficult it is for modern reformers to change the values and practices built up over the centuries without creating new problems even more serious than those which they are attempting to correct. In examining the Muslim religious institution, Sir Hamilton shows how the process of modernization has created a new, modern, secular reforming ruling class without eradicating the still-influential educated classes who reflect the traditional values and knowledge provided by the *Medrese* system. In many ways, it seems, modernization has greatly deepened the gap between the new rulers of the Middle East and the mass of its people, with the former determined to impose their own ideas of reform without really considering the desires of the latter.

Turning to the nineteenth century, Professor John P. Spagnolo, of Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, in his study of 'Mount

Lebanon, France, and Dâûd Pasha', examines the frustrations and difficulties faced by one of the leading nineteenth-century Ottoman provincial reformers, Dâûd Pasha, in attempting to modernize the Lebanon in the face of the intervention of the Ottoman governor of Damascus as well as that of the imperial interests represented by France. It is interesting to note that, however much the Ottoman Empire at that time was being reformed by the Men of the *Tanzimat*, their aim was to preserve and strengthen the empire and the inherited structure of Middle Eastern civilization which it represented, and not to allow them to disintegrate, a result which to them seemed inevitable if the Lebanese autonomy desired by Dâûd Pasha were allowed to be applied in other parts of the Empire.

Finally, Professor Lenn E. Goodman, of the University of Hawaii, concludes his study of 'Ghazâlî's Argument from Creation', elaborating on how Ghazâlî proved the fact of God's creation of existence in order to demonstrate the existence of God himself. He concludes that, to Ghazâlî, knowledge of God's creation, however imperfect that knowledge might be, was the best means of knowing God himself.   STANFORD J. SHAW