

The Truth
about the
Neicheri Sect
and an Explanation
of the Neicheris

by
JAMĀL AD-DĪN
AL-HUSAINĪ,¹
1298 h. [1880-81]

*"Announce the good news
to my servants—those
who listen to the word
and heed the best of it.
"It is they whom God
has guided and they
who are endowed
with understanding."
(Koran 39: 17-18)*

[*The book opens with the following letter to Jamāl ad-Dīn.*]

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.
To our Teacher, Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Husainī.

These days the sound, "neicher, neicher," reaches us from all over India—the Western and Northern states, Oudh, the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, and Hyderabad in the Deccan. Some men called "neicheris" are to be found in every city and town. It seems that this group is constantly growing, especially among the Muslims. I have asked many of this group: What is the truth about *neicher*, and when did this school appear? Is this *neicheriyya* group trying to reform civilization by its new policy, or do they have a different aim? Is this school incompatible with religion or does it accord with religion? How might one compare its total effects on civilization and the social order with those of religion? Also, if this is an ancient sect, then why has it not begun to spread in the world until now? If it is recent, then what effects will result from its existence? But not one of these people gave a decisive and adequate answer to my questions.

Therefore I pray that Your Honor explain for me in detail the truth about *neicher* and the *neicheriyya*.

[SIGNED] MUHAMMAD VĀSIL Instructor in Mathematics
at the Madrasa-i A'azza—Hyderabad, Deccan.
—19 Muharram, 1298 hijrī [December 22, 1880]

¹ *Husainī* was one of the appellations used by Afghānī, indicating descent from the Imām Ḥusain, a grandson of Muhammad.

[To this question Jamāl ad-Dīn answered.]

My dear friend:

Neicher means nature and the *neicheriyya* school is the same as the materialist school that appeared in Greece in the fourth and third centuries B.C. The basic aim of this *neicheriyya* sect is to abolish religions and lay the foundations of license and communism² among all peoples. To fulfill this aim they have made great efforts and have appeared in various guises. In every nation where they have existed they have corrupted morals and brought about decline. If one examines the aims and principles of this group, it will become clear to him that the only results of their views are the ruin of civilization and the corruption of the social order. For without doubt religion is the basic link of the social order, and without religion the foundations of civilization could never be firm.

The first doctrine of this sect is the overthrow of religions.

The reason the group has not spread, although it first appeared centuries ago, is as follows: the ordering of human society, which is a product of far-reaching divine wisdom, has always moved men to work to remove this sect. For this reason it has never enjoyed stability and permanence.

To explain these points I have written a little treatise, hoping it will be accepted by the honored intellect of my learned friend, and that those of clear intelligence will look on this treatise with confidence. Here is the treatise.

² *Ishtirāk* today means "socialism," but is translated "communism" throughout this work because Afghānī later explicitly translates the French "socialistes" and "communistes" as *ijtimā'iyīn* and *ishtirākīyīn* respectively. (The use of the genitive for the nominative plural is Afghānī's.) See p. 160 of the text.

Religion is the Mainstay of Nations and the Source of their Welfare.

In it is their Happiness and around it is their Pivot.

***Neicheriyya* is the Root of Corruption and the Source of Foulness.**

From it comes the ruin of the Land and the Perdition of Man.³

THE word *neicher* has spread to all corners of India in recent times. This word is mentioned at every gathering. The elite and the masses, each according to the degree of its knowledge, explain and interpret this word. Most of them, however, are unaware of its true meaning, origin, and current use.

I therefore considered it my duty to set forth the true meaning and basic purport of this word; to elucidate from the beginning the state of the *neicheris*; to explain in detail, through history, the harm and corruption that have occurred in the sphere of civilization and the social order from this group; and to demonstrate by rational proofs that this sect, in whatever nation it appears, inevitably causes the decline and disappearance of that nation.

[The Greek
Materialists]

THE accurate histories show that in the fourth and third centuries B.C. the Greek philosophers were divided into two groups. One group believed that behind sensate beings and beyond material creations there are beings devoid of matter and duration. Those beings are free from the inseparable attributes and the acci-

³ In the original this is written in Arabic in bold script as a heading to the work.

dental attributes of bodies, and pure of the defects of corporeal objects. They said that the hierarchy of these material and incorporeal beings culminated in an incorporeal being that is devoid of all attributes. This being cannot in any sense be conceived of as composite or compounded. Its existence is identical with its essence and reality, and its essence and reality are identical with its existence. It is the first cause and prime mover, the creator of all beings, whether material or immaterial. This group became known as the theists (*muta'allihūn*), meaning those who worshipped God. Among the theists were Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others like them.

The other group believed that nothing exists except *matière*,* meaning matter and material objects that are perceived by one of the five senses. This group was called materialists. When they were asked the cause of the various effects and properties of different materials, the most ancient representatives of that group answered that they all arise from the nature of matter. Nature in the French language is "nātūr," and in English it is "neicher." Therefore this group also became known as naturalists; naturalist (*ṭabīʿī*) in French is "naturalisme," and materialist (*māḍī*) is "matérialisme." [*sic*]⁴

The earliest members of this group, i.e., the materialists, then diverged regarding the formation of the stars and the genesis of plants and animals. Some believed that the genesis of the higher and lower heavenly bodies and the formation of these stable and perfected creations occurred through chance. Because of the weakness of their reason they apparently preferred to accept this view as probable so long as none more likely existed.

This belief originated with Democritus. He said that the whole terrestrial and celestial universe is composed of small hard particles that are naturally mobile, and that they appear in their present form by chance.

Some others believed that the heavens and earth have existed in their present form from eternity, and that they will always be so, and

* In this translation an asterisk indicates a word used in French in the original.

⁴ The Arabic in each case is an adjective, and the French a noun. Afghānī fairly consistently confuses his "iste" and "isme" endings. Afghānī's argument comes, in part, from the great theologian al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). In al-Ghazālī's *Confessions*, trans. C. Field (London, 1909), he classifies philosophers into three schools—the materialists and naturalists, who are accused of bestial sensuality, and the theists, including Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (pp. 25–26). (The Arabic title of this work is *Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, or "Deliverance from Error.")

that the chain of species of plants and animals has no beginning. In every seed a plant is enclosed, and in every one of these enclosed plants seeds are hidden, and so forth. Similarly in each animal germ an animal is concealed, in a perfectly created state, and in each of these concealed animals are hidden germs, and so on, ad infinitum. They ignored the fact that this belief necessitates the existence of infinite quantities in a finite quantity.

Another group believed that the hierarchy of plant and animal species is uncreated, as are the heavenly and earthly systems and bodies, but that the germs of plants and animals are not eternal. Rather each individual one of them is like a frame for the creation of germs that take on their form and likeness. They forgot that there are many malformed animals that give birth to perfectly formed animals.

And a small group has expressed its beliefs in summary fashion, saying that the species of plants and animals with the passage of time changed from one form to another until they reached their present form.

This supposition appeared with Epicurus, one of the followers of Diogenes the Cynic. He said that men at first were like hairy wild boars and gradually emerged into their present pleasing form. But he adduced no proof to show why the passage of time should cause this change in forms. The moderns of this group, the *neicheris*, when they saw that the science of *géologie*,* or geology, nullified the belief in the infinity of the chain of species, abandoned this belief. After that they diverged in their views.

[The Modern
Materialists,
Especially Darwin]

REGARDING the creation of the germs of the various species of plants and animals [one group said] that all the germs of the species came into existence when the burning earth began to cool, and that now no more germs are being created. Another group

said that there are still germs being created, especially on the equator, because of its great heat. Both groups were incapable of explaining the origin of life in these germs, whether plant or animal—especially when they observed that life is active in the elements of these germs, is the cause of their coalescence, and is the agent that takes the lifeless parts and nourishes them to life. Whenever there is a deficiency in life, there results weakness and debility in the cohesion and mutual attraction of these elements.

One group believed that these germs were on the earth at the time it separated from the sun. This is very strange because they say that the earth was then a ball of fire. How could these germs and seeds burn without their components decomposing?

The modern *neicheris* or materialists disagreed about the transformation of those germs from a defective state to perfection—from the realm of imperfection to their present perfected and durable forms. Some believed that each species has special germs, and that these germs move according to the demands of their nature, and make lifeless particles part of themselves by feeding them [*sic*], so that they take on the appearance of their species. They neglected the fact that chemical analysis has shown no difference between human sperm and the sperm of the bull or donkey. In none is there any excess or deficiency in the basic elements. Therefore, from where do special characteristics and distinctions come?

One group decided that the germs of all species, especially animals, are identical, that there is no difference between them, and that the species also have no essential distinctions. Therefore, they said, those germs transferred from one species to another and changed from one form to another through the demands of time and place, according to need and moved by external forces.

The leader of this school is Darwin. He wrote a book stating that man descends from the monkey, and that in the course of successive centuries as a result of external impulses he changed until he reached the stage of the orangutan. From that form he rose to the earliest human degree, which was the race of cannibals⁵ and other Negroes. Then some men rose and reached a position on a higher plane than that of the Negroes, the plane of Caucasian man.

⁵ *Yamyam* is a word that appears in some Turkish dictionaries and means "cannibal." We have not found it in Arabic, Persian, or Hindi dictionaries.

According to the views of this individual [Darwin], it would be possible that after the passage of centuries a mosquito could become an elephant and an elephant, by degrees, a mosquito.

If one should ask him about the species of trees and plants that have been in the forests of India from the oldest times, and were shaped in one corner of the globe by one climate, and their roots formed in the mud of one soil—why do they vary in structure, length, leaves, flowers, fruit, nourishment, and age; and what external causes have affected them despite their unity of climate and place?—he would certainly be unable to answer. If one asked him why the fish of Lake Aral and the Caspian Sea, although they share the same food and drink, and compete in the same arena, have developed different forms—what answer could he give except to bite his tongue?

Similarly, were he asked [to explain the variation among] the animals of different forms that live in one zone and whose existence in other zones would be difficult; or the insects of different kinds which do not have the power to traverse great distances—what explanation could he give except to stammer? Moreover, if one asked him: What guided those defective, unintelligent germs to the production of perfect and sound external and internal members and limbs, whose perfection and soundness the wisest men are unable to fathom, and whose benefits the masters of physiology are unable to enumerate; and how could blind necessity be the wise guide of the germs toward all these perfections of form and reason—naturally he could never raise his head from the sea of perplexity.

Only the imperfect resemblance between man and monkey has cast this unfortunate man into the desert of fantasies, and in order to control his heart, he has clung to a few vain fancies.

The horses of Siberia and the land of Russia have more hair than the horses that are born in the Arab land. The reason for this is given as need or lack of need; whereas the cause is exactly the same as the cause of the abundance or scarcity of plants in a single soil in different years because of the abundance or scarcity of rainfall and water. The same reason accounts for the leanness of the inhabitants of hot lands and the obesity of the dwellers of cold lands, because of the abundance or scarcity of decomposition.

He reports that one society used to cut off the tails of their dogs, and after they had persevered for several centuries their dogs began to be born by nature without tails. He apparently is saying that since

there was no longer need for a tail, nature refrained from giving it. Is this wretch deaf to the fact that the Arabs and Jews for several thousand years have practiced circumcision, and despite this until now not one of them has been born circumcised?

Some others among the modern materialists, or *neicheris*, when they became aware of the evils of the opinions of their predecessors, turned aside from these views. They took a new path and said: "It is not possible that insensate matter can be the cause and origin of these perfected orders, stable forms, elegant shapes, and attractive figures." Therefore they took the view that the cause of these heavenly and earthly combinations and the determinant of all these forms is compounded of three things: *matière*,* *force*,* *intelligence*,* meaning matter, force, and intelligence.

They believed that matter, because of the force in it and with the help of its intelligence and perception, has manifested and still manifests itself in these stable forms and shapes. Whenever it takes on the form of living bodies, whether living plant bodies or animal bodies, it considers the members and limbs needed for the preservation of the species and the individual, and takes account of time, place, and season. Since their line of thought is false and rotten, they neglect the fact that the belief of this group and of other modern materialists in the composition of bodies out of the Democritan particles confounds and renders useless the principle they have created with a thousand efforts and with which they have satisfied their hearts; because every Democritan atom has in this case a special force and a special intelligence, since it is impossible to posit that a single essence with individual unity can be in two places.

Since it cannot be so, I ask them: How did these separate, scattered particles become aware of each other's aims and by what instrument of explanation did they explain their affairs? In what parliament and senate did they confer in order to form these elegant and wonderful beings? And how did these separate particles know that if they were in a sparrow's egg they must there take on the form of a grain-eating bird, and that its beak and maw should be so formed as to make its life possible? And if they were in the egg of a royal falcon or an eagle they must make the beak and claw so that they can be used for hunting prey. Whence did they know before the event that this bird is going to be carnivorous?

When they are in the placenta of a dog, forming a small female

dog, how do they know before the fact that this small dog will in the future be pregnant and will bring forth numerous offspring at one time, and therefore they must create for her numerous teats? And how do these scattered atoms reason that animals in their lives need a heart, lungs, a liver, brain, bone marrow, and the rest of the members and limbs?

Naturally when [the members of] this group hear these questions, their heads will sink into a sea of perplexity, and they will not be able to answer, unless they blind the eye of reason and say: "Each one of these Democritan atoms knows everything that has been and will be, and each atom in the celestial and terrestrial world coordinates its movements with those of the other atoms, so that nothing results that is contrary to order. Thus the world exists and persists according to a single order and system." In this event I would say:

First: According to this theory it would be necessary that in the small dimension of a Democritan atom, which is not visible even with a microscope, there should exist infinite dimensions. For every knowable form that is drawn on a material inevitably takes on a part of the dimension of that material; and the knowable forms of those particles, according to this false view, are infinite. Therefore infinite dimensions must exist in those finite particles, which contradicts common sense.

Also, if the atoms are so perceptive and intelligent, then why do they not cause the beings composed of them to attain their own perfection? Why do they create pain, distress, and grief? And why is the perception of man and other animals, which according to this theory is none other than the atoms, unable to fathom their own condition or to preserve their own lives?

The strange thing is that the modern materialists, despite all their inventions, have remained baffled by some questions. They cannot apply any one of their false bases or principles, whether it be nature or absolute intelligence. For they saw that the basic elements of a group of variegated beings turned out to be identical when they were analyzed. Thus, after all their idle talk they said, guessing in the dark: The atoms have different forms, and according to different circumstances of the different particles various effects are forthcoming from them.

In sum, these ten doctrines are the doctrines of that group that denies divinity and does not believe in the existence of an exalted Creator. This group both in its own usage and the usage of those who

believe in God are called materialists and naturalists and *dahrīs*,⁶ or if you wish *neicheris* and *naturalismes* and *matérialismes* [sic]. Later we will write a treatise giving details of their doctrine, and will expose the corrupt principles of this group with rational proofs.

Let it not be thought that our object will be to cavil against these Indian *payāchūs*,⁷ meaning these clowns who make empty boasts. Far from it! Because they have no part or share in intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge. They have not even a share in humanity. Naturally such people are not worthy of either question, answer, or of being addressed. If they were worthy of something it would be that if someone wished to produce a *théâtre** (the *katputlī*⁸ show of civilized peoples) he should use them. My basic aim will be rather the exposition of the facts, the disclosure of reality, and the expression of the truth.

Now I wish only to expose the corruption that has come into the

⁶ *Dahrī* is one of the two common Arabic words for "materialist," and the one chosen by 'Abduh in his Arabic title for the treatise on the *neicheris*. Afghānī himself usually employs the Arabic term more common in Persian, *mādī* (literally "materialist"). A full discussion of *dahrīyya* by I. Goldziher, revised by A. M. Goichon, is in *EI*². This defines *dahrīyya* as "holders of materialistic opinions of various kinds, often only vaguely defined." *Dahr* (whose most common later meaning is "time") is a Koranic word meaning a long period of time. Its philosophic development is said to originate in the Koran 45:24, where the ungodly are cited as saying that nothing exists outside life in the world, and only *dahr* makes men perish. As a result of philosophic and literary development, traced in the *EI* article, *dahrī* came to have two philosophic connotations. "It denotes, firstly, the man who believes in the eternity of the world whether in the past or in the future, denying, as a result of this opinion, resurrection and a future life in another world; secondly, the *mulhid*, the man who deviates from the true faith." The common Western confusion of "materialist" in its philosophic and its popular, hedonistic, sense is also found in the Arabic. The *EI* article cites al-Jāhiz' *Book of the Animals*, in which "*dahrī* denotes the man who 'denies the Lord,' creation, reward and punishment, all religion and all law, listens only to his own desires and sees evil only in what conflicts with them; he recognizes no difference between man, the domestic animal and the wild beast. For him it is a question only of pleasure or pain; good is merely what serves his interests, even though it may cost the lives of a thousand men." Afghānī's description of the materialists perpetuates this confusion.

⁷ From the Italian *pagliaccio*, which passed into Turkish and is found in some Turkish dictionaries (with the "I" that Afghānī omits). Afghānī defines this exotic word with another exotic word for clown, *khalbūs*, which is Egyptian Arabic.

⁸ *Kathputlī* is Hindustani for "puppet," but with the addition of "tamāshā," as here, it can mean a theatrical show.

sphere of civilization from the materialist or *neicheri* sect, and the harm that has resulted in the social order from their teachings, and to explain and elucidate the virtues, advantages, and benefits of religions, especially the Islamic religion.

[The Social Virtues
of Religion and
the Social Harm
of the Materialists]

THUS I say: The materialists, or *neicheris*, have appeared in numerous forms and various guises among the races and peoples, and under different names. Sometimes they have become manifest under the name of "sage," sometimes they have appeared adorned as those who remove oppression and repel injustice. Sometimes they have stepped into the arena dressed as those who know the secrets and uncover the mysteries of truth, and as the possessors of esoteric knowledge. Sometimes they have claimed that their goal is the removal of superstitions and the enlightenment of peoples' minds. For a time they came forth as the lovers of the poor, protectors of the weak, and well-wishers of the unfortunate. Sometimes to fulfill their evil aims they have laid claim to prophethood like other false prophets. Sometimes they called themselves the educators, teachers, and benefactors of the community. But among whatever people they appeared, and whatever guise or name they bore, they became—because of their evil premises and false principles, their harmful teachings, deadly views, and fatal sayings—the cause of the decline and collapse of that people and the annihilation of that community. They destroyed the social order of those peoples and scattered their members.

For man is very cruel and ignorant. And to this treacherous, greedy, bloodthirsty creature there were supplied beliefs and qualities in the earliest period by means of religions. Tribes and peoples learned these beliefs and qualities as an inheritance from the fathers and grandfathers, and they adjusted their behavior accordingly, avoiding the evil and corruption that are the destroyers of the social

order. As a result they enlightened their minds with that knowledge which is the cause of happiness and the foundation of civilization. Thus there was produced for them a kind of stability and continuity.

The sect of *neicheris*, among whatever people they appeared, tried to nullify those beliefs and corrupt those qualities. From them destruction penetrated the pillars of the social order of that people and headed them toward dissolution, until they were suddenly destroyed. They [the materialists] are even now following the same evil path. The plain explanation of this is as follows:

Mankind from ancient times has attained from religions three beliefs and three qualities, each of which is a firm pillar for the existence of nations and the permanence of the social order; a stable foundation for the civilization and progress of peoples and tribes; and an active agent for the repulsion of the evil and corruption that are the cause of the dissipation of peoples.

[Religions' Three Beliefs]

THE FIRST of these great beliefs is that there is a terrestrial angel (man), and that he is the noblest of creatures.

[Second] is the certainty that his community is the noblest one, and that all outside his community are in error and deviation.

The third is the firm belief that man has come into the world in order to acquire accomplishments worthy of transferring him to a world more excellent, higher, vaster, and more perfect than this narrow and dark world that really deserves the name of the Abode of Sorrows.

One should not neglect the important effect of each of these three beliefs on the social order, their great advantages for civilization, and their many contributions to order and the relations among peoples. Each has excellent fruits in preserving the human race and in the co-existence of its individuals in a peaceful and amical way, and each has good results in the progress of nations in intellectual and spiritual accomplishments. Each belief has, intrinsically, special virtues and concomitants that are inseparable from it.

One of the concomitants of man's belief that his species is the

noblest is that he inevitably feels disdain for bestial qualities, and an aversion to animal characteristics. There is no doubt that the firmer this belief becomes, the more evident will this aversion be; and the more this aversion takes hold, the greater will be the progress of man in the intellectual sphere. His ascent on the ladder of civilization proceeds in proportion to his progress in the intellectual sphere, until he becomes one of those civilized, virtuous men whose life with brothers who have reached this rung of civilization is based on love, wisdom, and justice. This is the ultimate goal of sages and the summit of human happiness in the world.

Thus this belief is the greatest obstacle keeping man from living in the world like wild asses, cows, or beasts of the desert. It prevents him from being satisfied with the life of cattle and quadrupeds who are unable to repel harm, pain, and illness; do not know how to preserve their own lives; and pass their entire lives in a state of terror and fear. It is the greatest deterrent to men's rending each other to pieces like tearing lions, raging wolves, and biting dogs. It is the greatest obstacle keeping men from having the low and base qualities of animals. It is the best incentive for intellectual activity and the use of man's mental faculties. It is the most influential factor in purifying souls of impure vices.

Just consider: if a people or tribe did not have this belief, but rather believed that man is like other animals, or even lower than they, how many evils and vices would appear among them; what iniquities would come forth from them; how low and base their souls would be; and how their minds would be deterred from intellectual activity.

One of the consequences of the certainty that one's own community is the best one and that all others are in error is that the man who believes this will inevitably enter into rivalry and competition with the other communities; will compete against them in the arena of virtues; and will seek to be superior to and above all other communities in all the human virtues, whether intellectual, spiritual, or material. Such a man will never be satisfied with decline, baseness, or ignobility for himself and his community. He will be unable to see in another people any nobility, greatness, felicity, or prosperity without wanting it in higher measure for his own people. Because of this belief he knows himself and his own people to be the most worthy of all things that are considered in the eyes of humanity to have excellence, virtue, and nobility. If his people, owing to external

forces, declines in any human virtue or excellence, his heart will never be at rest, but as long as he lives he will strive to remedy it. This belief is the best motive for peoples to compete in civilization; the greatest cause for man to seek knowledge, wisdom, and the arts; and the firmest reason for peoples to strive to obtain titles to prestige and the prerequisites of nobility.

Consider: if a community were not certain of its superiority, how much apathy there would be in the striving of its members toward the virtues; how much weakness there would be in their zeal; how much baseness and misery would envelop that people; and how it would remain in slavery, humiliation, and abasement, especially if it considered itself lower than other peoples, as do the materialist and Manichean peoples.

One of the inevitable consequences of the [third] belief, that man has come into this world in order to attain the perfections needed to transfer him to a higher and vaster world, is that when someone acquires this belief he will of necessity always strive to improve and enlighten his mind with true science and sound knowledge. He will not leave his intellect idle, but will bring out of concealment and into the light of the world what has been deposited in him of active power, lofty sentiments, and great virtues. In all stages of his life he will try to rid his soul of impure features and will not stint in the adjustment and improvement of its qualities. He will continually strive to earn property in a worthy and proper fashion, and not by use of dishonesty, deceit, treachery, swindling, bribery, and cynical flattery. He will spend it in ways that are worthy and fitting, and not in false ways.

Thus this belief is the best impulse toward civilization, whose foundations are true knowledge and refined morals. It is the best requisite for the stability of the social order, which is founded on each individual's knowledge of his proper rights, and his following the straight path of justice. It is the strongest motive for international relations, which are based on the truthful and honest observation of the bounds of human intercourse.⁹ It is the best basis for the peace and calm of the classes of humanity, because peace is the fruit of

⁹ The word here translated as "human intercourse" is *mu'āmalāt*, which has no short satisfactory English translation. It is a large category in Islamic law, concerned with all dealings between human beings and their behavior. Elsewhere in this text it is translated as "dealings" or "relationships," whichever seems the most appropriate.

love and justice, and love and justice result from admirable qualities and habits. It is the only belief that restrains man from all evils, saves him from the vales of adversity and misfortune, and seats him in the virtuous city on the throne of happiness.

Imagine: if a community did not have this belief, how widespread would be discord, hypocrisy, lying, trickery, and venality; how notorious would be greed, covetousness, treachery, murder, the denial of rights, disputes, and fighting; and what neglect would occur in the acquisition of knowledge.

[The Three Qualities Produced by Religion]

[**AS FOR**] those three qualities that have been produced in peoples and nations from the most ancient times because of religion: [One of them] is the quality of *shame* (*ḥayāʾ*). That is, the shame of the soul at committing acts that would cause foulness and disgrace, and its reluctance to take on qualities that are considered to violate the world of humanity. One must realize that the influence of this quality on the regulation of the social order and in dissuading men from committing obscene acts and shameful deeds is greater than hundreds of laws or thousands of inspectors and police. For if there is no shame, what punishment except execution can detain a man who moves into the arena of vices and baseness from committing deeds that will bring on the corruption of the social order? And it is not proper that, as with Solon, the punishment for every shameful act be execution.

This quality is attached to nobility of soul, and the two cannot be separated. And nobility of soul is the basis of good order in human relations, the foundation of truthfulness in promises and firmness in treaties, and the cause of man's trustworthiness in words and deeds. This characteristic is the source of the quality of pride or zeal, which is called by two names according to its different aspects. Pride and zeal are the cause of the progress of nations, peoples, and tribes in the sciences, knowledge, honor, glory, greatness, riches, and

wealth. If a people did not have pride and zeal it would never progress but would forever remain in a state of lowliness, baseness, humiliation, poverty, and subjection.

This quality, i.e., shame, is the bond of human alliances, associations, and societies, since an alliance within a group takes place only when rules are maintained, and the maintenance of rules is never achieved except with this noble trait.

It is this quality that adorns man with good manners, separates him from the obscene acts of animals, and calls him to straightforwardness and righteousness in what he does or refrains from doing. With this quality man is distinguished from other animals and removed from the sphere of bestiality. It is this unique trait that encourages rivalry for the sake of virtues, bans shortcomings, and does not allow men to be content with ignorance, stupidity, vileness, and baseness. This is the guiding wheel without which the realization and perpetuation of truth, trust, and faith would not be possible. It is the prime quality aiding teachers, educators, and counselors to exhort men to generous deeds, material and moral virtues, and external and internal nobility.

Do you not observe that wherever a teacher wants to summon his pupil to excellence he addresses him and says: "Are you not ashamed that your companion has surpassed you in excellence?" If this quality did not exist, reprimand could have no influence, disgrace would have no fruit, nor exhortation any benefit.

It thus becomes clear that this quality has been and is the basis of all virtues and excellence, the motive force of all progress. Think: if this quality were not to be found in a people what treachery and lying would be manifested among individuals, and how many vicious, obscene acts and ugly, shameful deeds would openly be committed among them! What evil, meanness, and baseness of manners would encompass them, and what animality and bestiality would overtake them.

The second quality is *trustworthiness*. It is clear to everyone that the survival of the human race and its life in this world is dependent on dealings and reciprocal relations, and the life and soul of all dealings and reciprocal relations is trustworthiness. If trustworthiness did not exist, dealings would be broken off, and the thread of reciprocal relations would be cut. If the order of dealings is torn to pieces, life and survival will never be possible for man in this world.

Also, the prosperity and peace of peoples and nations, and the regularity of their livelihood, can only be realized under a form of

government, whether republican, constitutional, or absolute. Government in all its forms is created and takes on shape and reality only through a group endowed with the qualities of guardians, who prevent the encroachments of foreigners on the borders of the country, and try to uproot and suppress murderers, rapists, highwaymen, and thieves within the country. Government also requires a group that knows the revealed law and the civil laws and arrangements of governments and peoples, and sits on the chair of decision and judgment in order to decide legal and criminal disputes and settle enmities. And it needs persons who collect taxes and tribute from the people according to the laws of government, and keep them in the government treasury, which is really the treasury of all the subjects. It requires people who spend that accumulated money in an economic manner for the benefit of the entire people, as in building schools and libraries; constructing bridges and roads; founding hospitals; and paying the appointed salaries of civil servants, including the guardians, judges, and others.

The performance of their duties in a manner that keeps corruption from entering the government by this fourfold group, who are the four pillars of governments, is based on the quality of trustworthiness. If they are not trustworthy the entire nation will be deprived of tranquillity and security; rights will be nullified; killing and plunder will become flagrant; the roads of trade will close; and the doors of poverty and indigence will open before the people. The state treasury will become empty and the road to salvation will be closed.

Any people administered by such a treacherous and dishonest government will either suffer total decline or fall prisoner in the hands of foreigners and taste the bitterness of slavery, which is worse than the bitterness of decline and downfall. Moreover it is manifest that the domination and command of one people over others will only take place when the individuals among that dominating people become so united and consolidated that they can be considered a single individual. This type of unity is impossible without the quality of trustworthiness. Thus it becomes evident that the quality of trustworthiness is the support of human survival and the basic foundation of government, and that peace and security cannot occur without it. Dominance, greatness, and command are not created without it, and the spirit and body of justice consists of the very same quality.

Take note: if a people did not have this quality, what calamities,

misfortunes, and disasters would overtake its members; how poverty and misery would envelop them; and finally how they would be overthrown and annihilated.

[The third] of those qualities is *truthfulness* and honesty. Know that man's needs are many and the necessities of his life are innumerable. The things whereby he meets his needs are each hidden under a curtain. Each one is secluded somewhere under a concealing veil, and hidden without a name or sign. Know that thousands of calamities, misfortunes, and disasters lurk in every corner of the world. A deadly arrow aiming at man's destruction is hidden in the bow of ages and in the turns of fortune. Man, aided only by his five weak senses, will never be capable of being aware of all his interests or of meeting his needs. Although he may have come to realize the calamities that wait in ambush for him, he is unable to preserve his life.

Therefore each man, to secure his interests and repel evils, needs to appeal for the help of his fellow men and must seek their guidance so that, because of their direction, he may be saved as far as possible from injuries and attain some of his needs in life. This help is only useful from those who have the quality of truthfulness, since a liar would make what is near far and what is far near, and would present a benefit as an injury and an injury as a benefit.

The quality of truthfulness is the firmest pillar of the survival of the human race, and the strong bond of the social order of nations. No society can come into being without it—neither the society of a home nor that of a civilization.

Look: if a group did not possess truthfulness, how much adversity and misfortune would come upon it; how the chain of order would be broken; and how it would be overtaken by affliction.

[How the *Neicheri*
Undermine the Six Beliefs
and Qualities]

THESE deniers of divinity, the *neicheri*, in whatever age they showed themselves and among whatever people they appeared had this basic aim and goal: Through corrupt principles

and false foundations to extirpate that six-sided castle of human happiness that is built of those three noble beliefs and three great qualities. They aimed to open the gates of misfortune and calamity before unfortunate man, to bring him down from the throne of civilization and seat him in the dirt of the baseness of savagery and animality. For the foundation of their teachings rests first of all on this: that all religions are false, and are among human vanities and forgeries. Therefore, a people should not affirm its nobility and righteousness above all other peoples by means of religion.

After this corrupt teaching, which causes the weakening of ambition and the slowing of progress, they said that man is like other animals, and has no distinction over the beasts. Rather, his nature and temperament are baser and lower than those of most animals. With this belief, they [the *neicheris*] opened the gates of bestiality before man. They facilitated for man the perpetration of shameful deeds and offensive acts, and removed the stigma from savagery and ferocity.

Then they explained that there is no life aside from this life, and that man is like a plant that grows in the spring and dries up in the summer, returning to the soil. The happy man is he who attains in this world animal appetites and pleasures. Because of this false opinion they gave currency to the misfortunes of perfidy, treachery, deception, and embezzlement; they exhorted men to mean and vicious acts; and prevented men from discovering truths and traveling toward perfection.

These pestilences and plagues of the human world, the *neicheris*, saw that these corrupt teachings would not affect the souls of men of modesty, and that those having shame would never enter the sphere of animality nor consent to license and the sharing of food and women. Therefore they began to strive for the removal of shame. They said that shame came from the weakness and deficiency of the soul, and that if a person were strong and perfect he would never feel shame or modesty regarding any act. Thus the first duty of man is to strive for the removal of this quality, until he attains perfection of the soul.

With this intrigue the *neicheris* remove the obstacles in the path of animality, and facilitate for the soul the way of bestiality, which consists of communism and license.

Let it be clear that there are two motive forces for trustworthiness and truthfulness: [One], belief in the Day of Judgment [and the other], the habit of shame.

And it has become clear that among the basic teachings of this group of *neicheris* is the removal of that belief and the ending of that quality. Hence, the influence of their teachings in spreading treachery and falsehood is greater than the influence of someone who exhorts to treachery and falsehood directly. For if the above noble belief and honorable quality, which are the cause of trustworthiness and truthfulness, were in a man, he would resist the words of someone calling to treachery and falsehood, even if his resistance were mixed with weakness, and the effectiveness of his beliefs were weakened. Often the holder of that belief and the bearer of that quality will abstain from treachery and falsehood.

The contrary [will occur] if the basic motive is erased from the slate of the soul, since in this case no motive or exhorting force will remain to cause abstention.

In addition, this group has placed the foundation of their belief on license and communism, and has considered that all desirable things should be shared, and has regarded privileges and distinctions as usurpation, as shall be noted. There will no longer be a place for the attribution of treachery, since if a man chooses trickery to obtain his right to share things, that would not be treachery, and if he uses lying it would not be considered shameful. Therefore it is clear that the teachings of this group are the motive force of all treachery and lies, the cause of all evils, meanness, baseness, and wickedness.

Inevitably, if this type of thing is disseminated in a people, they will decline and be annihilated. From what we have said it can be clearly seen how this group becomes the cause of the annihilation and perdition of peoples, tribes, and nations.

Now I wish to say that this group was and is the greatest enemy of man, and they desired and still wish, under the pretext of the reform that has been traced out in their sick¹⁰ imaginations, that the fire of corruption be kindled and that the opponents of their wretched species be burned and their name effaced from the slate of existence.

It is clear to everyone that the survival of humanity in this world, because of its needs, is dependent on some arts and trades that differ in nobility and baseness, and in ease and difficulty. The final goal and ultimate object of this group is that all men should share in all desires and delights; that privileges and distinctions should be

¹⁰ The Arabic word used, *mālikhūliyā*, is from the Greek. In Arabic it means, approximately, sick-mindedness.

abolished; that nobody should have superiority or a surplus of anything over another; and that all should be absolutely equal. If it becomes like that, naturally every person will refuse to perform hard and menial tasks and economic life will be disordered; the wheel of dealings and relationships will stop moving; and finally this weak species will be brought to the vale of perdition and will disappear completely.

The results of the reforms proposed by those sick-minded men will be only this. Even if we grant an impossibility, that the life of man would be possible in this abominable state, you must know that undoubtedly all his good qualities, beauties, and luxuries would disappear in the winds of annihilation. All external and internal perfections, all material and moral progress, and science, knowledge, and the arts would be destroyed. Man's throne of glory and nobility would be overturned and he would dwell in the desert of savagery like the other animals, with a thousand pains and illnesses, in the extremity of fear and dread.

The real cause of the superiority of man is his love for privilege and distinction. When privilege and distinction are removed, souls are stopped from the movement toward eminence and minds neglect to penetrate the truth of things and to discover the subtleties of life. Men would live in this world like the beasts of the desert, were it possible for them. Alas, alas!

Let it be known that the *neicheris* have chosen several paths for the spread of their corrupt teachings. In times of safety and security they exposed all their principles and goals to the world with the greatest clarity, but in times of fear and insecurity, considering gradualness necessary, they trod the path of hints, allusions, and symbols with the foot of deceit.

Sometimes they have tried to demolish all at once the six pillars of that castle of man's happiness. Sometimes, according to the exigencies of the situation, they decided to take some of those pillars as a focus for their false teachings, and tried their best to undermine them. Sometimes, in accordance with necessity, they undertook the negation of those necessary results and causes whose negation entails the negation of the pillars also. Sometimes they contented themselves with the denial of the Creator and the ending of belief in rewards and punishments, since they knew that the end of these two beliefs would inevitably lead to all their harmful goals. Sometimes they were silent about principles and were concerned with the embellish-

ment and beautification of their fundamental goal, which is license and the sharing of all in all. Sometimes, in order to repel the opponents of their corrupt principles, they engaged in assassination and spilt the blood of thousands of innocents with intrigues and ruses.

[In sum], when their teachings appeared in a community, they pleased all those with wicked souls whose final object is the attainment of bestial desires, whether by means of truth or falsity. Having no regard for results and consequences, these men were happy and content with such corrupt opinions, and strove for their propagation and diffusion.

Another group, although they did not believe in or adhere to these opinions, nonetheless have not been preserved and immune from their injury and corruption. Damage, corruption, and destruction penetrated the foundations of their salutary beliefs and the bases of their useful qualities. Since most men in their beliefs and habits are followers of custom and imitation, and since the smallest doubt or uncertainty suffices to upset the pillars of imitation and custom, therefore corruption will then overtake the manners of all members of such a nation. Lying, deceit, trickery, and treachery will spread among them; the veil of shame will be removed; and deeds unworthy of the human status will appear openly among them.

And since, because of those corrupt opinions, each of them believed that there is no life but this one, the quality of *egoism*¹¹ overcame them. The quality of *egoism* consists of self-love to the point that if a personal profit requires a man having that quality to let the whole world be harmed, he would not renounce that profit but would consent to the harm of everyone in the world. This quality made a man put his personal interest above the general welfare, and made him sell his nation for a paltry profit. Gradually, because of this base life, fear and cowardice overtook man, and he became content and happy with meanness, baseness, slavery, and abasement in his life.

When the state of individuals reached this point, the bond of fusion and interdependence was broken; the unity of the species was annihilated; the power of preservation and the means of survival

¹¹ In French, *égoïste*. Probably Afghānī is here again confusing his "isme" and "iste" endings, as he often does elsewhere; but it would be possible to translate this phrase as "the quality of an egoist."

were lost; and the throne of greatness, glory, and honor was overthrown.

These are the particulars about those nations that, after greatness and nobility, were overtaken by humiliation and poverty, because of the teachings of the *neicheris*, i.e., materialists. And this is a description of the ways of the teachings of the materialists, or *neicheris*.

[How the Materialists
Undermined the
Great Nations of the Past]

THE Greeks were a nation small in number, but they possessed the three above-mentioned great beliefs, especially the belief that their nation was the noblest of all the nations of the world; and those three noble qualities, particularly the quality of modesty, which is either the source of shame or its first result. After the diffusion among them of science and knowledge, they stood for long years facing the Persian Empire, which extended from the regions of Kashgar to the borders of Istanbul. Fearing humiliation and slavery, which are incompatible with nobility, and which are rejected by the possessor of shame and modesty, they pressed forward with the step of manliness, so that in the end they overturned that great Persian Empire and extended their sway to India. The quality of trustworthiness had reached such a height in them that they preferred death to treachery.

Thus Themistocles, when Artaxerxes ordered him to lead a Persian force to conquer Greece, took poison and killed himself. He would not consent to betray his people and nation, despite the fact that the Greeks, after his outstanding services and his victory over the Persians, had banished him and he was compelled to find refuge among the Persians. Refer to the History of the Greeks.¹²

But when Epicurus the naturalist and the Epicureans appeared in Greece and called themselves sages, they first denied divinity, [a denial] which is the basis of all corruption and the source of all evils

¹² The Persian phrase sounds as if a particular work entitled [*The*] *History of the Greeks* is being referred to, which is why "History" is capitalized here.

and ruin, as will be demonstrated below. They said as follows: Man, because of conceit, arrogance, and vanity believes that the world was created entirely for his defective existence, and that he is the noblest of creatures and the final cause of all beings. Because of the greed, covetousness, selfishness, and even madness that overcomes him, man thinks he has a luminous sphere and an eternal world, to which sacred world he will move after his departure from this earth, and that he will there attain perfect happiness, without a stain of fault or defect. Therefore he has bound himself in opposition to *neicher*, or nature, with many bonds and chains; has charged himself with innumerable harsh labors; and has barred the doors to the delights of natural pleasures and inborn joys.

[And they said:] In fact, man has no superiority and distinction in anything over any animal, but rather is the most defective and lowest of the animals according to nature and temperament. Those arts that have become available to him, and which he prides himself on, have all been taken over as an imitation of other animals: for example, weaving from the spider; building and construction from the bee; the erection of castles and monasteries from the white ant; the storing of daily food from the black ant; and music from the nightingale. Therefore this conceited man should know that his life is like the life of the plants, and that there is no other world beyond this world, and no life apart from this life.

Thus, man should not throw himself vainly into toil and trouble; and should not place on his back, to no purpose, the heavy burden of duty; nor deny himself, contrary to nature, the various kinds of delights and pleasures. Rather, in whatever way is possible to him, and in whatever manner is feasible, he should gain his share in the delights of this world, and should not lend his ear or bind his heart to the fables of the lawful, the forbidden, the worthy, the suitable and unsuitable, and the other fictions with which men have bound themselves.

When this group saw that their teachings would be useless as long as the quality of shame was firmly rooted in souls, they started to remove that noble quality. They said that shame and modesty come from weakness of the soul and that every man should strive to remove them and to break the bonds of habit, until he becomes able to perpetuate all the deeds that men consider shameful without his soul being touched or ashamed by the open performance of those acts.

Finally these Epicureans rent the veil of shame and exposed man

to ignominy. Wherever they saw a table of food they got to it, until often the owners of tables addressed these latter-day sages as "dogs," and drove them away by hitting them with bones. Despite this, these dogs in human form were not deterred, and they proclaimed the community of property, and continued to attack from every side. This is one of the reasons they became known as Cynics.¹³

The corrupt teachings of these Greek *neicheris*, the Cynics, in the course of time influenced the souls and minds of the Greeks. They brought intellects to the point of stupidity; the bazaar of knowledge and wisdom became sluggish, and manners became corrupt. That people's nobility of soul changed to baseness; their trustworthiness to treachery; their modesty and shame to impudence and vice; their courage to cowardice; and their love of race and homeland to self-love.

In sum, all six pillars of their castle of happiness and all the foundations of their humanity were overturned. Therefore their greatness and glory disappeared, and they fell prisoner in the hands of Rome, that is the Latin race. Because of the misfortune of these corrupt teachings they passed long years in the bonds of subjection, after they had at one time been considered the unopposed rulers of this world.

The Persians were a nation that had reached the highest degree in these six foundations of happiness. They considered themselves so noble that they believed the only foreign peoples who were happy were those under their protection or those who had the honor of being located near them. Trustworthiness and truthfulness were the first religious teachings of that people. Even when they were in need they would not try to obtain a loan, fearing lest they be unable to avoid a lie.

Because of these beliefs and qualities the greatness, dignity, and extent of their kingdom rose to such a height that in order to present it a *Shāhnāma* would be needed. François Lenormant, the historian, says that the Persian Empire in the time of Darius the Great comprised twenty-one provinces. One of these provinces included Egypt, the shores of the Red Sea, Baluchistan, and Sind. If for a time some weakness affected their power, in a short time those true principles

¹³ Arabic *kalbī*, "like a dog." The Arabs translated "Cynic" literally from the Greek. (The Greek word "Cynic" is an attributive adjective or noun from the word for "dog" [*kyōn*, stem *kyn*].) Afghānī's etymology is fictitious.

prepared them to return to their former condition and supreme power.

Then, in the time of Qubad, Mazdak the *neicheri*, or naturalist, appeared in the guise of a remover of oppression and suppressor of tyranny. With one of his teachings he uprooted all those foundations of the fortune of the Persian people and flung them to the winds of annihilation. For he said as follows: The laws, norms, and customs established by men are all causes of oppression and tyranny, and they are all baseless. But the sacred law of *neicher*, or nature, has still not been abrogated, but has remained preserved and inviolable among the animals and beasts. What knowledge or reason can attain the rank of nature? Nature has established the right of sharing all food, drink, and women among all who eat, drink, and take women. Therefore why should men, because of the forgeries of fancy which they call laws and customs, be barred from their mothers, daughters, and sisters while others enjoy them? What sense has it that an individual should bring under possession common properties, and claim ownership; or that when he takes a woman in marriage he should bar others from her? What justice is there in laws that consider the usurpers of the common property to be the rightful owners, while the unfortunate man who artfully obtains enjoyment of his rights is called a usurper and a traitor? Therefore it is incumbent on every person to remove the oppressive yoke of the laws and customs of defective human reason from his neck; to obtain his rights in property and women in whatever way he can, in accord with the sacred law of nature; and to detain the usurpers, by force and compulsion, from improper deeds of usurpation and tyranny.

When these false teachings spread among the Persians, shame disappeared, perfidy and treachery became widespread, baseness and meanness spread, bestial qualities became dominant, and their natures became completely corrupted. Although Anushirwan killed Mazdak and some of his followers, he was unable to eradicate these corrupt teachings. Therefore this people was unable to sustain one attack of the Arabs, whereas their peer and contemporary, Byzantium, struggled and fought against the Arabs for many centuries.

The Muslims were a community who, because of their true divine religion and right heavenly law, saw produced among their members such noble beliefs and excellent qualities, and in whom the bases of those six pillars were so firm, that in one century, as a result of those beliefs and praiseworthy qualities, they occupied lands from

the Alps to the wall of China. They rubbed the pride of Caesars and Khusras in the dust of humiliation, even though they were only a small band. Their virtuous habits reached such a point that through the magnetism of their manners, they attracted in a short time nearly 100 million non-Muslims to their religion, despite the fact that they had left them free choice between a modest tribute tax and Islam.

The superiority and greatness of this noble community remained thus until in the fourth century [h.] the *neichêris*, or naturalists, appeared in Egypt under the name of the *bâṭiniyya* and the knowers of the hidden.¹⁴ They spread their program to all sides and corners of the Muslim world, and especially to Iran. Since these *neicheris*, the followers of the esoteric, saw that the light of the law of Muhammad had enlightened all the Muslims, and that the ulama of the chosen religion, with perfect knowledge, ample virtue, and extreme vigilance, were striving to protect this firm religion and to preserve the beliefs and manners of the Muslims, therefore in order to spread their own corrupt beliefs they took the path of hypocrisy and gradualness. They laid the foundations of their teachings on the following: First create doubt in the Muslims about their beliefs; and after the establishment of doubt in their hearts take an oath and promise from them, and present this oath and promise to the eyes of the Perfect Guide. They said it was necessary for the teacher of their teachings always to act in a dissimulating way with the heads of the Muslim religion, and to be capable of establishing his argument.

When someone was caught in the net of the Perfect Guide the first thing he taught him was as follows: External observances are only for those people who have not arrived at the truth. The truth consists of the Perfect Guide, and since you have reached the truth you must repudiate these external corporeal observances. Some time later he would say to him: All external and internal duties, and all beliefs and ties, are for the imperfect who may be likened to the sick. When you become perfect you shed all these external and internal bonds and enter the vast sphere of free action, whether lawful or prohibited, whether loyalty or treachery, whether truth or lying, and whether virtue or vice.

¹⁴ *Bâṭiniyya*, or esoterics, here refers to the Isma'ili sect of the Shi'i branch of Islam. Among their tenets was that the truest interpretation of Islamic law and scripture was an esoteric, or *bâṭinî*, interpretation, rather than a literal one. See M. G. S. Hodgson, "Bâṭiniyya," *EI*².

After establishing license in the souls of his followers, he brought into play other ruses for the denial of divinity and the demonstration of the *neicheri* belief. He said: If God existed he would be like existing things, and if he did not exist he would be like the non-existent. But God is free of all resemblance, therefore he is neither existent nor non-existent. This means you acknowledge a name and deny the thing named.

For a period of time this group of *bāṭinis* strove in a hidden way to corrupt the manners of the Muslims by means of these teachings, until the ulama of the faith and the other leaders of the Muslims became informed of it and planned an opposition. When the *bāṭinis* saw how numerous were their opponents, they assaulted and spilled the blood of thousands of ulama, worthy men, and princes of the Muhammadan community in order to spread their false beliefs.

One of them found an opportunity to declare publicly to the world these corrupt, harmful beliefs in the *minbar* at Alamut.¹⁵ He said: "At the time of the Resurrection there will be no duties incumbent upon mankind, neither external nor internal ones. The Resurrection consists of the rising of the True Redeemer, and I am the True Redeemer. After this let everyone do whatever he wants, since obligations have been removed." This meant that the doors of humanity were closed and the gates of bestiality opened.

In sum, these *neicheris*, the people of the *bāṭin* and the adherents of allegorical interpretation, or the *naturalistes** of the past Muslim centuries, with perfect trickery called people to every fault and vice that overthrows peoples and nations, and through the ruse of their counterfeit holiness, they obliterated belief in divinity, which is the foundation of all human happiness in this world. With the passage of time they corrupted the manners of the Muhammadan community, East and West, and shook the pillars of the admirable beliefs and qualities of that noble community. Finally their courage and bravery were changed to fear and cowardice; their trustworthiness and truthfulness to treachery and lying; and their love of Islam to bestial self-love. For this reason a band of Frankish beggars in the fifth century attacked the Syrian lands, destroyed hundreds of cities and villages, and gratuitously spilled the blood of thousands.

¹⁵ Alamut—the center of the "Assassin" branch of the Isma'ilis in Iran. The incident described occurred in A.D. 1164. See M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins* ('s-Gravenhage, 1955).

For almost two hundred years the Muslims remained unable to repel those beggars, despite the fact that previous to that corruption of manners and destruction of belief the Franks had not been safe from the advances of the Muslims in their own countries.

Similarly, a group of Tatar, Turkish, and Mongol ruffians came with Chinghiz Khan and ruined most of the cities of the Muhammadans, and spilled the blood of millions. The Muslims did not have enough power to repel this calamity, although in the early days of Islam, for all their small numbers, the arena of their horses extended to the wall of China. This humiliation, degradation, ruin, and desolation was all brought on the Muslims by the treachery, lying, cowardice, sluggishness, and weakness that resulted from corrupt teachings.

Since their former manners, habits, and Muhammadan religion had not been altogether removed from the souls of the majority of Muslims, therefore with a thousand efforts and after long years they took away the lands of Syria from the Franks and ennobled the followers of Chinghiz with the honor of Islam. They could not, however, completely remove their weakness or restore their domination and strength; for that domination was a result of those true beliefs and admirable qualities, and after the entry of corruption its restoration became difficult.

This is why historians have taken the wars of the Crusades as the beginning of the decline of Muslim power. It would be more correct to date the beginning of Muslim weakness and division from the appearance of those corrupt teachings and false opinions.

Let it be noted that the *Bābis*, who recently appeared in Iran and iniquitously spilled the blood of thousands of God's servants, were the apprentices of those same *neicheris* of Alamut and the slaves, or bearers of begging bowls,¹⁶ of those men of the mountain, and their teachings are an example of *bāṭinī* teachings. We must anticipate what further effects their beliefs will have among the Iranian people in the future.

The French were the only nation that by means of that sixfold foundation of felicity, elevated the banner of science and skill in the

¹⁶ *Chīlahā ya'ni kajgūl bardārḥā*. *Chīla* comes from Hindi, and Steingass' *Persian-English Dictionary* gives its Persian meaning as "slave." *Kajgūl* is apparently either a variant or misprint for *kachkūl* or *kashkūl*, the dictionary forms.

continent of Europe after the Romans. They became the civilizers of all the European peoples. Because of those glorious foundations they were influential in most periods in most Western countries. Until, in the eighteenth century A.D., Voltaire and Rousseau appeared claiming to remove superstitions and enlighten minds.

These two men exhumed the grave of Epicurus, the Cynic, and revived the old bones of *naturalisme*.* They overthrew duty, and sowed the seeds of license and communism. They considered manners and customs superstitions, and religions the inventions of men of deficient reason. They openly engaged in denying divinity and slandering the prophets. Voltaire even wrote books charging the prophets with error, and deriding, slandering, and vilifying them. These false beliefs influenced the souls of the French, who totally abandoned the Christian religion.

They opened the doors of the sacred law of *neicher*, meaning license, one day even bringing a girl and placing her on the altar of a church. The spokesman of that group cried: O people, after this do not fear thunder and lightning, and do not believe that they were sent by the Lord of heaven to terrorize you. Rather know that they are all the effects of nature, and aside from nature nothing exists in the world. Therefore no longer worship fancies, and do not invent a God for yourselves in accord with fantasies. And if you wish to worship something, then here is the *mademoiselle** in the altar, standing like a statue.

The corrupt *neicheri* teachings of these two persons first caused the famous French Revolution. Second, they caused corruption of manners, hatred, and division in beliefs to take hold of the individuals of that nation, until gradually each group of followers of different beliefs and divergent sects was occupied with itself; and they tried to achieve their own goals and pleasures, and turned their backs on the general welfare. For that reason their influence abroad began to diminish, both in the West and in the East.

Although Napoleon I restored the Christian religion, nonetheless the influence of the above teachings did not disappear, and differences of belief were not removed; and it finally all culminated in defeat at the hands of Germany. The French were hit by losses that they could not make up for many long years. Those harmful teachings were the reason that the group of *socialistes*,* i.e., socialists, appeared among them, and the harm and losses brought on France

by this group are no less than the harm and losses brought by Germany. Refer to the History of the French War.¹⁷

If the holders of good beliefs and praiseworthy qualities had not been prepared, these people, in order to carry out their hidden aims, would have turned France upside down, and would have pulled it to the ground.

It is no secret that the Ottoman nation, because of the appearance of these corrupt opinions of the *neicheris* among some of their amirs and great men, has fallen into its present sad state. Those military officers who committed treason in the recent war and were the cause of ruin and destruction were the same ones who marched in the *neicheri* road, and considered themselves holders of new ideas.¹⁸

Because of *neicheri* teaching they thought that man is like other animals, and these manners and qualities that he has considered virtues for himself are all contrary to *nature*,* and result from the meddling of the mind. And each man, to whatever extent and by whatever means he can, should obtain animal pleasures for himself, and not foolishly forbid himself pleasures because of the superstitious rules and artificial chimeras of ignorant men. And since man is mortal, what are honor, shame, trustworthiness, or truthfulness? Therefore they accepted a great degree of baseness and threw to the winds the ancient noble house of the Ottomans for a paltry price.

The *socialistes*,* *communistes*,* and *nihilistes** (i.e., the *ijtimā'iyîn*, *ishtirākîyîn*, and *'adamîyîn*) are all three followers of this path. They present themselves as lovers of the poor, the weak, and the unfortunate. Each of these three groups, although it outwardly expresses its aims in a particular way, has the final goal of removing all distinctions between men, and, as with Mazdak, that all should share in all.

¹⁷ As with "History of the Greeks," above, it appears that a specific book is intended.

¹⁸ Of this passage Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal, 1964), p. 267, says: "Abdül-Hamid must have been delighted to see that the book confirmed the wisdom of his persecution of the constitutionalists, and to learn that the same *nacharis* and *dehris* who destroyed law and order in the world at large were also responsible for the calamities of Turkey. He must have rejoiced to see the author refer, as usual anonymously, to Midhat Paşa and Süleyman Paşa as men who, like all *nacharis*, had sold their country to its enemies for petty gains. He had just court-martialled both, and had sentenced one to death and the other to permanent exile; but even he had not gone to the extent of accusing them of treason."

How much bloodshed they have caused in order to achieve this corrupt aim, and what disorders and revolts they have raised, and how many buildings and villages they have burned.

They say that all appetites and pleasures on this earth are among the bounties of *nature*,* or nature. Therefore it is wrong that someone should have a private right to one of these pleasures without having others share it with him. Rather all pleasures and desires should by right be shared among all mankind.

They say that the greatest barrier and firmest obstacle to the spread of the holy law of nature, which is license and communism, are religions and monarchies. Therefore these two must be uprooted from their foundations, and kings and the leaders of religion must be destroyed. If someone reserves for himself a pleasure or is distinguished by a talent or distinction, and acts against the holy law of nature, he must be killed so that others will not deviate from the rule of that law, and will not be refractory.

This threefold group found no ruse or trick better, in order to spread their corrupt ideas, than to found schools or to be teachers in the elementary and higher schools of others, and gradually to place their thoughts in the pure ears of children. Some of them therefore set about founding schools, and some others divided up, each one going to one of the higher schools of Europe to teach. They strove to publish and spread their false opinions, and their parties became numerous and spread in all lands and countries of Europe, especially in the Russian Empire.

Undoubtedly, if these three groups become strong, it will cause the decline and downfall of the human race, as was previously related. May God protect us from the evils of their words and deeds!

Mormon, that latter-day prophet of nature, who was first in England and then migrated to America, through the inspiration of nature saw fit to bestow the great gift of license and communism only on those who believed in nature. Therefore he formed two companies, one of male believers and the other of female believers, and he said: Every male believer has absolute possession of every female believer. Thus, if one of the female believers is asked, "Whose wife are you?" she answers, "The wife of the company." Similarly if one of their children is asked, "Whose child are you?" he will answer, "The child of the community."

Up to now the flame and evil of their corruption has not spread

beyond the abyss of their community. God the highest knows whether that flame will spread to the world, and the house and home of humanity will be burned and ruined.

As to all those deniers of divinity, or *neicheris*, who have come disguised in the clothing of reformers and friends of the community, and well-wishers of the people: they have made themselves both the accomplices of the thieves and the companions of the caravan, and have lifted the banner of their knowledge and skill before the foolish and stupid. They have a new plan for treachery, having waxed proud with two or three stolen and incomplete phrases, and they are swollen up with haughtiness and disdain. They named themselves leaders and guides, and for all their ignorance and stupidity, their base manners and blameworthy qualities, they have presented themselves as reformers. They found intelligence and wisdom only in perfidy, embezzlement, and dissimulation. I am deeply ashamed to mention them and to write of their ways and deeds, for their aims are exceedingly vile.

They wish for their own appetites to uproot the foundations of their community, and to tear up the bonds of its solidarity. The scope of their thoughts is very narrow, and they have not yet made a step beyond their stomach. The pen cannot move freely in that confined and filthy atmosphere. I can say this much: they are *payāchū*,¹⁹ meaning noisy braggarts over others. Let the reader know the rest.

From all that has been said it becomes clear to all that this group of *neicheris*, or materialists, in whatever community they appear, through a thousand disguises and hypocrisies corrupt the manners of the individuals of that community with their corrupt teachings. They undermine the foundations of the castle of their happiness and give currency to treachery, lying, sluggishness, and lust, until they gradually erase the name of that people from the slate of existence or entangle them in humiliation, poverty, and subjection.

Despite this, some of this group have hypocritically hidden their basic aims, which are license and communism, and externally content themselves with denying divinity and the Day of Judgment. Therefore, I wish to explain that this teaching alone suffices to corrupt the social order and shake the pillars of civilization. No cause more effective than this teaching can be found to corrupt

¹⁹ From the Italian *pagliaccio* (see p. 139 n. 7).

manners. It is impossible for someone to be a *neicheri* and despite this be refined in manners, trustworthy, truthful, manly, and generous.

[Why the *Neicheris*
Undermine the
Restraint of Passion]

THUS I say that every individual, according to his temperament and nature, has desires and lusts, to meet which certain pacifiers of passions are placed in the outside world. Those lusts in themselves make man try to acquire what he desires and to cure his appetites thereby, and to break the power of desire, whether these appetites are acquired in a right manner or a wrong one; whether their acquisition be a cause of sedition, corruption, bloodshed, and usurpation of rights; or whether they would be obtainable without these evils.

Four things can be imagined which might prevent these strong needs and effective motives from having an immoderate influence; make the possessor of these powerful appetites be satisfied with his rights; and bar transgressions and oppressions.

[These four are]: Either each possessor of a right must take sword in hand, put a shield on his back, put one foot in front and one in back, and night and day strive for the preservation of his right; or else nobility of soul, as is claimed by men of passion; or government; or the belief that the world has a wise creator, and that after this life there is a clear retribution for good and evil deeds—in other words, religion.

The first way would mean that in order to protect rights and repel transgressions torrents of blood would flow. Hills and valleys would be dyed with the blood of men, and every strong man would crush and grind the weak, until finally this race would be overthrown and its name erased from the slate of existence.

As to the second way: You must know that nobility of soul is the quality that restrains its possessor from blameworthy deeds and

shameful acts before his tribe and nation. And baseness of soul is that whose possessor does not abstain from mean acts. Disgrace and disapproval do not touch him.

It is clear that this quality, nobility of soul, does not have a fixed value or defined reality among people such as would enable it to place a moderate limit on desire; make everyone satisfied with his own rights; and make firm the foundation of order. Do you not observe how many affairs there are whose perpetration among one people is considered baseness and meanness, while the same affairs among another people are marks of nobility and perfection of soul, and occasions for praise and glory, despite the fact that really they are none other than tyranny, oppression, and treachery. For example, plunder, pillage, theft, highway robbery, and killing among the tribes and peoples of the mountains and deserts are considered the limit of perfection and the extreme of nobility. But the people of cities consider them all signs of baseness and meanness. Similarly with ruses, tricks, and hypocrisy: among one people they are considered vileness, while among other people these things are considered intelligent, skillful, and perfect.

Also, if you think deeply in this affair, you will see that every created thing has a cause, and the final cause of the acts of human will is man himself. You will easily perceive that man's seeking to be endowed with nobility of soul, and the effort to attain it, and the fear of baseness and meanness arise from man's desire and his longing to expand his means of livelihood and to avoid strictures in life. For he knows that the one endowed with nobility of soul will be worthy of trust and become known for trustworthiness and truthfulness. He will have many helpers and companions, and with many friends his ways and means of livelihood will be abundant. On the other hand, a reputation for meanness and baseness of soul, which causes the aversion of hearts and a paucity of friends, will close the gates to a livelihood.

The degree that a man seeks nobility of soul; the strength and weakness of that quality; its permanence and impermanence; its degrees and stages; and its influence in deterring the lustful from transgressions are in accord with ways of life of the different classes of men. That is to say, the classes of men will strive to acquire that quality to the extent that their lives are benefited and they are preserved from loss and injury. Every class considers nobility of soul that quality with which its rank and livelihood can be preserved.

And as to that which is superfluous for this, its lack will never be considered a defect or fault, although in other classes it is considered to be base and a defect, and [the first class] will make no effort to achieve it.

Look at most rulers and princes, how they are unconcerned over breaking treaties, especially with those lower than they in pomp and majesty, for all their belief in nobility. They do not shun injustice, tyranny, and vile deeds, nor do they consider any such deeds to be mean and base. Despite this, if one of these deeds originated with one of their subjects he would be considered a vile person, base of soul, and on this account his livelihood would be injured. The other classes themselves do not consider these matters among their rulers and princes as base and vile, but rather interpret them in other ways.

Similar is the state of each of the higher classes with regard to the classes lower than they, class after class. This is because the higher classes know themselves to be immune and protected from the damage of their heinous acts. Thus, if the pivot of the world order were nobility of soul, every higher class would place the hand of oppression on the lower class and would open the gates of evil and corruption before these unfortunate men.

Also, since the motive for acquiring this quality is to expand the means of livelihood and take precautions against strictures on life's way, as has become clear, therefore this quality can never bar men from internal transgressions, hidden treachery, and bribery in the corners of courtrooms. For man, seeking an easy life, knows that by means of these hidden evils he will reach his fundamental goal, without becoming known for baseness. You can observe what sort of acts appear in the corners of courtrooms from those who call for nobility of soul. Thus, someone who has set up nobility of soul as the criterion of justice should not believe that with this quality one can make everybody satisfied with his rights or create a bar to all open and secret oppression and transgressions.

If someone says that one cause for seeking nobility of soul is love of praise, and that everybody in order to receive praise should endow himself with the utmost nobility of soul and remove himself from all baseness, transgression, and oppressions—I would answer: First, few people can be found who prefer praise and eulogy to the pleasures of their bodily appetites. If you study the classes of mankind this will be manifest and evident. [Second], the first cause for the praise

and eulogy of these animal-like men, and the first grounds for the praise of deceitful historians and lying poets, is riches, wealth, position, glory, and power, even when these are achieved by unworthy means and a thousand oppressions and transgressions intrude in their acquisition. Therefore the majority of men in this matter would try to make themselves the owners of wealth and riches, and the lords of position and glory, even though it be by means of perfidy, oppression, and treachery. Thus they both procure bodily pleasures and have themselves praised by falsifiers. Few people are found who would seek rightful praise by means of righteousness, virtue, and nobility of soul.

From what has been said it appears that the quality of nobility of soul is in no way sufficient for the moderation of passions, the prevention of oppression, and the order of the world. But if it is supported by a religion, and in that religion its essence is specified and delineated, then because of that it will become the source and basis of the means of ordering the chain of relationships, [but] not by itself, as we pointed out in explaining shame.

As to the third means, it should be clear that the power of government is limited to the suppression of external oppression and transgressions. How can it prevent secret misappropriations, impostures, calumnies, corruptions, and transgressions by men of passion? How can it be informed of hidden tricks, deceits, and injustices, in order to strive to suppress them? Besides, the ruler and his helpers all have passions. What will bar these holders of power from the demands of active passions? What will deliver the weak, unfortunate masses from the hands of their evil and greed, since there is nothing to prevent or prohibit the latter? Of course that ruler is secretly the leading thief, and has publicly become the head of the highway robbers. His followers and helpers would all be tools of oppression, tyranny, and treachery; instruments of evil and corruption; and tools of misappropriation. They would strive for the denial of the rights of God's servants, outraging their honor and plundering their property. They would satisfy their sensual thirst with the blood of the unfortunate, and would paint and adorn their castles with the blood of the helpless. In sum, they would work toward the destruction of men and the ruin of the land.

Thus, no force remains for restraining men of passions from their transgressions and oppression other than the fourth way. That is, the belief that the world has a Creator, wise and powerful; and the belief

that for good and evil deeds there is a fixed recompense after this life. In truth, these two beliefs together are the firmest foundation for the suppression of passions and the removal of external and internal transgressions. They are the strongest pillar for overthrowing tricks, impostures, and hypocrisy, and the best motive for the determination of truth. They are the cause of complete security and tranquillity. Without these two beliefs the social order would never come into actuality, civilization would never come into existence, the foundation of human dealings would not be firm, and society and association could not be free of guile and fraud.

If someone does not possess these two beliefs, he will have no possible motive for virtue and nothing to prevent vice. Nothing would keep him from treachery, lying, hypocrisy, and deceit. For the final cause of all acquired qualities and free acts, as was said above, is man himself; and when a person does not believe in recompense and requital, what else will bar blameworthy qualities to him and call him to good behavior? Especially when a man realizes that being characterized by bad qualities will not result in any loss for him in the world, nor will having good qualities bring him any benefit. What will force him into cooperativeness, mutual assistance, mercy, manliness, courage, and the other qualities on which the social order depends?

[The Evils
of the *Neicheri*
and Virtues of Religion]

IT HAS become plain to the reader that the first teaching of the naturalists, or *neicheri*, is the rejection of those two beliefs that are the foundation of all religions; and their last teaching is license and communism. Thus these are the people who are throwing the social order to the winds. They are the destroyers of civilization and the corrupters of morals; the destroyers of the pillars of knowledge and wisdom. They are the annihilators of peoples; the obliterated of pride, zeal, and honor; the roots of baseness and treachery; and the plants of vices and vileness. They are the bases of sordidness

and depravity; the standards of lying and falsehood; and the callers to animality. Their love is deceit, their companionship a trick, and their gentleness perfidy. Their kindness is a ruse, their truthfulness a deceit, their claim to humanity imaginary, and their call to science and knowledge a snare and a forgery. They make trustworthiness into treachery; will not keep a secret; and will sell their closest friend for a copper coin. They are slaves to the belly and bound by lust.

They do not refuse to perpetrate any kind of base and low act in order to fulfill their passions. They in no way recognize honor, pride, or shame, and they know nothing of nobility of soul. Sons in this group are not safe from their fathers, nor can either of them be barred from daughters according to the ways of nature.

If someone is deceived by their snakelike smoothness to touch and becomes contaminated by their viperous spots and stripes; if the allurements of their speech attract him, and their tricks find a place in his heart, he then comes to believe that these people are the motive force of civilization and the cause of the order of the land and of the spread of knowledge and wisdom. Or else he believes that they are friends and supporters and keepers of secrets in time of need. One must both laugh and cry at his intelligence because it is an occasion for both laughter and tears.

Thus, from all we have expounded, it becomes clear in the most evident manner that religion, even if it be false and the basest of religions, because of those two firm pillars—belief in a Creator and faith in rewards and punishments—and because of the six principles that are enshrined in religions, is better than the way of the materialists, or *neicheris*. [It is better] in the realm of civilization, the social order, and the organization of relationships; indeed in all human societies and all progress of mankind in this world.

Since the order of the world has been laid according to the ways of wisdom, and the order of human affairs is a part of the total order, whenever these disrupters of the social order, the *neicheris*, have appeared, human souls have striven to eradicate them, and the lords of the true order of civilization, which is religion, have expended great efforts to remove them. The nature of a great man, according to his God-given intelligence, which is an effect of the universal intelligence, will not accept these men [the *neicheris*]. He rejects them like waste matter.

Therefore this sect has never become firm and durable, although they appeared in this world long ago and some treacherous souls

from among the powerful, because of their own aims, have strengthened them in every age. In whatever age they have appeared they have soon dispersed and disappeared like summer clouds, and the true order of the human realm, that is, religion, remained firm and well established, while these sources of disorder passed away and disappeared.

Since it is known that religion is unquestionably the source of man's welfare, therefore, if it is placed on firm foundations and sound bases, that religion will naturally become the complete source of total happiness and perfect tranquillity. Above all it will be the cause of material and moral progress. It will elevate the banner of civilization among its followers. It will cause those who are religious to attain all intellectual and spiritual perfections and to achieve good fortune in this world and the next.

If we think deeply about religions we will find no religion resting on such firm and sure foundations as the religion of Islam.

For, the rise of nations on the ranks of perfection; the climbing of peoples on the steps of knowledge; the ascent of groups on the stairs of virtue; the awareness of the nations of humanity of the details of truth; and their acquisition of true and complete happiness in this world and the hereafter—all these depend on several things:

[First] That the slate of the minds of tribes and nations be clear of the muddiness of superstition, and the rust of vain and groundless beliefs. For superstitious belief is a dirty curtain that intervenes between the holder of such a belief and truth and reality. It prevents the discovery of the reality of a matter. When someone accepts a superstition his reason comes to a stop and he refrains from intellectual movement. Then he will take up many similar beliefs, and will accept all superstitions and fancies. This will cause him to fall far short of true perfection, and the truths of existent beings will be hidden from him. It will even cause him to spend all his life in fantasies, loneliness, fear, terror, and dread. He will fall into shuddering from the movements of birds and the stirrings of beasts. He will be upset by the blowing of winds, the sound of thunder, and the gleam of lightning. He will be kept from most of the occasions of his happiness through belief in evil omens, and he will submit to every trick, ruse, and impostor. What misfortune, ill luck, or bad life could be worse than such a life?

The first pillar of the Islamic religion is that by the luster of unity [*tauhid*—the absolute unity of God] it purifies and cleans off the rust

of superstition, the turbidity of fantasies, and the contamination of imaginings. Its first teaching is that man should not consider another man or an inanimate object, high or low, to be the Creator, the Possessor, the Omnipotent, the Giver, the Preventer, the Strengthened, the Debaser, the Healer, and the Destroyer. Nor should he believe that the First Cause has appeared, or will appear, in human guise to improve or worsen things. Nor that Pure Being in order [to secure] some benefits bore, in human guise, pains and illnesses; nor other such superstitions, any one of which alone suffices to blind reason. Most existing religions are not free of these fancies and superstitions. Look at the Christian, Brahman, and Zoroastrian religions.

[Second] Their souls must be characterized by the greatest nobility. This means that every member of that community considers himself worthy and suited for any human rank and stage, except for the rank of prophecy, which is a divine rank. He does not imagine in himself deficiencies, decadence, and lack of ability. When the souls of men are endowed with this quality, each one competes with others in the wide arena of virtues, and enters into contest and competition; and they spare nothing to attain greatness and honor, and to acquire a high rank in the world.

If some men believe that their nature and character has less nobility than others, and that their rank is lower than others, naturally there will be defects in their zeal, languor in their movements, and weakness in their perception. They will remain deprived of many perfections, of high degree and worldly happiness, and will remain within the boundaries of a narrow arena.

The Islamic religion opens the doors of nobility before souls; strengthens the right of each soul to every excellence and perfection; and removes the distinction of nobility of race and occupation, basing distinctions among human beings only on intellectual and spiritual perfection.

Few religions can be found with this advantage. Look how the Brahman religion divides men into four classes—first the Brahmans, second the Kshatriyas, third the Vaishyas, and fourth the Shudras—and reserves the highest degree of natural nobility to the Brahmans and the next to the Kshatriyas, while the fourth class is considered the lowest of all in all human distinctions. This may be considered one of the main causes for the lack of proper progress among the followers of this religion in the sciences, knowledge, and the arts, despite the fact that they are the most ancient of peoples.

The Christian religion, according to the Gospel, affirms nobility for the race of the sons of Israel, and refers to other races in contemptuous terms. The followers of that religion, however, refused this rule and denied race distinctions, but they gave so much honor to the class of priests that it became a cause for lowering others. For the priests were given control over the acceptance of belief and the forgiveness of sins. They said that other men, even if they had reached the highest degree of perfection, did not have the power to present their own sins before the divine threshold and seek forgiveness. This has to be achieved through the mediation of priests.

Similarly they said that the acceptance of faith in the eyes of God Almighty depends on the acceptance of a priest. They took this rule, which debases people, from the Gospel, since in it was written: "Whatever you unbind on earth will be unbound in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven."²⁰ As long as this debasing belief was firm and well established among the Christian community in European lands no progress was achieved among that community.

Luther, the leader of the Protestants, who rejected this rule, in opposition to the Gospels, was following the example of the Muslims.

[The third foundation of human virtues] is that the members of each community must found their beliefs, which are the first things written on the slates of their minds, on certain proofs and firm evidence. In their beliefs they must shun submission to conjectures and not be content with mere imitation (*taqlid*) of their ancestors. For if man believes in things without proof or reason, makes a practice of following unproven opinions, and is satisfied to imitate and follow his ancestors, his mind inevitably desists from intellectual movement, and little by little stupidity and imbecility overcome him—until his mind becomes completely idle and he becomes unable to perceive his own good and evil; and adversity and misfortune overtake him from all sides.

It is no wonder that Guizot, the French minister who wrote the

²⁰ Matt. 16:19. As Afghānī implies, this passage is part of one that has been taken as legitimizing the Catholic church, though this is unclear without the full passage. Christ says to Peter: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

history of *civilisation*,* that is, civilization, of the European peoples,²¹ said as follows: One of the greatest causes for European civilization was that a group appeared, saying: "Although our religion is the Christian religion, we are seeking the proofs of the fundamentals of our beliefs." The corpus of priests did not give permission, and they said that religion was founded on imitation. When the group became strong their ideas spread; minds emerged from their state of stupidity and dullness into movement and progress; and men made efforts to achieve the attributes of civilization.

The Islamic religion is the only religion that censures belief without proof and the following of conjectures; reproves blind submission; seeks to show proof of things to its followers; everywhere addresses itself to reason; considers all happiness the result of wisdom and clearheadedness; attributes perdition to stupidity and lack of insight; and sets up proofs for each fundamental belief in such a way that it will be useful to all people. It even, when it mentions most of its rules, states their purposes and benefits. (Refer to the Holy Koran.)

There is no other religion having this excellence. I believe that the non-Muslims will also acknowledge these distinctions. It is no secret that the foundation of the Christian religion is the worship of the Trinity. All Christians confess that it is not possible for reason to understand it, which means that one must abandon reason in order to comprehend it.

As to the principles of the Brahman religion, it is clear to everyone that most of them are contrary to plain reason, whether the followers of that religion acknowledge it or not.

Fourth, there must be in each community a group of people who are constantly occupied with teaching the others, who do not shirk from adorning their intellects with true knowledge, and who do not fail to teach the ways of felicity. And there must be another group that always strives to straighten and rectify souls; to explain virtuous qualities and describe their benefits; and explain wicked manners and elucidate their harm and injuries. They should not neglect to enjoin the good and forbid the evil.²² For naturally all man's knowledge is acquired, and if man does not have a teacher he will not

²¹ The reference is to Guizot's *History of Civilization in Europe*, which assigns to the Reformation a key role in the progress of freedom of thought and of civilization. This book had recently been translated into Arabic.

²² A Koranic phrase found, with some variation, in several different passages in the Koran.

derive advantage or benefit from his reason. And he will live in this world like the animals and will leave this world barred from the happiness of both this world and the next.

Thus a teacher is indispensable. And since the lust and desires of man have no limit or measure, if there is no straightener and adjuster it will inevitably result in transgressions and oppression, and the possessor of those desires will deprive others of tranquillity and safety, and even burn himself on the fire of his passions. Man will then go to the abode of misfortune in the greatest wretchedness. Thus an enjoiner of the good, a forbiddler of evil, and a rectifier of morals are indispensable.

The greatest duties and obligations of the Islamic religion are these two matters. (Refer to the noble Koran.)

In other religions there has not been such concern for these two matters, and since there are many pillars of the Islamic religion, and to explain the benefits of each one for civilization and to describe how each of them is the source of perfect felicity would cause me to go beyond the subject of my discourse, I have considered it incumbent on me to write a separate treatise on this matter; in that treatise I will explain why the virtuous city for which philosophers have died hoping will only be achieved by man with the Islamic religion.²³

If someone says: If the Islamic religion is as you say, then why are the Muslims in such a sad condition? I will answer: When they were [truly] Muslims, they were what they were and the world bears witness to their excellence. As for the present, I will content myself with this holy text:

"Verily, God does not change the state of a people until they change themselves inwardly."²⁴

²³ This is the third approving reference to the "virtuous city," the others being on pp. 110 and 144 above. The phrase is part of the title of a popular work of political philosophy by al-Fārābī, and was used also by later philosophers.

²⁴ Koran 13:11. Since Afghānī first used it, this has become a favorite passage for modernists exhorting the Muslims to self-improvement. According to a statement by Professor H. A. R. Gibb in the autumn of 1963, however, the verb used for "change," *ghayyara*, had, at that time, the sense of "to change for the worse." This is certainly its sense in this Koranic passage, which reads (in 'Abdallāh Yūsuf 'Alī's translation): "Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves. But when God willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect." In Afghānī's brief citation here it is unclear whether he is thinking of the Muslims' past decline, their future improvement, or, most likely, both.

This is a summary of what I wished to explain about the evils and corruption of the *neicheri* path for civilization and the social order, and the benefits of religions and of Islam.

Completed by the writer Jamāl ad-Dīn Husainī.

An Islamic Response to Imperialism

Political and Religious Writings
of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn “al-Afghānī”

by N I K K I R . K E D D I E

Including a Translation of
the “*Refutation of the Materialists*”
from the original Persian

by Nikki R. Keddie and Hamid Algar

1968 University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles

*University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California*

*Cambridge University Press
London, England*

*© 1968 by The Regents of the University of California
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 68-13224*

*Designed by Wolfgang Lederer
Printed in the United States of America*