

superstitions to lead to an Islamic revival, secular nationalists, such as Ibrahim al-Yaziji and Negib Azoury, aimed at the removal of religion altogether from the realm of national action. Christian intellectuals, being the readiest to respond to the new forces from the West and therefore the vanguard of change, naturally desired to establish a national state without any reference to Islam. Christian Arab thinkers, in their role as the best interpreters of Western values and political thought, were the first to advocate the idea of Arab nationalism devoid of any Islamic implications.¹⁶ A modern state, they emphasized, cannot have equal and less equal second-class citizens like the dimmis of classical Islam.¹⁷ The separation of religion from the state, they argued, was in the interest of both Islam and the Arab nation.¹⁸ However, in their endeavor to build up a modern state on the principle of nationality and in imitation of Western political organization, the secular nationalists were

¹⁶ Hisham Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 17.

¹⁷ In an Islamic state the dimmis or the protected possessors of a revelation (ahl al-kitab) while adequately safeguarded by human rights they nevertheless are subject to certain inequalities concerning their duties. Cf. E.I.J. Rosenthal, Islam in the Modern National State (Cambridge: The University Press), pp. 107-108.

¹⁸ Haim, op. cit., p. 30.