

Koranic injunctions which call on Muslims to "conduct thy spiritual rituals but not forget your share in this life."

Mohammad is reported in the "Hadeeth" to have said "live your second life as if you are dying tomorrow, and your first as if you are immortal."

Islam has in fact banned priesthood as a profession or way of life, demanding of all Muslims to work for their living while simultaneously attending to their rituals. Islamic economic guidelines leave ample room for private ownership and initiatives within few constraints, most importantly, a ban on cheating, stealing, monopoly of necessities, and usury. Unconditional accumulation of wealth through legitimate means is respected as long as income earners pay their "zakat" income tax.

Empirical evaluation of the impact of Islamic faith on economic life in the West Bank (and in most other Muslim countries) lends no evidence to a negative correlation. Farmers, shop-keepers, artisans and small businessmen are noted for their enterprising spirit and hard work, while at the same time most of them may be overly pious. Commonly, they make their pilgrimage to Mecca and observe their prayers regularly while attending to their work. Farmers and rural residents tend to be noticeably closer to religious practices, while at the same time they are the harder workers. In fact the close observer can detect a sense of missionary fanaticism in their attitudes toward farming. This could be illustrated in the famous proverb rationalizing growing olive seedlings, which says "they (forefathers) planted and we eat, we plant and they eat (coming generations)". Again the Prophet is said to have kissed the hands of a farmer and noted that "those hands will not be touched by fire in the Doomsday."

Contrary to theoretical arguments, the secularization of Muslims

communities through higher education and acculturation along Western prototypes may have in fact drastically undermined the unusually dedicated spirit to farming and manual professions. This will be discussed in the next section, but it is safe to conclude this section by emphasizing that Islamic beliefs and practices do not constitute a deterrent to development, particularly in agriculture.

#### Attitudes to manual professions

A common feature of Middle Eastern societies is their marked bias for white-collar jobs such as medicine, engineering, law, teaching, and the government service. Professional occupations requiring manual skills are rarely taken out of choice, but more often due to failure to get a "cleaner" job. Undoubtedly, this attitude has deterred faster economic development, to the extent that it has impeded the mobilization of competent manpower to production sectors such as farming, industry, and handicrafts. Hence these sectors are frequently left mostly with mediocre workers.

Contrary to arguments presented by some writers, this attitude towards manual professions has little bearing on Islamic teachings. Instead, it seems to have its roots in the nature of Turkish, British, and Jordanian rule of the West Bank, when tangible experience demonstrated starkly the superior social and material remuneration which was accessible through certain types of professions. Thus, the popular preference for such jobs seems to have been a totally rational decision on the part of youth mindful of their future careers. Their priorities, naturally, bear directly on the quality of education which they would like to pursue - should they become free to do so.