

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

MARCEL A. BOISARD: L'HUMANISME DE L'ISLAM ¹

The *International Review* is pleased to present to its readers the recently published book by Marcel A. Boisard, who was for many years the ICRC delegate in the Arab Republic of Egypt, and who contributed several notable studies on Islam for the *Review*. For his book, Marcel Boisard was awarded the Prix de l'Amitié Franco-Arabe, in October 1979.

Much has been published concerning Islam in recent years, but the book by Marcel A. Boisard stands out for more than one reason. It is not a classical work on Islam nor is it a critical analysis of the contemporary Muslim world.

The author expounds the humanism of the Islamic world, on a plane where facts and theories merge, through the medium of a specific conception of the human being, of political institutions and of internationalist philosophy; he refers constantly to Islamic teaching to explain the facts and falls back on Muslim history to illustrate the theories. The study is set within the context of the new international order, which must include not only the economic and institutional aspects of life throughout the world but also the cultural, spiritual and juridical factors involved. Viewed in this way, Islam appears as one of the great moral and political forces in the world as we know it.

Subjects of current concern are dealt with successively: human rights, justice, the status of women, communal solidarity, social equity, safeguards for the rights of foreigners and non-Muslims. In the sphere of international relations, the author explains the dynamic pacifism of Islam, which prohibits aggression and all other forms of violence motivated by the desire for power, by religious intolerance or by the passion for wealth. Armed conflicts must also be conducted with propriety: Muslim teaching has developed extremely precise and inhibitive rules for the safety of non-combatants, humane treatment of the vanquished, and protection of the civilian population living in occupied territory.

¹ Ed. Albin Michel, Coll. Présence du monde arabe, Paris, 1979, 436 pp.

Today, the religious world of Islam is spreading while its political authority is gaining strength. Islam is rediscovering its age-old vocation, that of an open religion which imposes fundamental values. Islam, offering principles which are eternally valid in the eyes of Muslims, could, in the author's opinion, supply a vital contribution to the universal character of international law, reshaped at the universal level of the problems it is required to resolve, and could represent a nucleus of unchanging principles whose influence is growing steadily and playing an ever-increasing part in Muslim society throughout the world.

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