

A MESSAGE TO CONSIDER

«Leading psychologists and thinkers of today suggest as a remedy for common social evils a radical change in people's conduct so that their dealings with each other will be based on cooperation and fair play instead of jealousy and competition».

This statement was made by Dr. Azizah al-Hibri, an eminent professor of philosophy at the University of Texas, during a visit she recently made to Lebanon where she met a number of friends and colleagues.

To that statement, one of the listeners responded by saying: «Your suggestion implies a change in human nature, of which jealousy and thirst for domination are intrinsic traits».

Not exactly, answered Dr. Hibri. Many scientists think that what we now call instincts or inherited characters were, several centuries ago, acquired traits which, in the long run, became inherited. What we can do now is to reverse the process and build our educational system on a new basis: a humanitarian pattern instead of a selfish, anti-humanitarian one.

While I pondered over Dr. Hibri's words, I realized how true it is that jealousy and greed are chiefly responsible for human misery. War, the main source of injustice and suffering, has no other cause but jealousy and greed. Since the dawn of human civilization, jealousy pushed Cain to kill his brother Abel. It made Saul attempt to kill David, Sparta to fight Athens, the Greeks to invade and ruin Troy. Jealousy in pre-Islamic Arabia kindled the 40 year war of Dahis and Al-Ghabra and, in Islam, the war between Ali and Muawiah, between Omayyads and Abbasids and between Berbers and Arabs of Al-Maghreb. The Lebanese war of today has no other cause but jealousy and lust for power and positions, whether the fight is induced by rival great powers or by the local parties and communities.

Jealousy is a fatal disease because it is never quenched. A person who craves a certain position will not be satisfied with it; once he has obtained it he will keep craving a higher one until his disease destroys him.

The cure of this disease lies in the hands of educators, parents, teachers and society as a whole. It is up to them and through them to effect the change in children's orientation and moral training. Even as adults we can work to bring about the change in ourselves. For a person with a strong will, self-improvement is possible, no matter how old he may be. Getting rid of evil habits that poison our lives should be for every one a primary concern, which is never too late to start.