

Sharif and Sheikh

The historian and social scientist Dr. Ali Al Wardi, a self-described rebel against everything, was heavily influenced by the philosophy of Ibn Khaldun. Disgruntled with Arabic literature, Al Wardi hated grammar and syntax and believed it was given more importance than content. He also believed that kings lose power because of their advisors. He was one of the pioneers of secularism in Iraq and he has many analyses on Muslim crises and Arab suffering. The question is, how do I know about him, why did I read his work, and why am I writing about him? I will tell you.

In Dubai, the most important and enjoyable place I visit is the bookshop at Dubai Mall. A collection of Al Wardi's works caught my attention, and I started to skim through *The Sultans' Preachers*. Then I bought the whole collection. I began reading it and was eager to share my new found knowledge with my banking friends. As usual, however, I could not outshine my brother, Muthanna Al Hamad, who happened to know the author, had read his books, and even gave me a gift of another eight volumes Al Wardi's work on the modern history of Iraq. God bless you, Abu Talal. I have not, nor will I find a reader as educated as you.

Going back to Al Wardi, his work *The Story of Nobles and Ibn Saud* caught my attention. It talks about the fall of the Caliphate and the subsequent emergence of a new regime. This historical book was easy to read and the events were interestingly narrated. It covers the establishment of the nobles ruling in Hejaz, the Arab revolution against the Turks, and Faisal coming to rule over Syria. It analyzes how he lost his throne, his role in the Balfour Declaration and his relation with the English, how he was made king of Iraq while his father, Al Hussein, ruled Hejaz and