

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

# CRISIS

# IN THE MUSLIM MIND

**AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman**

Translation by:  
**Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين  
والصلاة والسلام على خاتم الأنبياء والمرسلين

*In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful  
Praise to Allah, Lord of the Universe.  
May Peace and Prayers Be upon His  
Final Prophet and Messenger.*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَقْرَأْ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾  
أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ  
مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

(العلق: ١ - ٥)

Read in the name of your Sustainer, Who has Created man out of a germ cell. Read—for your Sustainer is the Most bountiful One. Who has taught (man) the use of the pen. Taught Man what he did not know.  
(Qur'an 96:1-5)

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّن بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

(النحل: ٧٨)

And Allah has brought you forth from your mother's womb knowing nothing—but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful.

(Qur'an 16:78)

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**Crisis  
in the  
Muslim Mind**

**ʿAbdulḤamīd A. AbūSulaymān**

**translation by  
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**International Institute of Islamic Thought  
Herndon, Virginia USA**

## Islamic Methodology (1)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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FOREWORD .....	ix
PREFACE TO THE ARABIC EDITION .....	xiii
PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION .....	xvii

### CHAPTER ONE

<b>Contemporary Islamic <i>Aṣālah</i>:</b>	
<b>The Only Solution .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Historical Roots of the Crisis .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>The Crux of the Crisis and</b>	
<b>the Future of the Ummah .....</b>	<b>28</b>

### CHAPTER TWO

<b>The Traditional Methodology</b>	
<b>of Islamic Thought: Assessment and Critique ...</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Shari'ah and Non-Shari'ah Sciences .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Neglect of the Social Sciences .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>The Conflict Between Reason and Revelation ...</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Our Intellectual Heritage:</b>	
<b>Past, Present, and Future .....</b>	<b>59</b>



### CHAPTER THREE

Principles in the Methodology of Islamic Thought . . . . .	65
The Basic Concepts:	
The Purposeful Nature of Creation . . . . .	79
Objectivity of Truth . . . . .	81
Freedom . . . . .	83
<i>Tawakkul</i> . . . . .	91
Causality . . . . .	95
Islamic Methodology: Means and Application . . .	98

### CHAPTER FOUR

Requirements for Establishing the Islamic Civilizational Sciences . . . . .	105
Classifying Islamic Texts . . . . .	106
Dimensions of Existence . . . . .	113
The Impartiality of Truth . . . . .	119

### CHAPTER FIVE

The Premises of the Social Sciences . . . . .	123
Islamization and the Science of Education . . . .	125
Islamization and Political Science . . . . .	132
Islam, Science, and Technology . . . . .	141

### CHAPTER SIX

Islam and the Future . . . . .	145
Islamization and Academic Institutions . . . . .	149
The Future Course of Humanity . . . . .	153
Islamization is the Issue of the Ummah . . . . .	158

## **FOREWORD**

**There is general agreement that the Ummah is passing through an extremely difficult stage, one of disintegration and schism, loss of identity, failure of institutions, and inability to extract itself from its present state of bewilderment.**

**There is also general agreement that change is needed. In particular, the Ummah became acutely aware of its problems following its early encounters with Western civilization in Egypt and Turkey. In the two centuries that have passed since then, the Ummah has suffered through periods of dictatorship and submission to foreign experiments with its political and administrative systems, its culture and business, ethical and social makeup, and science and art. None of this, however, has yielded the kinds of results that the Ummah wanted or hoped for. Instead, the Ummah found itself caught up in a vicious circle.**

**What this means is that the leadership of the Ummah has been unable to determine the proper approach for bringing about the change needed to lead it toward its true objectives. After pondering the matter at length, looking at it from different perspectives, and considering objectively the attempts of the Ummah in the past to extract itself, we are convinced that the process of change must begin in the thought of the Ummah. This is because thought naturally precedes deeds, whether they prove to be correct or faulty.**

Only sound thinking will result in sound reconstruction, and only sound thinking will deliver the Ummah from the crisis which threatens to strangle the life from it.

Since Islam represents the sound core of the Ummah's thought and its true spirit, which tempers its sensibilities, moves its consciousness, and kindles within it the power to create, to construct, and to contribute, only Islamic thought is suitable for the Ummah.

Therefore, we may state confidently that the desired process of change is based on the thought of Islam and guided by its teachings, a process rooted in Islamic doctrines, values, and ethics and deriving its essence from Islam's sources.

Islamic thought is a general term, and interpretations of it differ. Since its definition is crucial, this book seeks to provide a definition which precisely delineates its method, identifies its principles, and anchors its basic concepts.

The book begins with a critical discussion of the traditional methodology of Islamic thought, which is followed by a look at its fundamentals and sources. The discussion then moves on to the subject of this methodology's performance in terms of the comprehensiveness of its scope and means. Finally, a general comparison is made between Islamic and scientific methodologies.

Thereafter, the author deals with the social sciences and humanities from the perspective of the Islamization of knowledge.

At the end of the book, the author speaks of two matters: Islam and the future, and the future of humanity. Finally, he announces his satisfaction with the idea that Islamization is the most important issue before the Ummah, that it is indeed the Ummah's future, its destiny, its objective, the means of its emergence from its crisis, and the way to its building a new civilization and a new renaissance.

Undoubtedly, rectifying the methodology of Islamic thought, returning to the roots of the matter, moving from the particular to the general, treating the causes of the problem rather than the symptoms, and advancing general principles and axioms, all in accordance with the teachings

of Islam, are the guarantees for the success and correctness of the process of change in thought that will enable the Ummah to put its feet on the right path. This is what this book attempts to explain.

Some may feel that the author attaches more importance to this issue than it deserves. But there can be no doubt that the issue of thought is fundamental and is of great concern to all Muslim scholars. Furthermore, according priority to this issue does not mean that other issues are forgotten. On the contrary, renewal will only come about when all issues are treated from a sound Islamic basis.

A number of studies have been published recently on the crisis of thought, the makeup of the Arab mind, the reconstruction of the Muslim mind, and issues of Islamic thought and methodology. This present study, however, takes a very different approach.

In his analysis of the crisis of the Muslim Ummah and its intellectual, methodological, and historical dimensions, the author takes a uniquely penetrating look at the problem. The ability to detect linkage between different issues and to derive lessons and wisdom from events are among the qualities that distinguish the author and his work. He is not distracted by side issues or by academic or technical discussions that pointlessly engage the reader's attention. This is one of the reasons that some readers may find the author's style difficult at first. On rereading, however, in the light of the author's objectives and basic ideas, the same readers will have no trouble in following what the author intends.

As readers delve further into this book, they will discover that they are not reading a fairy tale or a cleverly-written piece of literary forte. Rather, readers are bombarded with new ideas and perspectives that penetrate their innermost being. In short, the author is a hardened veteran who has weathered the concerns of *da'wah* and the difficulties and burdens of struggle for the sake of Islam.

The Ummah's pain and anguish are not merely subjects for treatment from a literary point of view. Its pains are his, as is its suffering. If he were a poet, it is possible that he

would have filled a library with his verses on the subject. Were he a professional writer, the bibliography of his works might have run to several volumes. In fact, a professional writer might develop each one of the author's ideas into a separate book.

The author, however, is a distinguished thinker whose concern is with the goals of the Ummah and the objectives of its existence. At times, readers will notice that his words have the hardness of a *mujāhid* or the directness of a pioneer. His writing is frank, for he goes straight to the point that he wishes to make. Rather than use a circuitous route, he shakes the reader with his exposition and forcefully draws his attention to the objective.

The original publication of this book in Arabic was delayed for several years in anticipation of the moment when the Ummah's political and intellectual leadership would be ready to look realistically and candidly at such a deep and comprehensive discussion of the Ummah's situation. Recent events, however, have made the translation of this book and the adaptation of the topics it deals with a matter of great importance. We can only hope that the book will find a place for itself among the issues that engage the attention of the intellectual and social leadership, as well as the youth, of the Ummah.

May Allah Most High grant that this book proves to be as beneficial as we hope it will be; and He is the Granter of Success!

All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Universe!

Dr. Tāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī  
President, IIT  
DhulHijjah 1314AH/June 1993AC  
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## **PREFACE TO THE ARABIC EDITION**

**All praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!  
Peace and blessings on Muhammad, His  
Servant and Messenger!**

**The book in your hands is very special. It is not a compendium or a composition, but a study, a contemplation, and an analysis that has occupied me throughout my life.**

**As a child, I opened my heart and soul to the Ummah's trials and anguish as expressed by its writers and poets. Where I grew up, in Makkah, in the classroom and between the covers of my books, the pages of history opened before my eyes and, in my imagination, I relived the Ummah's best and worst moments along with the finest and most courageous of its heroes. Often bitterness and frustration crept into the depths of my soul; but more often did the urgency of the crisis fill my heart with determination and the conviction that things must change.**

**The voyage of life provided me with experience and knowledge, and I never stopped asking myself about the reasons for the Ummah's decline and fall. As I was never prone to intimidation, I was unwilling to accept anything less than a satisfactory answer. Moreover, aided by personal experience and my studies in both the classical disciplines of Islam and in modern knowledge, I constantly pondered the crisis of the Ummah, searched for its causes, and**

sought answers and solutions. Nor was I ever satisfied with lamentation, emotional outbursts of anger, or even sentiments of zealous loyalty. To me, the problems of the Ummah demand understanding, study, and analysis. Therefore, I put all my personal and practical abilities, all my learning, and all my accomplishments to work. Day and night I pondered the Ummah's history, event by event, in quest of deeper understanding. I sought only the truth and the remedy.

When I write, I do so because I have made the Ummah's problems my own problems. Nothing I write is criticism, or faultfinding, or objection, or slander. Rather it is straight talk whose truth and candor are sharp and bitter.

As I speak to you in these terms, I am aware of the wealth of goodness residing in the Ummah, of the excellence of its essential being, of the strength it possesses in its depths, of how it is favored by its profound faith, its readiness to sacrifice, and its sincerity. I am not seeking to bestow compliments, nor am I looking for excuses, nor attempting to make the affliction seem less than it is. Rather, I have taken it upon myself to identify areas of impotence and backwardness for the purpose of rectifying these and seeking a way out of the crisis.

If I have been remiss in praising the Ummah's contributions, outstanding individuals, scholars, leaders, youth, or mujahidin, then my excuse is that, while the malaise grows more insidious, I am attempting to uncover the true nature of the affliction in order to prescribe an effective cure.

I do not insist on adherence to anything I have said in this book or to any opinion I have offered. Nor do I fear that something I have written may prove to be wrong. My only concern is that readers should join me in considering my vision of the reasons that led to the downfall of the Ummah.

No one could be happier than I if this book leads to serious discussion. Despite its modest proportions, this book is not an easy one to read, for its subject matter, which is extremely complicated and involved, stretches across populations, generations, and centuries. In order to

follow its arguments, the reader should know the Ummah's history and have an understanding of the *sunan* (natural laws) that Allah applies to nations and civilizations.

I hope that readers will give as much of their time and patience as is required for true comprehension of the issues discussed. A quick turning of the pages may not enable readers to see more than the externals, so that they understand the words mechanically. This is why the result of a cursory reading will only be to further cloud the vision I have intended to create. Since the subject is so vast, there is little opportunity for the book to go into the details of every matter discussed, or to produce historical evidence, or even to include other opinions. Rather, its focus is on the major issues and those at the very crux of the matter.

It is hoped that academic and cultural circles in the Ummah, as well as the social leadership, will deal with the thought and vision presented in this book in a manner befitting the issues that it raises. Hopefully, the book will motivate a great deal of serious and frank discussion that will in turn inspire more study and contemplation.

There is nothing in this effort that is intended to malign or detract from the work of any group or party in the Ummah, or from any of its individual scholars. I am well aware of the faith, sincerity, generosity, and jihad in the hearts of those who compose the Ummah. This work is an attempt to arrive at an objective understanding of the Ummah's history and the events that prompted it to tread on roads for which there were no maps, along which vision was limited, and for which there appeared to be no alternatives.

I hope that the Ummah's thinkers, leadership, scholars, and youth will rise to the challenge and accept their responsibility in dealing openly and truthfully with this undertaking. Moreover, I am confident that they will use all the means available to them in confronting the challenges before them. Certainly this will not be accomplished by snubbing our identity and nature; nor will it come about through an increase in resources, or in sacrifices, or in calls to honor values and principles, or in sermonizing, or in



becoming emotional. In fact, nothing will change unless we rectify, before all else, the ways in which we think! This, in turn, will lead to the rectification of the ways in which we teach, and then to the rectification of our social system and institutions. Only in this manner will the Ummah be able to revitalize itself.

"O Lord, show us the truth as the truth and grant that we should follow it. And show us falsehood as falsehood and grant that we should avoid it!"

I ask Allah Most High to grant the Ummah guidance, direction, *tawfiq*, assistance, and competence. Surely, He hears and answers those who supplicate Him.

'AbdulḤamīd A. AbūSulaymān  
1413AH/1992AC  
Herndon, Virginia USA

## **PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION**

**This work, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, is an abridgement and translation of an original Arabic text of high literary style. The subject matter, which is not always easy to follow, is aimed toward the initiation of serious discussion among Muslim intellectuals regarding the roots of the malaise of contemporary Muslim society. Such a work is undoubtedly difficult for anyone other than the author himself to translate. Unfortunately, I had neither the time nor the opportunity to undertake it myself. However, as I have full confidence in the abilities of Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo and those who edited and reviewed the work, I am confident that the message of the original has been conveyed.**

**The translation comes out at a time when the Muslim Ummah finds itself in the wake of the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the bipolar world order. Throughout the world, the adversaries of Islam continue their aggression against Muslims, in places like Bosnia, Kashmir, Kurdistan, southern Sudan, Somalia, the Phillipines, Burma, Palestine, Afghanistan, Algeria, and in many other places. Such dreadful conditions serve only to magnify the Ummah's crisis. While Muslims may react to these situations in the short term, we must never lose sight of the fact that the malaise lies in our own weakness and incompetency. Perhaps the most striking difference between the early Muslim generations and those that have followed is that the early Muslims were raised to be strong, both physically and psychologically. The dynamics of the Prophet's instructions**

(to strut and show their strength) to those performing *ṭawāf* before the conquest of Makkah were not lost on the early Muslims.

This book deals briefly with issues of methodology, the relationship between the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the time and space dimension in the Sunnah, and the rift between the political and the religious-intellectual leadership of the Ummah. It is the contention of this work that while the political leadership used force to keep the masses in order, the intellectual leadership used emotional and psychological means to keep them in check. The net result of such pressure was the creation of inhibitions within the Muslim mind, which caused the mentality of the Ummah and its character to develop in such a way that it lacked initiative and the ability to innovate and think for itself.

At the present time, the Ummah clearly needs to address these problems and to deal with them openly and honestly. As a precondition, it is essential that the Ummah as a whole overcome its reservations and superstitions in regard to understanding and reinterpreting both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In the final analysis, however, it is the education and upbringing of new generations of Muslims that must be our first concern.

The responsibility for instituting the needed change lies squarely on the shoulders of Muslim intellectuals. These are the ones who must break the psychological chains that have bound the Ummah for the past several centuries. They are the ones who must diagnose the malady for what it really is and then prescribe the right cure. Only then will Muslims be able to actualize the true Islamic way of life represented by *tawhīd*, *khilāfah*, and brotherhood. Finally, once Muslims have regained their dynamism, courage, and morality they will not only improve their own lot, but contribute positively to world civilization as well.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Contemporary Islamic *Aṣālah*: The Only Solution**

#### **The Approach to the Solution**

No one studying the Ummah will have difficulty in discerning the present backwardness of its culture, its political degradation, and its human suffering, regardless of its human and material resources and in spite of its values and principles. Such is the very heart of the Ummah's crisis. It is inevitable that such a backward and aimless existence should be of major concern to the spirit of the Muslim Ummah which has always represented the conscience of a pioneering and constructive people. It is therefore only natural that the Ummah seeks to reform, renew, and revive itself.

In order to deal with the Ummah's structural shortcomings and to fulfill the conditions necessary for their successful treatment, we must understand the root causes of those shortcomings. In truth, the Ummah's present infirmity and backwardness have become so pronounced that its very existence is threatened by the challenge of Western civilization to its way of life, thought, and institutions. What is called for is a comprehensive and deeply analytical examination of every facet of the Ummah, for only such an analysis will allow us to trace the path which has brought, and continues to bring, the Ummah to the depths to which it has fallen.

The Ummah has been in decline for several centuries. All of it, save a few remote geographical regions, came under the sway of European imperial power. Perhaps even more painful is the fact that, even today, the Ummah continues to represent spheres of influence. The entire world vies for supremacy over its strategically valuable territory, important markets for foreign industry, raw materials, and cheap unskilled labor. And this is happening at a time when the Ummah is unable to feed itself and remains in dire need of industry as well as a scientific and technological base, technical experience, advanced institutions of technology, and all the elements of independent power.

The reasons for the Ummah's decline go far back into history. Not all of the factors are readily apparent, for many nations at the outset of their decline enjoyed the great wealth and ease earned by their previous progress and development. This was also true of the Ummah, for, in its early stages, wealth, centers of learning, personal fortunes, and public works were abundant. Yet the signs of coming decline were clear in the ebb of the Ummah's territorial expansion, the spread of corruption, the change from an offensive to a defensive posture, and the losses that it sustained at Baghdad, Jerusalem, Cordoba, and other places.

It is quite important, if we hope to come to an understanding of our decline, to distinguish between what caused the malady and what its symptoms and complications were. The historical spread of heretical sects and doctrines is nothing new to the Ummah. This phenomenon began with the *ṣabā'īyah*, *ismā'īlīyah*, *nusayrīyah*, Druze, and others. Today, we are beset with continuing heresy in the form of the *bahā'īyah*, *aḥmadīyah*, *qādlānīyah*, and nationalists.

These movements are clearly symptomatic of maladies that took root during the early years of the Ummah, when the Muslims were challenged by the Roman and Persian empires and were compelled, in order to meet those challenges, to give a measure of civil and military power to desert Arab tribes who had only recently embraced Islam. Since their tribal mentality had not been totally transformed

by the teachings of Islam, they soon began to cause great upheaval and eventually brought down the government of the third *khalifah*, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, when they attacked Madīnah, the capital of the prophetic state. This event led to the creation of states with distinctly tribalistic and ethnic leanings, states that were essentially a mixture of Islamic and pre-Islamic teachings and heritages.

When we ponder the depths to which the Ummah has plummeted, the seriousness of the threat it faces, and the extent of the crisis from which it suffers, we begin to understand the gravity of its situation and the urgency of the efforts required to rescue it from further decline and suffering. Even though these negative developments are tangible and objective matters upon which all sincere and reasonable people can agree, there is no agreement on, or any degree of clear vision of either a solution or the means to a solution. An even worse complication is the spread of ethnocentrism, nationalism, atheism, anarchy, and permissiveness. Some of those who claim to be reformers are in fact the Ummah's enemies, for they promote these foreign ideologies by all the means at their disposal. They often claim that these ideologies are signs of a healthy society, or that they constitute starting-points for progress and reform.

What we need to determine, first of all, is the true starting-point for dealing with the crisis. Perhaps we should first define the starting-points and alternatives that are available to the Ummah. These may be classified into three main categories:

1. *The Imitative Foreign Solution*: This is often called "the foreign solution" and entails borrowing solutions which spring, in essence, from the cultural (secular and materialist) experience of the contemporary West. This may take the form of individualism, totalitarianism, secularism, atheism, capitalism, or Marxism.
2. *The Imitative Historical Solution*: This implies relying on solutions derived from the Islamic historical experience, regardless of considerations of relevance in terms of time and place.

**3. The Islamic *Aṣālah*<sup>1</sup> Solution:** This is the approach which seeks to apply relevant solutions, derived from authentic Islamic sources, to the Ummah's problems.

In the Ummah's quest for the recovery of its vitality, there are four prerequisites: (1) specification of a sound approach; (2) unswerving faith in that approach; (3) resolve to do all that is necessary for the attainment of its goals; and (4) provision of all the practical means required to ensure its success.

We might begin promoting the correct approach by taking it directly to the people and explaining to the Ummah's writers, thinkers, and leaders what we believe to be its most important aspects. In this way, they may come to share our conviction that our approach is the best one.

Perhaps the most effective method of promoting our solution would be to lay bare the weaknesses of the faulty approaches by explaining why they are unsound and then presenting the correct solution and the reasons why it should be adopted. This is the method used in this book, for while the Ummah is under attack, so to speak, by cultural invaders who seek to confuse it and make it lose its way, it is imperative that the Ummah understand the reasons why the solutions proposed by others will not work. In this way, the Ummah will be better able to discern for itself the most suitable solution and then proceed to bring it about.

### **The Imitative Historical Solution**

The historical approach traditionally has been the Ummah's choice. However, this approach inherently disregards temporal, local, and ummatic considerations. In recent times, it has failed repeatedly to meet the challenges of modern life and the forces inimical to the survival of the Ummah and its thought. Had traditional solutions remained

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<sup>1</sup>The meaning of *aṣālah* is not to be confused with "fundamentalism". It is rather a more comprehensive term which denotes the innovative application of original Islamic principles to changing circumstances. (Trans.)

effective there would be no crisis today, no downfall, and no impending disaster. Moreover, there is no point in making excuses for the inefficacy of this approach. If there were extenuating factors, then the fact remains that the traditional approach failed to take them into consideration. In any event, it failed to deal with the problem in its totality.

The main drawback of the traditional approach is that since it begins with the pious assumption of its own infallibility, it is totally intolerant of all parties, approaches, and circumstances that do not agree with it. An approach that demands even its detractors' cooperation is clearly impractical. Rather, it is symptomatic of the Ummah's problem itself. Essentially, the approach that has dominated the Ummah's thought for so long is little more than a stubborn insistence on maintaining the facade of Islam's golden age. The traditional approach ignores the realities of history and material development. Therefore it has consistently failed, despite the Ummah's faith in Islam. This also explains why the *fuqaha'* stopped short of dealing with modern transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), restricting themselves instead to the regulation of religious ritual and personal circumstances.

An example of how the traditional approach may lead to an absurd extreme is the pronouncement made by one of this century's most prominent Muslim reformers, who nevertheless misinterpreted the connection between the social and political systems at the time of the *khulafā'*. His opinion, based on the traditional approach, was that the Ummah could only be reformed by what he termed a "just dictatorship." This, as any student of political science knows, is a contradiction in terms. That 'dictatorship' and 'justice' are mutually contradictory, or in no way compatible, is a recurrent theme in the Book of Allah:

...but man transgresses all bounds, in that he looks upon himself as self-sufficient (96:6-7),

...and consult with them in affairs [of moment] (3:159),



...who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation (42:38).

The isolation of Islam's intellectual leadership from its political leadership dates back to the confrontation between the first *khulafā'* and the various ethnicities and tribal groups. This was the upheaval which ended in conflict between the old-line leadership like al Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, 'Abd Allah ibn al Zubayr, Muḥammad al Nafs al Zakīyah, Zayd ibn 'Alī, and others who advocated an Islamic polity along the lines of the first Islamic state at Madīnah, and the emergent political leadership that established dynasties on the basis of ethnocentrism and tribal loyalties. When the first group was defeated politically by the second, its members, along with the scholars, withdrew from public life. As time passed, the isolation of Muslim intellectuals from the challenges of public life became more pronounced. The result was the growth of a school of thought that was isolationist and protectionist (in that they feared the Shari'ah might be tampered with by unscrupulous rulers and those who served them). Those who ascribed to this school of thought paralyzed the progress of Islamic society and culture by referring almost exclusively in their writings to the events of the early years of Islam (the lifetime of the Prophet and the thirty years that followed his death). In this way, they left the political and social leadership of the Ummah to those who were intellectually and politically incompetent.

Owing to this withdrawal, the Ummah fell prey to despotism, poverty, and social and political decline. Indeed, from the times of the Mongol invasions and the Crusades, this has been the fate of the Ummah. In more recent times, it fell beneath the sway of foreign colonial powers and was exposed to the dangers of blindly imitating a foreign civilization, either of its own volition or under duress. In every case, however, imitation led to greater and more widespread infirmity and decline. Thus the cultural, economic, and technological gaps widened between North and South, between the advanced industrialized nations

and the underdeveloped nations of the Third World, many of which are Muslim.

The lessons to be learned from this are that the traditional approach has been of no avail and that dreams of times past are useless against the relentless movement of life in time and place and in thought. In short, the obvious results of this approach have inevitably been backwardness, weakness, and decline.

### **The Imitative Foreign Solution**

This is the other approach that has found currency in the Muslim world. Historically, it was first adopted over two centuries ago, when the Turkish 'Uthmānīyah empire was confronted by the military might of Europe. Under Salim III, the 'Uthmānīyah empire began a policy of imitating Europe, thinking that this was the way to renew their declining power.

Thus the cycle of emptiness and loss of vision began on the millstone of imitation, as the attempt was made to import foreign technical knowledge and experience. The Turkish state began by establishing its first modern engineering college and followed that with a military academy for training officers along Western lines. So determined were the 'Uthmānīyah sultans to carry out their plans, and to regain their power and status, that they actually slaughtered their own traditional military corps, the Janissaries, in their barracks when they resisted plans to "modernize" the army.

However, neither the plan to imitate the West nor the method chosen to effect it was successful in restoring the power to the 'Uthmānīyah sultanate, in facing up to the challenges confronting their empire, or in transferring knowledge to the Ummah. Rather, the retreat of the 'Uthmānīyah sultanate continued without a halt before the onslaught of Western military might. Their solution to this unexpected turn of events was to increase their efforts to imitate the West by sending droves of students to Europe, a policy which led to further Westernization. This, in turn, brought a new dimension to imitation: the perception on the

part of the Turks that political and social reform would have to be carried out along Western lines. Otherwise, their reasoning went, they would not have the kind of atmosphere conducive to the academic, administrative, and military reform so urgently needed for the reconstruction of their empire.

This kind of thinking resulted in many liberal political and social reforms, reforms that were crowned in the latter half of the nineteenth century by what became to be known as Midhat Pasha's constitution. It is a widely known historical fact that this attempt at reform was no more successful than those that had preceded it. Thus, Sultan 'Abd al Ḥamīd II was encouraged to personally administer the entire state in a last hopeless attempt to rescue the historical model of the Islamic system of state and society.

This reform movement, based on the principle of foreign imitation, progressed and added a new and clearly European dimension: the importance of nationalism as a motive in building a nation. Among the Turks, the leaders of the reform movement that adopted the foreign approach emphasized the importance of nationalism. To give meaning to their assertions, they created "Turanian" nationalism. This was an essentially pan-Turkish nationalism that encompassed all speakers of Turkish in western and central Asia. The modernist reform movement began its rise to power in Turkey at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, when, under the name of the Union and Progress Party, it challenged the 'Uthmānīyah sultanate, overthrew Sultan 'Abd al Ḥamīd II, and took the reins of power. This attempt at reform, however, ended when these Turks, in their final war, were subjected to a defeat worse than any they had suffered under 'Uthmānīyah rule: the occupation of the heart of Anatolia by the Greeks, whom they had long considered to be their lowliest subjects.

In spite of all this travail, however, attempts at foreign-inspired reform continued unabated, and in a more comprehensive fashion, until the 'Uthmānīyah sultanate was brought to an end at the hands of the founder of the

modern Turkish republic, General Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his military clique. This group carried foreign imitation to its furthest extremes, for its leaders instituted comprehensive and overall changes in accordance with European patterns, abolished the role of Islam and Islamic culture in society, endorsed the European concept of secularism, and ensured, in no uncertain terms, the separation of Islam from the affairs and organization of the state as well as from all aspects of society. In addition, they abolished all Islamic laws and 'Uthmānīyah institutions and replaced them with the legal code of the European country they believed to be the most advanced: Switzerland. In order to nullify the effects of Islamic culture on future generations, the Arabic script was abolished and replaced with the Latin alphabet. The common people were forced to adopt European dress, women were required to discard the *hijāb*, and even Islamic rituals like the call to prayer were required to be performed in Turkish.

Before Atatürk's rule ended, the government had adopted many concepts dealing with state intervention in administering and making policy for the country's major social and economic institutions. In particular, the state took control of the country's most important financial and economic institutions, such as banks and insurance companies. However, these developments did not improve Turkey's condition. Rather, its decline continued unabated, even though it passed through all the stages of the foreign imitation solution: the importation of science and technology; the organization of a modern army; the modernization of its civil administration; the espousal of liberal concepts; the transmission of Western culture; the enactment of political and constitutional reforms; the adoption of nationalism, ethnicity, and secularism; the establishment of European laws and institutions; and state control of all important social, economic, and financial institutions.

Still, all that this imitation accomplished was the further weakening of the Turkish state and its eventual complete domination by the Western powers. General Ismet İnönü,

Atatürk's successor and longtime comrade, was forced, as a result of the failure of these policies and of the pressure exerted by the Western powers, to abolish one-party rule in the country (i.e., the Republican party) and to return to a new round of liberal political reform. As a result, new elections were held and the opposition Democratic Party, under Adnan Menderes, took over.

In spite of the seriousness with which they were undertaken, none of these attempts was successful in rescuing Turkey or in restoring it to its former power and status. On the contrary, the deterioration was so complete that, in 1960, Menderes was hanged in the first of a series of military coups that would eventually lead to dictatorship and repression. Thus Turkey remains, as much today as ever before, the "Sick Man of Europe." In fact, Turkey is worse than sick. It is the perennial Western camp-follower who has no hope of ever improving its lot in life.

If we look closely at the Egyptian experience from the time of Muḥammad 'Alī, from the outset of the nineteenth century AC/thirteenth century AH until the present time, and if we look at the experiences of Islamic countries in Arabia, Asia, and Africa, we will find nothing new to add to the experience of Turkey and its painful results. Over the centuries, the Islamic world has remained, owing to its adherence to the principle of imitating whatever is foreign, a sick and fractured entity. And it remains so during a time when the civilizational gulf separating it from the developed nations continues to increase.

The reasons for the failure of this approach are easy to understand. Nations, as living human aggregates, are far more complex than individuals in their composition and in the amount of energy it takes to motivate them either to overcome obstacles or to be constructive. Each nation, then, in the same way that it has its own motivations, psychology, and history, has its own composition in terms of its values, beliefs, and concepts. Unless these are understood correctly, it is next to impossible to deal with a nation in a way that will inspire it to realize all of its hidden potential for progress.

What motivates one human being may not motivate another. The same is true of nations, since each nation works on the basis of its own incentives and priorities. It is therefore a major mistake to ignore a nation's incentives and priorities and rush headlong after a blind imitation of plans for production and reform without a proper understanding of what distinguishes that nation from other nations. Unless this way of understanding nations is adopted, the future of the Ummah will be no better than the long centuries of importation and imitation.

### **Examples from Recent History**

Among the simplest and most readily understandable examples of what was mentioned above is the effect that the uniquely Western institution of banking has had on the Ummah. When it first appeared in the West, banking served to answer the economic and commercial requirements of Western society. This imported institution, however, had a distinctly negative effect on the foundations of the Muslim Ummah. Instead of assisting in the Ummah's development and economic reconstruction, it paved the way for further foreign influence. The main reason for this negative effect may be attributed to differences in beliefs and values. Indeed, Western-style banking succeeded in creating divisions and generating even more conflict, as well as draining the Ummah's strength, curbing its motivation, extinguishing its enthusiasm, and facilitating the foreign domination of its resources instead of acting as an aid to progress and economic development.

To a great extent, the reason Western-style banking failed in Islamic societies, despite its supposed success in the West, is that it is an application of methods that are essentially foreign to Islamic economic systems and values. It presented both the individual Muslim and the Muslim Ummah with an extremely difficult choice: wealth and economic prosperity in this world on the basis of usurious transactions which would ultimately spell damnation in the afterlife, or toil, backwardness, and poverty in this world if the teachings and values of Islam were followed.

What the Muslim conscience seeks is to make the best of life in this world and thus earn blessings, rewards, and ultimate bliss in the next world. There is no scope in that conscience for the acceptance of dualism or contradiction as to what is good and right in this world and what is good and right in the next. Islamic banking in the Islamic world today is a partial attempt to present an Islamic solution or alternative which gives hope to the desire to realize contemporary Islamic requirements, including financial and economic services, in a way that harmonizes with the Muslim's personality, thought, and heart.

### **The Ummah and the Imported Solution**

The imported foreign solution is, to use a metaphor, a theatrical solution which turns the Ummah into a passive spectator in a drama that is mere play-acting and only a shadow of reality. The most that the audience can do during a performance is to applaud or show its displeasure in accordance with the twists of the plot and what it evokes. This does not mean, however, that the Ummah has any significant role to play in what takes place on the stage between the actors representing the political and social leadership. This may explain why every time one of these plays ends, or a leader falls from power, or a role is finished, the Ummah merely shakes it off and goes about its business as if nothing had happened. Before long, it will move on to witness another play, another distraction, another leadership, and another round of the latest trends in imitative historical and foreign solutions.

The difference between the thought of advanced nations, their leadership, and their institutions on their own territory, and the thought of backward nations, their leadership, and their institutions is immediately obvious: those of the advanced nations are real, for they spring directly from the being or essence, the values, the personalities, and the requirements of those nations. These are the components of thought, policies, and teachings that make the leadership and the nation one team working for progress and the purposeful betterment of the life of the nation.

**This basic insight presents us with a sound explanation of what we might term the "comedy of politics and politicians" in the Islamic world and, on a larger scale, in the Third World in general. It explains the differences in the nature of politics, government, and administration in the developed nations. It also explains how these reflect the relationships of interaction and performance that represent a society, a process, and a movement springing from reality, dealing with and influencing it, and being influenced by that same reality.**

**What is required of us is that we understand the intellectual and cultural dimensions of the imported foreign solutions. If we can accomplish this, then we will not waste any more time on imitation and parody, and therefore spare ourselves and the rest of the Ummah more suffering and pain. It is certainly neither fair nor just that the Ummah continue to be led by the political and intellectual leadership, be they nationalist, secularist, Marxist, or whatever, who have failed it so badly over the centuries. Why should they be allowed to direct the Ummah along the same useless path?**

**Serious and mature Muslim intellectuals and leaders must commit themselves to the one path that is truly open to them, regardless of how difficult it might at first appear to be. They must make certain that the solution they seek originates in their religion, their homeland, and their history, and that they use it to steadfastly confront the challenges of the present. If this is not done, the bitter failures suffered by the Islamic world over the past several centuries will pale in comparison with the new problems that it will have to face.**

**Of course, Muslim leaders and intellectuals, with all their different leanings and preferences, as well as the entire Muslim Ummah can continue to dream of salvation, progress, honor, or power. However, if they do not change their present ways, means, and methods of thinking, in the end they can only expect that their lot will be a harvest even more bitter than those they have experienced in the past. The Ummah's intellectual and social leadership must search**



for an authentic Islamic alternative solution, strive to discern its elements from deep within the thought, culture, practices, and institutions of the Ummah, and then relate it to the actual circumstances of its people.

### **The Ummah and the Historical Solution**

The Ummah has also attempted to apply the imitative approach. However, this solution ignores, in a completely haphazard fashion, the elements of time and place in the structure of the Ummah and its historical progression. In the last few centuries, this approach has represented continual reversals for the Ummah as regards the challenges put forward by contemporary life and the forces inimical to the Muslim mind and its thought. Clearly, this solution has failed to rescue the Ummah, for the circumstances of the Ummah have continued to deteriorate rapidly, its enemies have gained a great deal from its crisis, and it continues to be beset by innumerable problems. If this approach had been successful, the excuse that certain unforeseen obstacles prevented the realization of the desired results would never be accepted. Obviously a solution is only as good as its results and, unless it takes the unexpected into consideration, it will not be satisfactory, for the unexpected is an integral part of the problem.

The imitative historical solution greatly oversimplifies matters by attempting to establish the soundness of its own principles and the inadequacy of all others. In fact, it is a solution that requires, as a condition for its success, the cooperation of its opponents. Were they to place obstacles in its way, it would not be able to solve anything. This in itself represents a part of the problem that needs to be solved.

Essentially, the imitative historical solution that has captured and held the imagination of so many Muslims for so long is little more than a stubborn insistence on a return to Islam's golden age. It does not take into account any change, whether material or contextual. This explains why this "Islamic" approach to delivering the Ummah from its tribulations has consistently failed, even though the

Ummah is Islamic in its beliefs and has been so throughout its history. This further explains why the scope of traditional *madhhab*-based fiqh was confined to the sphere of ritual worship and personal law.

Perhaps the example which most embodies the fallacies inherent in this solution is that of Sayyid Jamāl al Dīn al Afghānī. Although he was one of the greatest and most sagacious of all recent Islamic reformers, he nevertheless misinterpreted the relationship between the social and the political systems at the time of the early *khulafā'* and deduced his infamous conclusion that the leadership needed by the Ummah was a "just dictatorship."

Obviously, dictatorship and justice are at opposite ends of the political and administrative scale. And, furthermore, this was clearly enunciated in one of the first Qur'anic revelations:

...but man transgresses all bounds, in that he looks upon himself as self-sufficient (96:6-7).

In attempting to understand the phenomena of the imitative historical approach, we should first come to terms with how the approach developed through the history of the Ummah. The origins of the approach go back to the division between the Ummah's intellectual and political leadership: the last days of the early *khulafā'*, which were characterized by a power struggle between the leadership of the state and those ethnocentric and tribalistic desert Arabs who supported the movements toward apostasy and repeated political refractoriness. Finally, this conflict escalated into an open confrontation between the leaders of the state at Madīnah who represented the general politics of Islam (i.e., people such as al Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, 'Abd Allah ibn al Zubayr, Muḥammad Dhū al Nafs al Zakīyah, Zayd ibn 'Alī, and others) and the political leadership of the ruling dynasties.

This confrontation ended in the defeat of the intellectual and religious leadership, a development which engendered their withdrawal from politics and their assumption of a

**new role: an intellectual and religious opposition. Their isolation continued to increase and, over the centuries, left an indelible mark on the nature of Islamic thought and the concerns of Islamic thinkers. As the scholars fell into the trap of looking at problems from a narrow perspective and interpreting the texts of revelation from a purely lexical point of view, schools of *taqlid* came into existence. In the scholars' defense, it is likely that their desire to protect and preserve the Shari'ah from any tampering on the part of the unqualified and unscrupulous contributed to the overly conservative approach they adopted. Still, the natural result was that as time went on Islamic thought became distinctly retrospective, lost in faint recollections of times past and the adoration of sacred relics.**

**As a result of this development, the intellectual roots of the Ummah's social and political leadership shrivelled up and died. When the leadership finally and completely lost its hold, the Ummah succumbed to blind imitation and intellectual stagnation, particularly the religious scholars who no longer had any practical political or social role to play. Repression, tyranny, and subjugation took hold of the Ummah as the political and social leadership lost the intellectual base from which to derive the solutions needed for the Ummah's development, and its alternatives and replacements.**

**On one side, the Ummah was enveloped in imitative and stagnant thought and, on the other, by despotism and political autocracy. This is a fairly accurate picture of the Ummah's history and the reason why, after the Mongol invasions and the Crusades, the Ummah fell prey to Western imperialism and remains today under foreign domination.**

**The important thing here is that the Ummah's decline, the failure of its institutions, and its inability to think beyond the limits of historical imitation led to an even greater danger: the perception that the solution to its problems was to be found in an imitative foreign approach. However, the results of that imitative approach were to hasten the fall of the Ummah and to leave it weaker than**

ever before. By following this path, the Ummah was soon beset with what scholars call an increasing civilizational (economic and technological) gulf between the North and the South, or between the advanced and industrialized nations and those of the underdeveloped Third World, many of which are Muslim. Among the most important lessons to be learned from the failure of this approach is that backward-oriented dreams are unnatural and contrary to the laws of motion that govern life, time, space, thought, and possibility. Moreover, insisting on this type of thought and approach when it comes to reform entails insistence on the results of the approach: backwardness, decline, and defeat in the face of a barrage of foreign ideas.

The Ummah must find a new path to tread, and the intellectual and political leadership must make a serious attempt to find ways and means of reform. But what is this new way? And what is this new approach? What is at its core? What are its characteristics? How can it be tested so that we may know that it will be better than what preceded it, and that it will succeed where the others failed?

In order to answer these questions, we first have to understand this phenomenon. How did it begin? How, when, and why did the decline first set in? How did the situation degenerate? Surely an understanding of the malady itself, its beginnings and its symptoms, and then its progress as it infected the corpus of Islam and its history is an essential prerequisite to understanding the cure and its attributes. By means of such an understanding, we may determine the kind of effort required for reform, the priorities of such an effort, and the plans for its implementation.

### **The Approach of Contemporary Islamic *Aṣālah***

As its name indicates, this is an approach based on Islam in terms of its objectives, beliefs, values, and ideas. This is because the Ummah for which growth, positive action, and reform are intended is Islamic in its beliefs, values, and intellectual and psychological makeup. Thus

there is no way to motivate it if this basic truth about its personality, hidden strengths, and motives is ignored.

Clearly, it is not enough to state categorically that Islam is the essence of the approach and the solution, because Islam constitutes a part of both the imitative historical approach and the contemporary Islamic *aṣālah* approach. It is therefore essential that the distinguishing features of the latter be defined.

These features may be sought in the contemporary aspect and the integrity of the proposed Islamic approach. This means that the solution will be derived from Islamic beliefs, values, and inclinations as they reflect on the Ummah's contemporary circumstances and its standing issues. It also means understanding what those circumstances require as regards time and place in relation to Islam's heritage and experience in its earliest age on the one hand, and in terms of the significance of quantitative and qualitative change in human life on the other. This differs from the imitative solutions in that the solution based on contemporary Islamic *aṣālah* comes as an enunciation of the Ummah's needs, and as an answer based on the values, concepts, and objectives of Islam, to the challenges confronting it. In this way, the Ummah and its potentials are placed in a position of leadership, and through its values and objectives the Ummah may best direct the future of humanity.

Our understanding of "contemporary *aṣālah*" or dealing with contemporary circumstances from the starting-point of the Ummah's Islamic character, means, to begin with, "comprehensiveness." This, in turn, means understanding the theories and applications of the early period of Islam with all their dimensions of time and place. This also entails a thorough understanding of Islam's objectives and higher purposes and the proper relationship between them. This is what is to serve as the foundation for all ummatic interaction with contemporary life and society, so that the Ummah may assume a position of leadership as regards other civilizations.

Contemporary *aşālah* implies ability, technical experience, and sound methodology. It also means an academic and intellectual approach based on knowledge of the laws of nature and experience. The experience referred to here is that which springs from real issues, problems, and possibilities as viewed from the perspective of Islamic thought, principles, purposes, values, and teachings. By means of a methodology based on academic and practical comprehensiveness, it should be possible to make the desired intellectual and civilizational transition from pastoral, agricultural, and simple trading societies to the world of automation, communication and unending movement, one which is characterized by change in its potentialities and capabilities, its wealth and production, and in the requirements and responsibilities of individuals, groups, and political, social, and economic systems. In this way the challenges, dangers, and opportunities from which the world has begun both to benefit and suffer can be met.

There is therefore no escaping the need to think about overall and comprehensive approaches or of following the movements and social dealings of human groupings. This, above all, means that there must be a complete understanding of, and concentration on, the higher purposes of the Shari'ah and on its general principles, values, and fundamental teachings. These must become the starting point for contemporary Islamic social thought and for the arrangement of its institutions, organizations, and the regulations that direct and guide its movement. If these goals are realized, Islamic society will remain distinguished by justice, *shūrà*, solidarity, brotherhood, and all the other values held dear by Islam.

In order to achieve the goal of contemporary Islamic *aşālah* the methodology of research in Islamic studies must be restructured so that it proceeds from experience derived from practical situations related to Islam and its higher purposes, values, and societal and civilizational precepts. What this entails is the reunification of the two branches of education on all levels: the spiritual, with its stress on values, and the technical, with its stress on application.

Attention also must be paid to Islamic approaches and philosophy in every branch of learning, particularly the humanities and the social sciences.

In the final analysis, contemporary Islamic *aṣālah* will lead to a reordering of priorities and a restructuring of methodology and thought so that the means for sound Islamic education will be provided. Moreover, a reconstruction of institutions, organizations, social systems, and political institutions will also take place, so that complementarity and sound progression will propel society towards a constructive reorganization on the basis of Islamic values and purposes.

The approach taken by contemporary Islamic *aṣālah* must include two factors if it is to have an effective role in the leadership and reform of human civilization. Based on the study of historical civilizational change, these factors are: the impetus of a positive religious outlook and preeminence in effective thought.

In the early days of Islam this came about through the pure Islamic *'aḳīdah* (creed) and the supremacy of Islamic thought. Such a combination gave rise to many remarkable accomplishments in the first generation of Muslims: the severing of the pagan Arab trade routes, military and diplomatic genius at the battles of Khandaq and Ḥudaybiyah, the conquest of Makkah, the amazing crossing of the Syrian desert prior to the decisive battle with the Byzantines at Yarmūk, the genius in maintaining the various *dūwāns*, framing policies, establishing organizations, building mosques as schools and training centers, and the dissemination of knowledge and scientific lore. All of this speaks eloquently of the Ummah's cultural superiority at that early stage of its history when it was surrounded by corrupt and failing civilizations and barbarian bedouins.

The same was true of the European Renaissance, for it was driven by a positive new religious outlook (the Protestant reformation) dedicated to an effective Christian worldview aimed at erasing the superstition and ignorance of the Middle Ages. This, combined with the reform of European thought, which until that time had been shackled

by literal interpretations of fabulous tales derived from biblical sources, proved to be a potent mixture. What had happened in the early days of Islam, the joining together of a constructive religious outlook and effective and superior thought, also happened in Europe and resulted in a similar development: the founding of a new civilization, that of Renaissance Europe. The approach of contemporary *aṣālah* is based on these two factors as well.

Thus, emphasizing religious reform to the exclusion of sound methodology will not benefit the contemporary Islamic movement. Moreover, Westernized secularists will not succeed if they are only concerned with the issue of thought and its brilliant achievements. Rather, both elements must be combined, and the two camps must unite to bring about the needed elements for *khilāfah* and the establishment of a new civilization.

The process of bringing the religious and the secular elements together is, from the Islamic point of view, a restoration of the link between reason and revelation, or between the role of the mind in appreciating (comprehending and interpreting) revelation and guiding the mind by means of the revelation's objectives, its comprehensive and universal outlook, and its living and civilizational values. Thus, the joining of the two wings in the pursuit of reform is an intellectual process in its methodology and style. In other words, the crisis faced by the Ummah at the present time is one of thought.

It is only natural, then, that the call to the proper approach, the explanation of what that approach and its priorities should be, and the plans for its implementation should be made by the Ummah's intellectuals, writers, and concerned social and political leaders. These people must strive to clarify the picture, to make the Ummah aware of the problem, and to plant the seeds of reform so that these may grow and eventually bear fruit. It may sometimes seem that the road is a winding one. This, however, is the case in every beginning and new undertaking. Although the beginning may be difficult, people have never chosen paths simply for the ease of passage these may afford them. On



the contrary, paths are chosen for the reason that they lead to those objectives for which people set out on the road in the first place.

## **The Historical Roots of the Crisis**

### **Change in the Political Base:**

#### **Bedouins, Infighting, and the Fall of the *Khilāfah***

It should be quite clear from the preceding analysis that the Islamic solution must be applied if the Ummah is ever to resolve the crisis of its debilitation, factiousness, backwardness, and lack of civilization. The opening pages of this work briefly sketched the Ummah's efforts to extricate itself from the crisis and to institute reform when it found itself face to face with modern Western culture and forced to taste the bitterness of defeat at its hands. For the first time, the Ummah was confronted by a decidedly destructive enemy which threatened its entire civilization. In the foregoing pages, we reviewed how the Ummah has failed repeatedly in its attempts to liberate itself from the challenge of Western influence. As a result of the preceding analysis and what we see today, we have come to look at contemporary Islamic *aṣālah* as the only way to deliver the Ummah from its present woes and to free it from the vicious circle in which it finds itself enveloped. It is therefore all the more important that we understand the nature of the crisis and the axis on which it revolves. Only if that is accomplished will we be able to penetrate to the heart of the crisis. Indeed, until now, it has been our ignorance of the nature of this crisis that has hampered us from evaluating our performance as a civilization and maintaining a course of progress over the centuries.

In such an undertaking, we must be ready to plumb the depths and to ignore the superficial (regardless of the defects in our upbringing), the shortcomings in our thinking, and our trepidations with regard to what we hold, legitimately or otherwise, to be sacred. Undoubtedly, we have

been influenced by the long popular, political, and intellectual struggles that have taken place over the centuries and that rarely, if ever, show themselves for what they really were, or are. Moreover, these influences persist beneath the surface of our caution about what we hold sacred, and thus paralyze our minds and souls, and prevent us from thinking seriously, from pondering these matters, and from wisely using our intellect in ways that lead to true accomplishment.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to consider our present condition and every aspect of our long history. We must examine these closely in order to acquire a proper understanding of the situation and to distinguish between what is truly sacred and what is not. We must also avoid the futile trap of attempting to assign responsibility for our failures to others.

The first sign of the Ummah's emerging crisis was the *fitnah* (infighting) which broke out in a series of destructive civil wars within the Islamic state. The third *khalīfah*, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, was martyred during these wars, as was his successor 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib. Eventually the *khilāfah* came to an end and was replaced by the profligacy, despotism, and tribalism of the new rulers of the Ummah, the Umayyah royalty.

The infighting that ultimately resulted in the fall of the *khilāfah* is such an important event in the history of the Ummah that it should not be passed over until we have gained a correct understanding of it, of what caused it, and of what it engendered. We need this information because the events of this period continue, even in our own day, to influence the Ummah's behavior.

The most important factor in the infighting was the unnoticed and inevitable change in the political power base from which the leadership of the *khilāfah* derived its legitimacy. Because the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) constituted the armies and echelons for the power base of the Prophet's state, they also performed the same function for the *khilāfah* with all that this implies as regards standards of quality, inclination, training, wisdom, and morals.

During the sequence of events that included challenges by the contemporary Persian and Eastern Roman empires, the door was open for Arab bedouin tribes, still imbued with their ethnocentricity and prejudice, to join the Muslim armies. While the numbers of the new bedouin recruits increased, the numbers of the veteran Companions decreased, for many were martyred during the early conquests. This fact made it possible for the bedouins to preserve and maintain, in addition to the main teachings of Islam, all of the prejudices and ethnic biases of the desert, namely, all of those elements which the care and upbringing of the Prophet had managed to erase from the hearts and minds of his Companions.

Thus the political foundations of the *khilāfah* underwent drastic change due to the ascendancy of these bedouins. The purely Islamic values, objectives, and criteria that had been taught by the Prophet were no longer the guiding forces of the new armies or of the new politics. The inevitable result of such a development was infighting and the eventual fall of the *khilāfah*, which was replaced with the power of the tribes and the ethnocentric and despotic tribalists of the Umayyah royalty.

It was also quite natural that the religious and political leadership in Makkah and Madīnah would not last for more than a century, and that the efforts of Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī, ‘Abd Allah ibn al Zubayr, Muḥammad Dhū al Nafs al Zakīyah, Zayd ibn ‘Alī, and others would come to naught in the bloody civil wars against the overwhelming bedouin majority. As time passed, great numbers of Persians, Byzantines, Indians, Turks, Africans, and others entered the fold of Islam without the benefit of a complete Islamic upbringing to destroy their old prejudices and pre-Islamic concepts. This missing element soon caused many members of the Ummah to deviate from purely Islamic practices, concepts, and methods. In short, when the bedouin tribal majority came to power, the political power base changed and the Ummah was subjected to a mixed pre-Islamic and Islamic style of leadership and politics.

## **The Rift between Political and Religious Leadership**

If the bedouin domination of the army that led to the fall of the *khilāfah* and its replacement with the Umayyah royalty was the first cause of change and deviation, then the subtle differences that came about as a result of this overt change were decidedly more insidious. Essentially a rift occurred in the ranks of the social leadership between the political and religious intellectual leaders. This rift became one of the most important factors in the dissipation of the incredible energies so recently released by the force of Islam.

Following the establishment of ethnic and dictatorial forces in the Islamic social system, the religious intellectual leaders located in the Hijaz refused to accept the reality and the reasons for the new changes. Instead, they resisted on the basis of dogma and thought, as opposed to ethnicity, all tribal forces, including those of the Umayyah branch of the Quraysh.

When the century-long civil wars had exhausted the religious intelligentsia (who had been unable to gain the support of the masses whose thinking and upbringing were decidedly tribalist and ethnic in nature), its members retreated and sought refuge far from the political leadership, abandoning all attempts to mount any significant opposition. The strategy of the new political leadership was to contain the religious intelligentsia and to force its members to do as they were told by applying increasing amounts of pressure. Thus the lot of the great ulama, especially those four who founded the schools of legal thought, consisted of torture and exemplary punishment. Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) died in prison because he refused to accept a position as a judge in a regime that was not committed to Islam. When Imam Mālik (d. 175/795) opined in favor of the invalidity of *ṭalāq* pronounced under duress, he was beaten so badly that his hand was paralyzed.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Imam

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<sup>2</sup> Under the 'Abbāsiyah *khilāfah* subjects were required to take an oath of allegiance in which they swore that if they ever broke their allegiance to the *khalīfah* then their wives would stand divorced. Thus,

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) was forced to undergo a great deal of suffering for his opposition to the political ambitions of those in power. Imam al Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) was forced to flee from the authorities in Baghdad after he was brought there in chains from Yemen. Finally, he had to take refuge in Egypt, far from the center of power.

The rift between the Ummah's political and religious intellectual leadership represented the beginning of the decline of Muslim power, of the rent in the fabric of Muslim society, and of the crisis in Islamic thought and institutions. All of these factors contributed to throwing the door open to corruption and decline. Gradually Islam was no longer able to maintain its vitality. As a result, only the remnants of its spiritual teachings have survived over the centuries. The rest of its glorious civilization has perished.

The rift between the religious intellectual and the political leadership was the underlying cause of all the maladies that would later beset the Ummah. This bitter rift led to the removal of the intellectual leadership from all practical and social responsibility within the Ummah. This, in turn, became the most important reason for the paralysis of the Muslim mind, which literally retreated into the confines of the mosque. There, its only concern was with tomes of primarily theoretical lore dealing essentially with descriptive and lexical approaches to the interpretation of texts from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The intellectual leadership's only other concern was its vigilance in preventing the political leadership and its agents from corrupting or misinterpreting the sacred texts in order to justify their actions. As a result, the Ummah is even now incapable of competing with other civilizations on either a material or intellectual level. In fact, its very existence is threatened by contemporary Western civilization.

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Mālik's *fatwā* absolving one under duress of the consequences of pronouncing divorce was, under the circumstances, an important political statement. (Trans.)

This sorry state of affairs led to what is widely known as the closing of the door to *ijtihād*, although in truth, *ijtihād* never had a door to close. Rather, "closing the door" was a metaphor for the stagnation of thought based on the political leadership's loss of commitment to Islam because of its preference for perpetuating its authority and power through despotism and for putting everything it touched into the service of its, and its agents', own interests. All of this served only to drive the *ulama* deeper into the recesses of their mosques, far from the continuing changes.

Secondly, the rift led to the political leadership being deprived of a viable intellectual base capable of serving it in the face of changing circumstances and providing it with ideas, policy guidelines, and workable alternatives. It should come as no surprise, then, that the political leadership of the Islamic world has, generally speaking, been despotic and dictatorial in nature. Rarely, if ever, has there been scope for *shūrā*, a Qur'anic term denoting the participation of the masses in determining the Ummah's affairs. This being the case, there is also nothing strange about the way in which the Ummah faded and then disappeared as a world civilization with its own unique characteristics, thought, and institutions.

It should not be difficult for readers to appreciate the kind of factionalism and political disintegration that afflicted the body politic of the Ummah after the fall of the *khilāfah*. Readers must understand, however, the difference between the power of civilizational vitality exhibited by Islam in its early period and the great accumulations of wealth and territory that came about later as a result of that early vitality, accumulations which were partly due to the imminent collapse of the neighboring Persian and Byzantine empires. These outward signs of vitality came about despite the decay that had set into the Muslim Ummah, for the loss of vitality we refer to was a relative loss. In fact, the Ummah of that time still retained a great deal of its vitality. It is therefore important that readers not overlook what might otherwise be hidden by outward circumstances; the Ummah's strength was sapped.

## **The Cruz of the Crisis and the Future of the Ummah**

### **A Crisis of Thought not a Crisis of Belief**

In spite of the continual ill-fated attempts to apply foreign or traditional solutions to its problems, the Ummah's understanding of an Islamic outlook has remained unclear. This is perhaps due to its general misconception concerning thought and belief, i.e., viewing thought and belief as one and the same thing, absolute and eternally sacred. In fact, this misconception is a direct result of what our enemies have circulated among us via their control of culture, education, and the media. In particular, the concerted efforts of those engaged in orientalist studies about Islam or the Muslim world have greatly increased our level of confusion. One factor contributing to the lack of clarity in contemporary Islamic vision is the psychological impediments that have left the Muslim mind as tame as a household pet. In other words, it does not have enough courage to analyze its intellectual legacy or what it holds as sacred. As a result, it cannot understand what is really important, distinguish between what is fundamental and absolute and what is temporary and limited; or even appreciate what is essential and what is a matter of performance and style. The fears, the lack of self-confidence, and the misgivings that we have planted in ourselves make it impossible for us to look honestly at the events, and the accompanying factors and shortcomings, of our past.

The Muslim mind, therefore, has remained a prisoner of those concepts and basic approaches that doom it to remain bound by past mistakes and digressions and bereft of the ability to penetrate, distinguish, and amend its own course, or to plumb the depths of the issues confronting it. Thus it is unable to boldly chart a course for the future, for it sits bound and blindfolded in a dusty corner of the distant past.

If the methodology of thought does not undergo change, and if its approaches are not rectified, the Muslim mind will remain unable to take a critical or penetrating look at anything. Instead, it will continue to gravitate from one

failed solution to the next. There can be little doubt that continuing along this path can only lead to further disintegration and collapse.

To add to the burdens of the wretched Muslim mind, the Ummah's intellectual and political leaders, whether by design or otherwise, despaired of ever having a complete monopoly on leadership. What each group sought, then, was to force its own kind of terrorism on the Ummah. Regardless of what its intentions might have been, the political leadership practiced a sort of material terrorism, whereas the intellectual leadership perpetrated a sort of psychological terrorism. These two groups engaged in this type of activity in order to ensure the continued pacification, weakness, and subjugation of the Muslims vis-a-vis the leadership in their private and public lives. What is so laughably regrettable, however, is that this terrorism reached a point where even the intellectual and political leadership themselves were negatively affected. The final result was that the infirmity of the Ummah caused the collapse of the leadership's powerbase and left it unable to defend itself in the face of the onslaught of foreign colonial powers.

Owing to the fogginess of the Muslim vision and the way that it has been hampered, we find that Muslims either accept their past with all its deviations and peculiarities of thought, society, and organization, or they reject it, along with all its inherent values, entirely. Over the centuries, this vision has grown increasingly weaker as the Ummah's personality has been beset by a series of devastating illnesses that have left it unable to distinguish between truth and dogma, ends and means, religion and folklore, values and commonplace events, and concepts and imitation.

In essence, the Muslim mind was divided between groups that called upon it either to reject or to accept everything, without differentiating between historical fact and fiction or distinguishing between the means and the end. Some groups within the Ummah even claimed that peoples and societies whose material resources have



suffered are actually the victims of immaterial or abstract crises.

### **Issues of Thought and Means Versus Issues of Values and Ends**

It should be clear that no one could possibly object to the values, principles, and beliefs which form the foundations of Islam. Still, the enemies of Islam do not speak of these matters. According to them, when one speaks of Islam one speaks of fatalism and tyranny, political absolutism, intellectual and psychological shortcomings, the excesses of the slave trade, and the degradation of women. Such people also proclaim that Islamic beliefs are no more than the myths of Muslims and the history of their mistakes and their beliefs are really their customs and traditions, as well as signs of their ignorance, superstition, and prejudice.

However, what we must remember is that the peoples who accepted Islam did so at a time when their nations were in decline. Thus whatever those peoples achieved thereafter was the result of the precedence of Islam and its principles and approaches. On the other hand, whatever evil ways those people fell into came about in spite of Islam and its values and can be traced back to the practices of their former civilizations. Had it not been for the civilizing effect of Islam and its values and principles, the Muslims would undoubtedly have involved themselves in far worse sorts of injustice, corruption, and ignorance.

The important thing for us to realize at this juncture is that the shortcomings in the lives of Muslims are in no way attributable to the values, objectives, and purposes of Islam, but rather to the way that Muslims think, perceive, and reason. Thus when we speak of reform, we are really speaking of thought and the Muslim mind. What really needs addressing is how the Muslim mind applies the values and principles of Islam in society and organizations, and in specific situations and under various circumstances.

After all, there is a difference between the principles of mutual agreement and solidarity and the arrangements and procedures used to realize these principles (or those which

in fact allow these principles to be lost or wasted). There is also a difference between the higher purposes of the Shari'ah and the policies framed to ensure them, as well as between the principles and values of the Shari'ah and the procedures and arrangements for carrying them out. Things like values, principles, and ends are among the universal laws of existence, which, in spite of limitations of time and place, become parts of a sound human character. Procedures, policies, approaches, and practical measures, on the other hand, are very much linked to the exigencies of time and place.

What all of this means is that the difference between beliefs, principles, and values, on the one hand, and thought, understanding, and application (or its lack or imperfection), on the other, is a very basic issue. If ever we hope to put our future course right and effect any sort of meaningful reform, we must be clear on this issue. In the final analysis, this confirms that the Ummah's crisis is essentially one of thought rather than of belief, one of method and not of meaning, and that the issue involved is one of means and not of ends. This, then, is the proper place from which to begin a serious study and, in so doing, to put an end to the needless confusion about pretentious claims and timeworn traditions.

### **Intellectual Isolation:**

#### **The Cause of *Taqīd* and Backwardness**

As time passed, the crisis in the Muslim mind became more and more difficult to ignore, for the gulf between theory and practice became more exaggerated. Muslim objectives took on the aspect of unattainable hopes and fanciful wishes, and Muslim accomplishments became little more than history and memories of times past. When control of the Ummah passed into the hands of its enemies, the bankruptcy of Muslim society and its political leadership was self-evident. The Muslim intelligentsia also suffered the same fate, and to the same degree, for by that time it was no longer competent when it came to facing the challenges thrown its way by the foreign cultural invasion.

The civilizational horizons attained by the Ummah in the past were clearly the result of the overwhelming impetus provided by the early generations of Islam. Yet the spark had to fade eventually, and the movement had to come to a standstill sometime. Times and circumstances changed. But the Ummah truly lost both its way and its ability to renew itself when its political leadership became separated from its intellectual leadership. This split so encouraged literalism, *taqlīd*, indulgence, and superstition that they soon became the order of the day. The Ummah lost its ability to give birth to new ideas, to update its institutions, and to produce the planning, means, and policies essential to further progress at the civilizational level.

Since the time of this separation, the Ummah has lived on the ruins of the broad societal foundations laid by the early generations of Muslims. Yet at the same time, the agents of political and intellectual decay have spread throughout the Ummah and its leadership, a trend that has resulted in the virtual disintegration of the historical Islamic social structure.

The intellectual leadership, due to its isolation (often an isolation imposed upon it by the forces of political authority), rarely if ever exercised its social responsibilities. Instead, it devoted itself to studying religious texts, cultivating an oasis of religious sciences, and preserving the intricacies of the Arabic (as the medium of all religious texts and sciences) spoken in classical times. These activities led to the establishment by these people of the textual sciences of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the Arabic language. The science of fiqh was limited from its inception to the regulation of individual practice in formal acts of devotion. As such, it never developed a perspective beyond that of the daily circumstances of the early generations of Muslims. Likewise, the practical science of fiqh was never applied to the doctrinal sciences (*'aqā'id*), so that these became, generally speaking, theoretical and speculative in nature. Thus the doctrinal sciences never played a significant role in guiding the Ummah.

Even the major principles of Islam which had guided the Muslim mind and the Ummah in its thought and deeds in the early generations were divided into two distinct sets. The first, and by far the most important, consisted of those principles related to the preservation and interpretation of the textual sources of Islam. The second set, deemed secondary in status and relegated to insignificance and neglect, were those principles related to the rules and approaches essential to analysis of social conditions and the circumstances and variables of life in society.

Owing to this division, the principles dealing with texts were developed into highly complex sciences, while the "secondary" principles and all the fields of knowledge related to them were essentially ignored. It was for the above reasons that no social sciences, in the proper sense, ever developed from Islamic principles and approaches. This explains why no Islamic economic, educational, political, communications, or administrative sciences were ever developed. Instead, these subjects were mentioned by the classical scholars of Islam, if ever, only in passing or as casual asides or observations. Thus matters like establishing cadres within Muslim society, organizing it, and framing policies for its development were never anything more than *ad hoc* and wholly arbitrary, concocted in reaction to fluctuating circumstances. The differences between casual observations made on social phenomenon and the use of formal social sciences is that formal studies are structural, begin from reality and an understanding of nature, and then proceed to objectives, principles, and values. The social sciences are regulated by real results and are in no need, as so often happens, of hiding behind catch words and empty phrases.

The crisis in the Muslim mind is one related to the achievement of Islam's higher objectives and the embodiment of Islamic values. It is therefore a crisis of thought in its essence and its approach, and a crisis of the methodology, which the Ummah lacks, in the social sciences. The crisis of Muslim thought is one of the establishment of those social sciences that can assist the Ummah with its

thought, organization, institutions, and policies. When we speak of the social sciences, we refer to the fields of methodological study, without reference to any specific (Western, Leftist, Eastern or whatever) theories or schools. Certainly the Muslim mind, with its complete and comprehensive sources of knowledge, will have much of value to contribute to such sciences and disciplines.

It is certainly premature to speak in a detailed fashion of the issues and problems of the Islamic social sciences. Rather, these are things that, with the passing of time, will become more apparent. Regardless of the formula we begin with, the point is to make a beginning from what is already known, to benefit from what humanity has already achieved in the relevant fields. The important thing here is that the starting-point be distinguished by its *aṣālah*, maturity, and openness, so that progress may begin far removed from the restraints of those traditions which have held the Ummah captive for so long.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The Traditional Methodology of Islamic Thought: Assessment and Critique**

It should be apparent from the foregoing discussion that the traditional solutions, be they historical or foreign, have failed because they do not represent the proper approach to reform. The crisis of the Ummah is not one of capabilities and resources, but rather one of concepts. This conceptual crisis is not a crisis of beliefs, values, or principles, but rather a long-standing crisis of thought and methodology brought on by a change in the Ummah's political foundations and the resultant distancing of the intellectual leadership from any sort of societal responsibility. This single development ended all intellectual and scientific growth, and rendered the Ummah incapable of keeping up with change, development, and challenges.

This inability to keep abreast of the march of civilization is the core of the crisis. But the situation will not be rectified until several other matters are attended to: until the course of the Muslim mind is set aright; the ways by which Muslim thought approaches various issues are rectified, and its methodology is restructured in a way that will enable it to deal with events, challenges, relationships, and all other aspects of social life. If the Ummah's methodology is sound, its thought will be capable of providing it with the energy required for reformational efforts and for confronting the challenges that face it.

For this reason, we must take a closer look at the methodology of the Muslim mind and thought to understand them better and to recognize their shortcomings and failures more easily. Thereafter, we should be able to draw some tentative conclusions about how the Muslim mind might be reformed.

### ***Al Uṣūl: Definition and Clarification***

The science of *uṣūl al fiqh* (juridical source methodology) is the historical methodology of Islamic thought. This science represents the most important component of the methodology used in the classical Islamic disciplines. Taking into account the perspective of those who have mastered this science and its branches, from the earliest generations to the present, it might also be called the traditional methodology of Islam for the reason that its perspective has always been one of passive, if not blind, acceptance.

In the early days of Islam, the broad principles and universals of this methodology reflected the nature of Islamic thought and its correlation to the religion and mission of Islam. The best example of its spirit and its creative application is to be found during the times of the *khulafā'*, a time when revelation (*wahy*) was taken as the source of guidance and direction, and when reason and *ijtihad* were used both as tools for understanding and interpreting revelation, as well as for dealing with events and developing responses and policies.

In the age of *ijtihad* that followed, when the first schism occurred between the Ummah's political and intellectual leadership, Muslim thinkers and scholars were still in close touch with the spirit of the message and the methods of the earliest age of Islam. As a result, they wrote and thought on the basis of the early methodology. However, as their political isolation grew, they began to shun all but academic pursuits, and taught and wrote on the most personalized aspects of the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, such as worship and transactions, and ignored issues related to politics, government, social organization, and the general

nature of the group and society. As a result, the source methodology they used became conditioned by the purposes it served, while conforming to the circumstances under which it was developed, and over which the scholars of Islam had no control.

Even so, the general principles of their methodology remained open to development and real contribution. But continued development, based upon the spirit of innovation as opposed to *taqlid*, became the responsibility of the generations to follow. Only in the spirit of progress would it be possible to deal correctly with the methodology, to derive benefit from it, and to build upon it in order to meet the challenges presented by changing conditions. Such a spirit would allow the methodology to evolve in a positive and effective manner and thereby contribute to life outside the personal realm. This spirit would also allow Islamic thought to preserve its comprehensive and original nature, as well as its *ijtihad* and the complementarity of its sources and disciplines.

It will be advantageous here to survey briefly the universals of the traditional methodology of Islamic thought as we know it today. This will be followed by a discussion of some of the more pivotal aspects of that criticism and of the more important issues of that methodology.

The methodology of Islamic thought as we know it today is represented by the science of *uṣūl al fiqh* which, in turn, is represented in its general principles and axioms by the rational foundations and basic precepts of the Islamic mind. However, *uṣūl al fiqh*, as a discipline, was developed by scholars of the successor generation (*tābi'īn*) and those immediately following them (*tab' u al tābi'īn*), generations that came after the age of *al khulafā' al rāshidīn*. Thus the work, *al Ritsālah*, by Imam al Shāfi'ī is considered the earliest academic articulation of Islamic thought methodology in general, and of the science of *uṣūl al fiqh* in particular.

The basic principles upon which this science and methodology are based may be classified into two types: primary and secondary. The primary foundations are composed essentially of studies related to the Qur'an, the



Sunnah, *ijmā'* (the consensus of the learned), and *qiyās* (analogy). The secondary foundations consist of studies dealing with those sources of evidence on which the scholars differed as to how and under what conditions they are to be applied (*al adillah al mukhtalif fihā*), sources which are used in the main as the basis for the process of *ijtihād*. Among the most important of these secondary sources are: *istihsān* (the more reasonable analogy), *al maṣāliḥ al mursalah* (the wider interests of the community), *sadd al dharā'i* (the obstruction of ostensibly legitimate means to illegitimate ends), *'urf* (custom and legal usage), the sayings of the *ṣaḥābah*, and the practices of the people of Madīnah.

### **Shari'ah and Non-Shari'ah Sciences**

On the basis of this division, we find that all Islamic sciences and disciplines since the first generation have been classified as either Shari'ah or non-Shari'ah sciences. From the earliest generations, the distinguishing characteristic of the Shari'ah sciences has been their concentration on studies related to legal interpretations of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It was on this basis that the sciences of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, of *fiqh*, theology, and the classical Arabic language developed into the Shari'ah sciences. The inclusion of the sciences of the classical Arabic language under the general heading of the Shari'ah sciences was due to the fact that Arabic is an essential element in all studies of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

This division or separation in the foundations of the methodology of Islamic thought explains the position of the theological sciences (*'ilm al kalām*) on the lowest rung of the Shari'ah sciences. Although the central concern of the theological sciences is the study of Islamic beliefs and doctrines, their intrusion into the realms of comparative religious studies and their infiltration by Aristotelian logic and Greek philosophy gave them a low priority, and left them open to much acrimonious debate and division in the ranks of all those scholars who dealt with them.

Thus theology remained a source of weakness in the Ummah's thought. As a result, the Ummah was unable to use it as a guide to its actions and deliberations in the domains of its social and civilizational organization and development. Another result was the dichotomy between the spheres of the legal sciences, with their orientation toward the life of the individual, and the instructive and universal orientation of the theological sciences. Without the complementarity of these sciences, no comprehensive Islamic vision developed, and so both sciences developed incompletely, a result which led to their later inability to keep abreast of the changes and challenges faced by the Ummah.

At this point in our discussion it will be necessary to look at each of the basic issues in the framework of traditional Islamic thought. This will enable us to understand the reasons for its shortcomings and also how best to deal with these issues.

The first sources of Islam are the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The most important qualifications for their study under the traditional methodology are at once historical, theoretical, and linguistic knowledge. All traditional Islamic studies hinged on the theoretical, while all of the other vital elements associated with these two sources (i.e., interpretation and relevance to actual situations) remained of secondary importance. The utilization of these elements depended on chance, the background of the scholar, and the scholar's personal way of life.

This realization helps us to understand the reason for the domination of petrified lexical methodology in all the Islamic sciences and studies, and the demise of ijtiḥād. In addition, it helps us to appreciate more fully the abilities of a handful of brilliant scholars over the centuries who performed ijtiḥād despite the long stagnation of the institution itself. Their brilliance can surely be traced to their exposure to political and social life which enabled them to excel in the contemporary sciences, to understand the situation of the Ummah as a whole, and to look objectively at problems as opposed to dealing with them from a purely theoretical or lexical perspective.

Another relevant observation is that the traditional studies of the Qur'an and the Sunnah often confuse the one with the other and actually dispute each other's positions and the ways in which they are interrelated. It is almost impossible to discern in these studies any sort of distinguishing role or any particular contribution for either of them. This is why contemporary Islamic studies have been overshadowed by traditional historical *taqlid* and the concept of abrogation (*naskh*), with the result that the wisdom of the higher purposes of the Shari'ah and the concept of a relevant and responsive fiqh were lost. In addition, the static intellectual atmosphere resulted in the confusion of such elements as time and place dimensions, and the position of specific and contextualized texts in relation to the general and universal meanings of the original revelation, and to the nature of humanity and the universe.

Such a state of affairs is contrary to what we find in the record of the Sunnah itself or to what we know of the lives of the *khulafā'* and their contemporaries. Thus, for example, the study of the Sunnah was transformed into a complex study of the formalities of transmitting and relaying hadiths. This is not to deny the importance of these studies, but to point out that centuries have passed since these matters were essentially settled, classified, and codified. The tragedy is that the meaning and relevance of these same hadiths have not received nearly the same amount of scholarly attention.

Likewise, if we look closely at the fundamental concept of *ijmā'*, we find that its purpose as defined in the traditional *uṣūl* studies is not consensus in the sense of the dominant or majority opinion, but rather as an absolute consensus leaving no room for disagreement or opposition. Thus, those who have studied *ijmā'* have realized that it is virtually impossible for it to be used in any matter of either doctrinal or juridical significance, save for those fundamental teachings specifically mentioned in the sources. Of course, in those circumstances, where a clear text from the sources is available, there is no need for *ijmā'*!

Moreover, the kind of traditional *ijmā'* defined by the scholars of *uṣūl al fiqh* is never referred to by anyone other than certain groups of specialized academicians in their studies of the Qur'an and Hadith. Thus *ijmā'*, even if it ever were to be achieved, is essentially a theoretical issue with no practical bearing on contemporary Muslim needs. It is out of step with our ways of thinking and has no relevance to our present situation. This situation has, in addition to its theoretical and academic dimensions, real social and political dimensions, for it makes *ijmā'* a phenomenon that perpetuates and encourages the rift between the Ummah's intellectual and political leadership. The result is that society as a whole suffers. This, in practical terms, spells an end to the true meaning of the Ummah or the Muslim community that is based on the harmony and legitimacy of the two leadership groups.

Thus *ijmā'*, as conceived by scholars of *uṣūl*, is purely theoretical and represents no practical or reliable source and no real expression of Islam's social or political dynamics. As such, it plays no significant part in the politics, government, or legislation in contemporary Islamic society.

Muslims should seek to establish another type of *ijmā'*, one based on *ijtihād* and *shūrā*, one that draws in a major way from the idea of consulting groups of qualified people and those leaders of society committed to Islam irrespective of their various political or intellectual leanings. The needed *ijmā'* is the one that also draws from the idea of majority rule, the majority as represented by its true and responsible leadership. This is the kind of *ijmā'* that is needed when the Ummah cannot agree unanimously on an issue. In this manner, we may easily differentiate between theoretical studies based on personal opinion (especially on issues dealing with transactions, organizations, and public policy) and politically and legally binding legislation that affects Muslim life in practical, conceptual, and ethical ways.

The fourth primary foundation is *qiyās*, the exercise of reason in regard to events about which no textual injunctions have come to us in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Its purpose is to establish similarities between the event in

question and one that occurred in the lifetime of the Prophet, in the belief that their similarity will allow the application of the same ruling. However, there is one major qualification to this practice: the general social circumstances in both instances must be the same. If anything is different, it must be ascertained whether the difference(s) are minimal and limited to details rather than fundamental and demanding of attention. If the differences are found to be inconsequential, a parallel may be drawn with the historical event, and the same ruling may be applied.

From the time of Islam's greatest expansion, during the *khilāfah* of 'Umar, comprehensive and sweeping changes have taken place. Thus, such a limited form of *qiyās* as described above is no longer practical or suitable for dealing with contemporary problems and changes. This was realized by certain of the classical scholars themselves, so that they moved toward another option, *istihsān*. This methodological tool first gained currency with the *fiqh* scholars in Iraq, Persia, and Central Asia. Moreover, the reason why *istihsān* first appeared in those territories was due to social developments during the period of the *khulafā'*, the expansion of Islam into Persia, and the establishment of the 'Abbāsīyah empire. This period was a time of massive demographic, social, and political change on a scale never before seen in the early days of Islam or in the Arabian peninsula where the political role of the scholars had decreased to insignificance after the passing of the first *khulafā'*.

*Istihsān* heads the list of secondary sources in the science of *uṣūl al fiqh*. Its development indicates clearly the changing legislative and social needs of society, especially in the more developed urban situations in lands where pre-Islamic civilizations had flourished. The traditional form of *qiyās* and its method of comparing one incident or event to another that resembled it in certain (but not all) aspects was far too simplistic. Such a method was actually misleading, for it distracted scholars from seeking the true causes of the problems confronting society and led them instead to base their legal rulings and judgments on circumstances that did not represent the total picture or the truth of those

situations. Hence the need for *istihṣān* was clear, for without it the legal scholar could not transcend the limited approach represented by *qiyās* and his own inability to undertake a comprehensive approach that took into account the higher purposes and priorities of the Shari'ah. Only in this way could the jurist go beyond the limited particulars of the problems that continually sprang up to confront him, and give rulings reflecting the true spirit of the Shari'ah and its higher purposes. There can be little doubt that such rulings are always better in the long run for Islam.

In order to comprehend the vital issue of understanding Islamic institutions and social change, we should note that the majority of classical jurists, particularly those given to a strict adherence to the literal, chose no other means to deal with social change other than a belated acceptance of its consequences. They had no alternative but to move beyond their literalist methodology and its constricted horizons to consider the purposes, principles, and priorities of the Shari'ah.

Among the examples of this new phenomenon was the position of such scholars concerning price regulation. Despite the existence of texts in the Sunnah that categorically rejected such regulation, and in spite of the scholars' natural inclination toward literal acceptance of everything in the Sunnah, they ruled in favor of regulation because it was obvious to them that economic injustice would ensue if they did not. Since they were unable to deal with the issue in a comprehensive way that would restore general social and economic balance, they had no alternative but to rule in favor of regulation and governmental intervention in the marketplace and, in particular, the setting of prices.

### **The Neglect of the Social Sciences**

These observations on the general lines followed by the traditional *uṣūl* and methodology, and their origins and development, clarify how the secondary *uṣūl* represented the principles and approaches of Islamic rationalism toward reality and life. However, even though these principles

represented the basis of *ijtihād* and its practical application, their being accorded only secondary importance is clearly indicative of the flaws that beset Islamic thought and methodology in general. These, then, were the landmarks on the road to the social, organizational, and cultural backwardness that eventually caused the Ummah's decline and fall.

The obvious result of the intellectual leadership's resignation (forced or otherwise) from public life was that its principles and methodological tools were never put to significant use in developing distinctly Islamic sciences of *fiṭrah* and Muslim society (on the lines of today's social sciences and humanities). As a consequence of the political turmoil experienced by the Islamic world from the times of the "great *fiṭnah*" and the murder of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān that led eventually to the establishment of the Ummawīyah dynasty, the political and intellectual leadership of the Ummah had a parting of ways. With the separation of the committed Islamic intellectual leadership from all real forms of authority, Islamic thought turned away from using its *uṣūl* for the development of sciences and disciplines dealing with the organization and well-being of society, preferring instead to focus on the spiritual and ritualistic needs of the individual Muslim.

Having considered the events that contributed to the development of Islamic thought and its methodology, we may now more fully appreciate the causes behind the failure of Islamic rationalism and why the door to true *ijtihād* and intellectual initiative was closed so early in the history of the Ummah. While there were a number of outstanding contributions in these fields, they were no more than the efforts of individuals and never constituted anything like a formal intellectual movement. This explains why we may find in the science of *fiqh* examples of profound thought about the nature and workings of society. However, these isolated thoughts may in no way be considered "Islamic social sciences," nor could they be expected to become a new trend in Islamic thought or direct the Ummah and its institutions towards solutions to its problems. Based on

what we know about the growth of Islamic thought, we can easily understand the reasons for the lack of serious intellectual studies on the general organization of society and the issues of authority, government, caliphate, and politics. Thus, the all-important questions of what constitutes the Ummah and the essence of its existence were either ignored or left to passing mention in minor works of little import.

The intellectual framework that evolved from the separation of the Ummah's political and intellectual leadership reflected on both the methodology and the content of Islamic thought, as well as on the Islamic sciences and the scope of their concern. The result of this was that all of these studies became hopelessly mired in descriptive traditionalism and literalism. This development accounts for the excessive attention of classical scholars to language and literature, and to all the learning requisite to a proper and orthodox understanding of the texts.

The resulting intellectual gulf led to a clear division in the society of the Ummah. On the one hand there was the individual and on the other there was society in general. The classical Islamic scholars made the individual the focus of their concern, especially in matters of worship, ritual, personal law, and transactions. Thus the affairs of individual Muslims were largely governed by the opinions of jurists and their legal pronouncements (*fatāwà*). The affairs of society as a whole, as well as the affairs of state, became the sole domain of royalty and the feudal hierarchy, or of the powerful and influential. These leaders and authorities were looked upon by both the common people and the scholars with outright distrust and suspicion.

The intellectual and psychological atmosphere of estrangement led the traditional scholars to have a poor and incomplete understanding of politics and society in general. Then, without the guidance and learning of the scholars, the Ummah's policies and institutions suffered. Without the intellectual leadership's input, true Islamic institutions never developed. Instead, whatever institutions did evolve fell prey to corrupt hands. Thus the concept of an ummatic



entity, of the group, the state, or society never sparked the inner conscience of the Ummah.

Another result of this gulf was a weakening of the political leadership's commitment to Islamic teachings and principles, as well as the lack of any formal or comprehensive educational or cultural programs. As the Ummah and its institutions grew weaker, so did the role of its leadership and its law, until finally the Ummah became divided into sects, tribes, serfdoms, and mutually antagonistic groupings unchecked by either religion or conscience.

Under the influence of these factors, the essence of Islamic thought and education was transformed into trepidation, compulsion, and submission. In many ways this was practiced, propagated, and encouraged, either intentionally or otherwise, by all sectors of the Ummah's political, social, and intellectual leadership.

### **The Conflict between Reason and Revelation**

Among the most important effects of the intellectual and political estrangement and confrontation was the existence of an imaginary struggle between reason and revelation. This struggle resulted in a portentous rift between the juridical sciences of *fiqh* and those of theology (*'ilm al kalām*). This rift was not limited to outward appearances or even to specialized and academic issues, for it was a serious intellectual rift that had deep-seated effects on the relationship between concepts and purposes of religion on the one hand, and between social life and institutions on the other. One result was that the sciences of theology became entangled in philosophical arguments and rational debates (more often than not over metaphysical issues related to the "world of the unseen") that had no relevance to the Islamic mind or to those issues which were of concern to it. Such intellectual acrobatics gradually exhausted the Muslim mind and blurred true Islamic vision, thus negatively affecting the Muslim intellect when it came to matters of the "seen and the unseen" (i.e., revelation, reason, faith, determinism and free will, the divine names and attributes, and a whole list of futile intellectual sophistries that contributed

nothing to the Ummah, its thought, or its faith). The result of this was that the science of fiqh, and Islamic thought in general, formulated no clear theological basis that could represent the purposes and principles enabling the Ummah to progress and develop both socially and organizationally. In this manner, the Islamic mind and thought became the prisoner of a specific and limited methodology that was incapable of growth and of keeping pace with changing realities, needs, and possibilities.

Another traditional issue of Islamic thought that represents the conditions mentioned above, including the gulf between the intellectual and political leadership, and one which has yet to be settled, is the abrogation (*naskh*) of text in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The widely held and accepted opinion on this issue is that the correct legal ruling or teaching belonged to the last revealed text, so that the previously understood meanings and rulings derived from the earlier text would be annulled. This annulment, however, did not necessarily take into account the circumstances around which the ruling revolved or the wisdom behind the earlier legislation. In this way, and despite the discrepancy between the two cases in content and circumstances, the concept of *naskh* in Islamic law became almost synonymous with the concept of abrogation in man-made legal systems in which later legislation is given precedence over earlier legislation owing to the differences in circumstances.

This concept, generally speaking, leads to the supposition that all Islamic legislation and social organization is to be patterned after the example of Madīnah during the last days of the Prophet and subsequent to the conquest of Makkah. This may be referred to as the "second Madīnan period" as distinguished from the "first Madīnan period." The first Madīnan period was characterized by fear, frailty, and deficiency, for it was a time of building amidst a hostile environment. In my opinion, the time of the Prophet can be divided into three distinct stages: the "Makkan period" (the initial phase during which an individual propagational style was used to spread Islam. This was a period in which the

fundamentals of belief and the principles of change were suggested to society at large), the "first Madīnan period," and the "second Madīnan period."

A comprehensive look at the progression of revelation and the prophetic mission will show the policies and the attempts used to deal with varying circumstances and situations while maintaining the same basic principles stemming from a single divine source. The Makkān period, as it represents the stage of propagation and reform based on new and higher principles, was concerned with the call, dialogue with fundamentals, and with generalizations. It is also for this reason that the Prophet used to emphasize to his followers never to use confrontational methods or to return open hostility with hostility. Regardless of the price they had to pay in suffering, the early Muslims were never to turn away from the basic issue: the reform of society.

Moreover this was, generally speaking, a political issue, and the only thing that can influence politicians is politics. Furthermore, a nonviolent response to violence exposes the aggressor before the conscience of the world, while the issue under contention remains a point of focus, especially for sympathy, regardless of its details.

The first Madīnan period took place before the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, at a time when the Muslims were forming their own polity in the face of conspiracies and alliances of pagan Arabian tribes with the Jews. Thus, we find that the dominant characteristics of this period were discipline and sacrifice as well as the use of force in answering force in order to make the enemies afraid and discourage them from ever again attempting to use violence against the Muslims.

The second Madīnan period, from Ḥudaybiyah to the time when the new Muslim state and society had gained absolute ascendancy over all its adversaries, was characterized by its completion of the detailed organizational and social arrangements for society and for ensuring its progress and protection. This was also a period during which the new Muslim state dealt with forbearance and understanding toward its enemies and neighbors.

Here we may note that the way things were done and the nature of legislation at the time, even though they represented a similar vision and goal, reflected policies connected to the realities of that period and stage of development. Moreover, these were aimed at influencing, directing, and bringing about fruitful change in those conditions.

In that period, any concept of action or legislation which did not take the specific nature of that action or legislation into consideration would have been the same as a crime against the thought of the Ummah, for it would have transformed the guidance of Islam into theoretical chains divorced from the surrounding actualities and circumstances and from the policies and strategies appropriate to each stage of development.

Thus the concept of *naskh* as the abrogation of the earlier by the latter in a strict academic and legalistic fashion is something which, in this day and age, cannot possibly have any sort of application outside of institutions run on strictly parliamentary lines. (The obvious reason for this is that such institutions are the only ones in which there are established guidelines for carrying out legislative decisions.) Thus, whatever is legislated subsequently on any particular issue will automatically cause the earlier legislation to become legally null and void. This, however, is an entirely different matter from the issue of interpreting a text from revelation, or turning to it for guidance in human affairs at any time and in any place.

The concept of *naskh*, as traditionally elaborated, reflects a static understanding in the methodology of Islamic thought, for it acts without taking notice of the difference between the general and universalist nature of the Qur'anic teachings as opposed to the specific and particularized treatment of subjects found in the Sunnah. The traditional concept of *naskh* also reflects a total lack of appreciation for the elements of time and place in the process of interpreting and applying texts, as well as in comparing and analyzing them. This matter is clearly illustrated in the limited attention paid to the *asbāb al nuzūl* (the study of what occasioned the revelation of verses in the Qur'an) and the

lack of scholarly works on the subject. The scholarly attention paid to what occasioned the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and their chronology was even less.

The traditional concept of *naskh* prevalent in methodological *uṣūl* studies (a concept which spelled contradiction and abrogation along the lines of man-made legislation) immediately jars the sensibilities of the modern scholar, thinker, legislator, or leader who looks to the prophetic period for guidance, legal rulings, policies, ideas, and solutions to current situations. While current situations may share some common elements with events of the prophetic period, the differences are far more numerous.

The Muslim student of today will notice that the concept of *naskh* in its traditional form actually came into conflict with many of the basic principles of revelation, actually nullifying or limiting the scope of their applicability to include only as much as was relevant during the second Madīnan period.

Two examples of the negative effects of this concept of *naskh* are the issue of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and the effect that mistaken interpretation had on matters like *da'wah*, international relations, Islamic law, and political strategy.

In the field of Muslim-non-Muslim relations, we find that the "verse of the sword,"

And fight the pagans wherever you encounter them  
(9:5),

is a clear example of the negative effects of the classical interpretation of *naskh* as annulment. This verse was revealed late in the second Madīnan period and at a time when the Muslims enjoyed power and dominance over their enemies, the pagan Arabs who had for nearly twenty years opposed the mission and message of Islam through open hostility, conspiracy, and the repeated breaking of treaties, despite the diplomacy, peacemaking initiatives, and patience of the Muslims and the Muslim state. Thus the Qur'an commanded the Muslims to fight the intractable and

obstinate pagan bedouins until they submitted to Islam and became members of its structured and civilized society. Only then would their situation improve and their aggression cease. But here we discover that the traditional interpretation of *naskh* failed to derive the desired perspectives from this situation, those of reform, refining character, and meeting injustice and oppression with deterrent force. Instead, the traditional interpretation was carried over into the fields of *da'wah*, relations with others; and every other form of discourse with non-Muslims. By extracting similarities from these events, all sense of how to deal with equals, give doers of good their due, and soften the hearts of those who appear to be coming close to Islam is lost. Thus tolerance as a concept became a conditioned value, one qualified and relegated to particular situations only, while the concept of limiting the individual's freedom of religious belief became a hard and fast rule.

Likewise, the meaning of the Qur'anic term "People of the Book" (and the dealings the Prophet had with them) lost its comprehensiveness and so excluded people of all other enlightened and civilized religions. Instead, the term was understood as limited only to those mentioned specifically and unambiguously; the Jews, the Christians, and the Magians.

This issue and its far-reaching repercussions have been discussed in my book, *The Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Islamic Methodology and Thought*. There, it was concluded that apparent contradictions between the revealed texts and Shari'ah rulings do not necessarily indicate that one must have been abrogated or annulled. Rather, the true significance of such contradictions is that human life and society, when faced with different conditions, require different forms of regulation. Thus, the application of a particular Shari'ah ruling depends upon the prevailing circumstances. For example, when non-Muslims live in peace with Muslims and deal with them decently, Muslims must reciprocate. But when non-Muslims act aggressively toward Islam and Muslims, then the only proper Muslim response is one of

confrontation and even open hostilities. There can be no mistaking the one position for the other due to a mistaken understanding of *naskh*. In other words, the legal ruling applied depends upon the particular situation. However, if the circumstances change, it is senseless to insist on maintaining an irrelevant ruling. Rather, a new ruling that takes into account the new conditions must be sought. In this way, we may understand the "verse of the sword" as being completely compatible with those Qur'anic verses that insist on tolerance and forbearance toward non-Muslims.

It is for this reason that the interpretation of this verse as the final revealed word on the subject, as well as the Prophet's final practice, is in fact in opposition to the concept of Islam's finality and universal mission.

At the time of the Prophet's death, the new Islamic society had essentially gained the upper hand over its enemies throughout the Arabian peninsula. During the time of the Ummayah and the 'Abbāsīyah *khilāfah*, when *ijtihād* was alive and the classical schools of *fiqh* flourished, those conditions remained constant. Today, however, Muslim society is debilitated and in many ways resembles the conditions faced by the first Muslims in the early days of Makkah, the period of the first emigration to Ethiopia, the first Madīnan period, and before the treaty of Hudaybiyah and the conquest of Makkah, all times when the Muslims were literally surrounded by enemies threatening them with death and destruction.

If contemporary Muslims were to consider carefully the teachings of Islam and the priorities, policies, organization, and strategies of the Prophet prior to the treaty of Hudaybiyah and the conquest of Makkah, they would learn a great deal about how oppressed, weak, and unequipped nations could best deal with the challenges put forward by powerful enemies. Certainly the weak and oppressed Muslim masses of today have much to learn from the policies and methods adopted by the Prophet for the economic, political, and military advancement of the weak and disadvantaged Muslim community.

The second example of the traditional interpretation of *naskh* is related to the position of Islamic thought toward strategies for *da'wah* and the implementation of Islamic law. Basically, there are two trends of thought on these issues. One group, saying that the present circumstances of the Muslim world resemble the Makkan and the first Madīnan periods, claims that Muslims need to concern themselves with issues of faith and propagation in the same way as the early Muslims did. Such matters as transactions, arrangements, and administration that characterized the second Madīnan period do not need to be considered at this time. The other group, however, holds that the present state of Muslims is more like that of the second Madīnan period, when the Muslims were the majority and held sway over the entire Arabian peninsula. Moreover, as this second group understands *naskh* to mean that the rulings and policies of the second Madīnan period abrogated those of the earlier periods, they feel themselves bound only by the teachings of the latter period.

While we have no doubt that certain rulings or teachings of the earlier period were actually replaced in the later period, we also have to believe that the religion and mission of Islam are in fact two parts of the same whole. It is therefore incorrect to say that a certain person or organization is presently going through a stage that closely resembles the Makkan stage, and that therefore that person or organization does not have to follow the teachings of the later Madīnan period.

Rather, we must understand that both the formality of the religion and the flexibility of the mission have gone through distinct stages and that we cannot compare those stages to present situations when so many of the elements involved have changed so completely. Nor is it any more sensible to attempt to force a distorted analogy from any historical period, especially when there can be no comparison between those who live after the revelation was completed and those who were living while it was still being revealed.



The real issues here are those of the particular and the general, the methodology of Islamic thought, the lack of appreciation for the elements of time and place in the composition of society, and the concept of revelation as a source of knowledge complementing both reason and nature so that humanity can fulfill its role of doing good on earth. Individuals and societies in different times and places will differ according to their circumstances, opportunities, needs, and challenges. Therefore their policies and organization will also vary. Even contemporaneous societies will differ greatly, so that differences in time will hardly seem to be more significant than differences in place. Thus, when the matter is looked at in a comprehensive manner, there is really no scope for labelling a situation as Makkan or Madīnan. Rather, one must deal with situations realistically and on the basis of the laws of nature and the Shari'ah's higher purposes, objectives, and principles. Moreover, a dynamic kind of fiqh is required, one that relies upon living ideas suited to the circumstances of contemporary society rather than on the fossilized and forced legal analogies or *qiyās* of bygone ages. Thus, every individual and every society will pass through its own special stages in the light of broader Shari'ah principles.

One problem currently afflicting the Ummah is that of *ribā* (usury). The contemporary application of the traditional methodology by Muslim scholars and students has proved inadequate in the face of this issue's import, implications, the relevant Qur'anic guidance, and the prophetic practice. Upon further consideration, it is clear that these shortcomings are due to the limited vision and experience of Islamic scholars in matters of economics and the social sciences in general. The result has been that their efforts have brought forth a plurality of formalistic and contradictory exercises in regard to the term's meaning and significance. Today there are over twenty different schools of thought on this single issue.

Significantly, several of these schools have ignored a very important authentic hadith which, if viewed from a comprehensive economic perspective, would go a long way toward

clarifying much of the reasoning behind the economic policies of the Prophet and the stages through which these passed. This hadith, related by Usāmah ibn Zayd, concerns how *ribā* is limited to deferred payment (*ribā al nasi'ah*) on the exchange of the six similar commodities named in the hadith.<sup>1</sup> Owing to their constricted vision and methodology, some of the classical schools were forced to resort to legal artifices that would allow them to tamper with the true spirit of the law while at the same time adhering to the strict letter of the texts.

This is what happened in their interpretation of the hadith related by Rāfi' ibn Khudayj concerning the Prophet's prohibition of a landowner renting land to a farmer in return for a percentage of the resulting crop.<sup>2</sup> The classical jurists<sup>3</sup> opined that if the landowner supplied the seed to the farmer, then the landowner could legitimately take a share of the harvest. Another group of classical *fuqahā'*, in an opinion that amounted to a declaration of surrender and a squandering of the Shari'ah's higher economic objectives and wisdom, said that *ribā* was a

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<sup>1</sup> This was the hadith related by Abū Sa'id al Khudari and others in which they reported the Prophet to have said, "Gold for gold, silver for silver, oats for oats, wheat for wheat, dates for dates, and salt for salt; a like amount for a like amount, and passed from hand to hand. Anyone who increases or asks for increase will have taken *ribā*." (Trans.)

<sup>2</sup> The wisdom behind such a prohibition was obviously to encourage those who own land to take an interest in making it productive. The classical jurists, however, understood the prohibition only in terms of *ribā*, considering that the agreement to pay a percentage of a crop that is unknown in quantity at the time of agreement is a form of deferred payment, the prohibited *nasi'ah*, to be given in exchange for an unknown. (Trans.)

<sup>3</sup> Often such decisions were made under pressure exerted on the *fuqahā'* by royalty and princely landowners whose interests and influence made them impossible to ignore. (Trans.)

matter of ritual and therefore to be accepted blindly, but only in regard to commodities mentioned specifically in the hadith literature on *ribā al faḍl* (i.e., gold, silver, and salt). No wider application, they held, was necessary.<sup>4</sup>

Such shortcomings in methodology and thought caused Muslim economic policy to undergo an important change when experienced Muslim economists began a serious professional inquiry into the issues of Islamic economics. This new attitude has resulted in the good tidings of a comprehensive academic and intellectual breakthrough in Islamic economic studies, and it can now be hoped that a contemporary movement of reform in Islamic economic thought and methodology has begun. These advances will in turn help to reestablish the vitality and comprehensiveness of Islamic thought in general.

Another shortcoming in traditional methodology and those who attempt to apply it is their view that the sayings and opinions of the *salaf* (predecessors) are nothing short of sacred. This is especially true in regard to the understanding, *ijtihād*, and interpretations of the *salaf*, some of which have been elevated by the traditionalists to the status of revelation itself. So, in spite of our acknowledging the circumstance of human limitations in terms of time and place, and in spite of our theoretical certainty that nothing other than divine revelation is sacred, we find Muslims studying the works of the *salaf* not to extract from them authentic Islamic perspectives on contemporary issues of concern, but in order to transpose their situation on our own and then follow, by means of legal analogy, the rulings that they had prescribed centuries ago.

Without our even sensing it, the false understanding we have of what it means to respect the *salaf* has been transformed into a whip with which we flagellate ourselves. Such

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed explanation of these and other matters, see the author's introduction to Islamic economic theories; *Contemporary Aspects of Economic and Social Thinking in Islam*, American Trust Publications, Plainfield, Indiana, 1976.

faulty perceptions obstruct our attempts at reform and progress. This is also why we find many of the enlightened ideas and thinking of contemporary scholars being distorted by those traditionalists who believe that all ideas must agree with those held by the *salaf*.

As long as Muslims refuse to deal realistically with the heritage left by the *salaf* and continue to bestow upon them and their work a sort of sanctity, the latter's ideas and experiences cannot be used to solve contemporary problems or help Muslims to relate Islam to the actualities of contemporary human life and society.

To summarize, it should now be clear that the traditional methodology of Islam sufficed in its own times to address the political and civilizational issues then current. Many of the shortcomings in that methodology resulted from its futile concentration on ways to extract the Ummah from its long-standing problems instead of helping it to keep abreast of issues of progress and development. While the classical disciplines did contain the seeds of the methodology essential to inquiry in the social sciences, these were never sown or cared for by the generations of scholars that followed. It is also important for us to understand where the traditional methodology falls short in dealing with present-day problems, for it is not only the shortcomings in the methodology itself which render it ineffective, but also the shortcomings in the attempts to apply it by traditional scholars.

Another important methodological issue to keep in mind is related to the texts of the Sunnah. It is quite amazing that, despite the passing of so much time since the Sunnah was first preserved and recorded, its texts still present scholars with difficulties as regards their authenticity or lack of it. Likewise, the highly technical terminology developed by the classical Hadith scholars has created no end of confusion among contemporary Islamic scholars. As a result, whenever an author cites a hadith, he is automatically subjected to criticism that serves little more than to distract readers from the point the author was trying to make by needlessly engaging the reader in disputes over

technicalities related to the transmission of the hadith in question.

It is therefore imperative that the texts of the authentic Sunnah be collected, classified, and placed within easy reach of scholars, researchers, and specialists in all fields of knowledge. These texts must be indexed, ordered by subject content, and purged of all accretions.

Such a classification of the Sunnah may be completed in the following manner:

1. Those hadiths which, owing to the authenticity of their narration (*sanad*) and the soundness of their meaning, may be accepted as authoritative evidence.
2. Those hadiths which, owing to the soundness of their meaning, may be accepted as evidence, even if their narration is open to debate.
3. Those hadiths which, regardless of what may be said about the authenticity or otherwise of their narration, are questionable in terms of meaning (i.e., their meanings seem to be in some way contradictory to the principles or purposes of the Shari'ah).
4. Those hadiths which, owing to the dubious authenticity of their narration and the contradictory nature of their meaning, may not be considered acceptable as evidence.

The importance of this methodological issue is not limited to the mishandling of the Sunnah, for in many cases the Muslim mind is overawed by what is clearly unsound, with the result that when it accepts something unsound as sound, it loses its ability to discriminate and perceive things as they truly are. Finally, the Muslim mind, thought, and methodology lose all value and utility when they become accustomed to accepting principles other than the divinely revealed principles and approaches contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Quite clearly, then, awareness of and sensitivity to the principles and approaches of thought as well as to the principles, values, and purposes of the Shari'ah are the only proper standards for the preservation of revelation, the

prophetic message, and the Shari'ah from all distortion and misrepresentation. In the same way, these are the only standards of importance to guarantee the freedom and integrity of the Muslim mind and methodology. Furthermore, preserving the Muslim mind and methodology is the same as preserving Islam itself.

What is true in regard to the Sunnah is true in regard to all of the literature of our heritage. It must be made accessible to scholars and it must also be analyzed and presented in a way that the pure and simple teachings of Islam shine through the accretions of alien influences. In this way, this body of literature may serve as an example and an aid to lucid contemporary Muslim thinking, rather than as a means to renewing intellectual disputes that should have been buried long ago.

Among the important issues deserving mention at this point (a detailed discussion will follow in a later chapter), is the confusion over the roles of revelation and reason in Islamic methodology. This occurred during the centuries following the first expansion of Islam which brought Muslims into contact with the philosophy and culture of other civilizations and religions (primarily Greek and Roman) and saw them begin to inquire into the subject of theology. Even leading Islamic thinkers, like many of the mu'tazilah, fell under the influence of abstruse metaphysical inquiries. Many orthodox Islamic scholars went to the extreme of denying reason and its role, thus limiting Islamic thought to literalist and descriptive studies of the revealed texts that have continued to influence Islamic thought by making it suspicious even today of all forms of rational inquiry.

### **Our Intellectual Heritage: Past, Present and Future**

At the end of this brief critique of the most important issues in traditional Islamic methodology, it is essential that we pause to consider some of the questions dictated by the circumstances of contemporary Islamic thought and the increasing number of problems presented to it by the modern world.

Perhaps the most pressing question is: Who is to blame for the present situation? The answer to that question, however, is that there is no place for such a question. It is simply not important that we be able to place this responsibility on a particular person or age. Such an exercise only detracts us from gaining a proper understanding of the problem and prevents us from obtaining an overall view of the Ummah's progress over the centuries. Rather, the questions that need to be asked are: What is the proper framework for coming to an understanding of the dimensions of the issues with which we need to deal? And how may we discern the outlines of the course we have taken so that we may direct our attention back to the right course?

In order to answer these questions, we must do the following:

1. We must understand our past, benefit from its lessons, and make it a source of strength by concentrating on its positive aspects and then building upon them. We have already wasted centuries on the negative aspects of our history, and we certainly cannot afford to waste any more time or effort on such matters.
2. In order to progress, we must understand that many past mistakes were made with the best of intentions. It therefore behooves us to study the past in order to extract from it only that which is positive and beneficial. Furthermore, there is no point in reopening disruptive chapters of our history. What we need to remember is that the Ummah's previous achievements were due to its adherence to Islam and Islamic thinking and methodology. Islam, and Islam alone, allowed the Ummah to establish its civilization and culture all over the world. Still, the objective of this study is to direct the reader's attention toward the future so that the Ummah may continue to develop and reach out toward new horizons. Only by thinking in this way can the Ummah regain its strength and its pioneering and reformative energies.
3. The Ummah must also overcome its tendency toward *talfiq*, or the urge to graft essentially Western solutions

onto its own political, military, cultural and economic problems. Both *talfiq* and *taqlid* must give way to an original and integral Islamic approach that rejects imitation. Such an approach requires an intellectual and reformational movement based on a methodology that truly reflects Islamic concepts, objectives, and values. In the final analysis, of course, this requires independent Islamic intellectual inquiry nourished by Islamic social sciences that are distinguished by their sources and their unique premises and approaches.

What all this ultimately means is that an original and systematic intellectual vision must emerge, one that will not suffer adversely from the achievements of others but will, on the contrary, both welcome and accommodate them after weighing them against the standards of its own unique perspective.

The calamities that befell the Ummah after the period of its early expansion, calamities that led to the fall of the *khilāfah*, should not be attributed to Islamic thought or even to the mistakes and excesses of the political leadership. Rather, the reasons for their occurrence can be traced in the main to the influx of peoples and nations into the society of Islam before they were properly attuned to the Islamic way of life or had educated themselves in Islam's objectives and noble values. As a result, the new political leadership never developed or matured as it should have. Instead, the new political and military leadership represented a cross between the old pre-Islamic ways and the new. It was no surprise then, especially after the political and intellectual leadership parted company, that the effectiveness of Islamic thought was never extended to aspects of the administrative or the hard sciences.

Yet in spite of all this, the achievements of that thought in the early period were sufficient to bring light, guidance, and knowledge to humanity. In view of the accomplishments of the early generations of Muslims, is there really any reason for us to attempt to place the blame on them for what they did not manage to achieve?



Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that their Islamic vision should have become obscured, that the forces of Islamic originality should have weakened to such an extent that they gradually faded away altogether, and that the thought of the Ummah should have been transfigured to mere form, empty words, and a heritage venerated, but seriously misunderstood, by succeeding generations. It is thus imperative that we take pride in the achievements of Islamic thought for the betterment of the Ummah and humanity in general. Indeed, none of our historical achievements can be understood except as a result of Islam's contribution and its ways of thought, civilization, and reform. So even if it did not deliver all that it was capable of delivering, there can be no doubt about the fact that it did deliver a great deal in spite of all the obstacles in its way.

What we must understand is that what happened to us is what happens to all nations and communities. But when the progress of nations is impeded, they need to regain their original and uncontaminated vision so that they may rechart their course and again set out on their way.

So here we may rephrase the questions: Why was our progress impeded? How do we regain our vision and strength and thus correct our course? The objective of our study and research should be to take a step toward renewing our vision, reforming our methodology, and developing the sources of our strength.

At this point, we have reached a suitable place in our study from which to look comprehensively at the issues of our thought and methodology in full view of the challenges now confronting us.

Islam came as a message of guidance from Allah to all creation at a time of ignorance in its history, a time when the previous revelations had been distorted and corruption had become universal. Islam came and opened peoples' minds and souls to its light, to learning, and to civilization.

The methodology of Islam in its earliest ages was a natural and automatic sort of methodology that relied on the wisdom of revelation and the soundness of human reason and ijtiḥād that sprang from the untainted human

*fitrah*. Thus the prophetic and the caliphal ages were the best examples of the human spirit for all the generations that followed. Whatever remains today of goodness in the lands of Islam is directly attributable to Islam, Islamic character, or Islamic objectives. Thus it is safe to say that Islam has remained, despite all the factors of decay, the only refuge for the Ummah.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Principles in the Methodology of Islamic Thought**

The Islamic world community has been charged with a responsibility towards itself and towards history to perform the duties of vicegerency (*khilāfah*) and reform civilization in the light of the noble principles of Islam. In view of the present world situation, humankind and the Muslim Ummah have no alternative but Islam. Only through Islam will reform come to modern civilization.

In order to understand the teachings of Islam, we must first define the comprehensive framework of the methodology which forms the pivotal point around which Islamic thought revolves.

### **Methodological Framework of Islamic Thought**

It is very important to understand at the outset that the framework of Islamic thought represents a comprehensive view of life and the universe. Having realized this, we may begin to comprehend the relationships, concepts, and principles which characterize and govern Islamic thought. So, if we wish to appreciate the nature of Islamic thought and methodology, and if we ever hope to understand the goals which Islam seeks to achieve, it is essential that we first comprehend the concepts of the "seen" and the "unseen" in Islam.

These concepts define the purpose of life and relate it to that which is beyond the material universe. The world of the

unseen is known only to Allah. He reveals about it what He wishes to whomever of His servants He wishes, and then sends them as messengers to bring guidance to humankind and clarify for them the meaning of their existence. According to the Islamic concept of the unseen, man's relationship with the world of the unseen is a good and constructive one which is aimed at establishing truth and justice on earth and keeping it free from corruption.

He who created death and life, that He may try which of you is best in deed (67:2).

Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin; and He forbids all shameful deeds, abomination, and wrongdoing (16:90).

We can summarize the most important principles of the unseen and what it has to offer to man, as follows:

- Life has a purpose, which is moral good; it was not created without a purpose.
- Do you suppose that We created you in vain, and that you will never return to Us?(23 :115)
- The original, eternal relations between everything in the universe are beyond what the human mind is capable of comprehending.
- The most important feature of the unseen world, which is of particular concern to man, is the existence of Allah, the Eternal Creator Who is One; there is nothing like unto Him, and He has knowledge of all things.
- The resurrection of all souls in the Hereafter will be the time of reckoning when man will be either rewarded or punished according to his deeds in this life.
- This world is the place for positive action, for building, and for putting things in order. Everything in it has been made subject to the will of man in his mission as *khalifah* on the earth, populating it, putting it in order,

subjecting everything in it to his good will, taking care of it, putting it to good use, and not abusing it by spreading corruption throughout it.

- Man's free will springs from the omniscience of the Almighty and exists by His command. It is one of the wonders of Allah's creation and a sign of His greatness and power. He created it by His Will as He created everything else. He distinguished and honored man by giving him freedom of will.
- Allah created the Universe and subjected it to natural laws. By acting in accordance with these laws, deeds can be done, aims can be realized, and the human will can express its determination and direction. Without the application of these laws, however, there can be no will or determination, no goals can be reached, and nothing can be expressed. After the Believer has sought to understand the natural laws and to act in accordance with them, he is to rely (*tawakkul*) on Allah, Who knows the unseen and is in control of the universe. Everything Allah decrees for His believing servant, after that servant has fulfilled his responsibilities according to the natural laws, is for the servant's good in this world and the next.

*Wahy* or revelation is the divine source which provides man with the knowledge he needs of the unseen world; whereas reason is the instrument man uses to acquire and apply knowledge in this world, which is the seen world, in order to achieve the mission of *khilāfah* and its aims of establishing truth, justice and righteousness.

- In the presence of sound human nature (*fitrah*), faith in the oneness of Allah, and the guidance of His *wahy*, there can be no room for contradictions in the Islamic outlook toward *wahy*, reason, and the natural universe. *Wahy* deals with the unseen world; and acceptance of the truths brought by *wahy* is the factor which distinguishes between sound and corrupt knowledge. This is the standard which differentiates between the angels' rightly-guided knowledge and Iblis's corrupt knowledge and reasoning:

They said: ...of knowledge we have none save what  
You have taught us (2: 32).

Iblīs arrogantly voiced the idea that he was created of  
superior matter:

You created me from fire, and created him (Adam)  
from clay (7:12).

Allah, Who has complete knowledge and power, said:

I know what you know not (2:30).

Within this comprehensive framework of thought, the  
first generation of Muslims found the answers to all their  
needs. It did not escape them that Allah has connected faith  
(*īmān*) with good works throughout the Qur'ān.

...such as have faith, and do righteous deeds ( 103:3).

The word for righteous deeds (*salāh*) implies both objective  
understanding and serious efforts. Good intentions, in other  
words, are not enough.

In order for the Muslim mind to regain its strength, it  
must first recover its outlook. When this happens, man and  
his thought will be guided, his efforts will be rewarded, and  
Allah's promise of strength and victory will be fulfilled.

### **Sources of Islamic Methodology: Revelation, Reason, and the Universe**

#### ***Wahy***

*Wahy* as a source of knowledge and guidance in human  
life is the truth which Allah revealed to His Messengers so  
that they might convey His commandments to humankind,  
and guide and teach them the meaning and purpose of their  
existence. The essence of the message which *wahy* brought  
to humankind is its explanation of their relationship to  
Allah, and the aims of their existence in the universe.

Humans are the most honored of Allah's creations because Allah favored them with free will. If they follow the truth of their own accord, they will be superior and do well. But if they follow their own whims and ignore the truth, they will become corrupt and oppressive.

The relationship of human, the creature, to Allah, the Creator, is one of submissive discipline and control, not one of enslavement and degradation; it is a relationship of *khilāfah* and honor, not of contempt and exploitation. A human's turning to Allah, following His commandments, and avoiding that which He has prohibited is a relationship of respect and honor because it reaches and achieves the Truth, that which is good and real, the straight path, the lofty aim for which all righteous people strive. Humans are elevated by their efforts, and there is no room in the Islamic understanding of this relationship for any concept of degradation, contempt or exploitation. Concerning this, the Prophet said:

The odor from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. (Al Bukhārī, Muslim).

Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His servant than any of you would be if you were on a journey in the desert and lost the riding-camel that was carrying your food and drink and, after despairing of it and lying down in the shade of a tree, you saw the camel come back and stand beside you. (Muslim)

Allah said:

There has come to you from Allah a light and a perspicuous Book, — wherewith Allah guides those who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, — guides them to a path that is straight (5:15-16).

## **Reason**

Reason is the instrument humans use to understand, distinguish and compare insights, and it is the means of carrying out responsibilities in the seen world. Besides being the basic means for understanding, reason is that through which humans can reach an appreciation of their relationship with life, the universe, and other creatures. On this basis, they can build their understanding of their own existence. Without reason there would be no humans, no comprehension, no appreciation, and no responsibility.

It is reason which distinguishes between true *wahy* and false, between misleading lies, fabrications, and myths. Likewise, it is reason which enables humans to choose and face the consequences of the choices they make.

When the revelations given to previous nations were altered and corrupted so that they lost their authenticity, the Muslim mind became distinguished by its having a complete and true revelation, and by the fact that its sources of knowledge encompassed both the seen and the unseen worlds. Thus the two sources, *wahy* and reason, are integrated with the universe to enable humans to realize the purpose of creation and to fulfil the role of *khalifah*.

The role of reason is to understand the seen world through establishing the authenticity of the *wahy* and then by understanding its purpose concerning human existence in the seen world. The role of the Muslim mind is to shape the seen world and perform the duties of *khalifah* in accordance with the directions and aims of the Divine Will.

The Muslim mind derives its strength, stability and uprightness from its understanding of *wahy*. The Muslim mind is a believing, rightly guided, and confident mind. It is not arrogant, it does not abandon certainty for conjecture, or light for darkness, or guidance for error. It is a capable mind, completely absorbed in its role as *khalifah*. It does not waste its time and efforts on conjecture or on matters which serve no useful purpose. In accordance with this unambiguous outlook, the Muslim mind will not debate matters of the unseen, nor will it ignore the role of reason in understanding and interpreting the articulations and



purposes of *wahy* and putting them into practice. According to this Islamic outlook, the role of reason cannot be ignored in understanding nature and events, or in building systems, or bearing responsibilities.

Such an outlook should enable humans to fulfill their roles as *khalifah*, prevent clergy and priests from controlling people in the name of religion, halt the activities of tyrants, and bring an end to the exploitation of religious sentiments for purposes which ultimately go against those of the Shari'ah. In the correct Islamic outlook, there can be no room for deviation or tyranny in the name of either reason or religion.

The conflict between *wahy* and reason which emerged in the history of Islamic thought was, on the one hand, an expression of political conflicts and aims and, on the other, the outcome of the confusion of pre-Islamic cultures when their tribes and peoples came to Islam. The result was that Muslim thought was pulled in two opposite directions. Historically, Muslims wasted a great deal of energy when they began to discuss matters of the unseen, theology, and philosophical sophistries having to do with issues like the divine predicates.

Yet all the illusions and sophistries remain; the Ummah is still arguing about theology, and the arguments continue to intensify. What is worse is that those with vested interests support and encourage these wasteful exercises and thereby hinder the Ummah by diverting it from taking up the challenges it should be facing. In the final analysis, this can only help the enemies of the Ummah to achieve their purposes.

It is important that, in this study of Islamic methodology, we should not confuse the sources of Islamic knowledge, which are *wahy*, reason, and the natural laws of the universe, with the means for conducting research and study. Every scientific field has its own means which are particularly suited to it. Clearly, the Islamic disciplines must be based on *wahy*, reason, and the laws and standards that Allah has imposed on creation. Thus grounded, the new Islamic disciplines will be distinguished by their

comprehensiveness and openness to any means capable of producing knowledge beneficial to humankind.

In the modern age, the Muslim mind has yet to deal in a systematic way with the sources of Islamic knowledge. Yet in light of those sources, it must lay the foundations for the sort of social sciences which the Islamic outlook requires and which, through research and study, will enable the Ummah to educate its youth. But before the Muslim mind is qualified to establish its own social sciences, it must clarify the principles and concepts on which Islamic thought is based.

### **The Fundamentals of Islamic Methodology and Thought**

Islamic methodology and thought are distinguished by certain fundamental principles. If we fail to understand these principles, we cannot deal with them or operate according to them. These principles represent basic assumptions which guide the Muslim mind in its creative and intellectual movement towards an understanding of life and the universe, and how to interact with these in a progressive manner.

These fundamentals are unicity, vicegerency, and responsibility; three principles which form the basic outline of the Muslim mind, define its direction, and clarify its aims. Anything not based on these principles will never motivate or vitalize the Muslim consciousness. The failure of Islamic thought in the past was, to a great extent, due to the failure on the part of Muslims to understand the importance of these principles; it may also, to a great extent, explain the confusion of the Muslim mind and its ineffectiveness at the present time. In what follows, we shall examine each of these three principles.

#### **Unicity**

This principle, as it is embodied in *kalimat al shahādah* and as it is explained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, establishes Islamic thought and methodology on the premise that absolute truth is the basis, source, and

ultimate destiny of the whole universe; that the universe exists for a serious purpose; that the final destiny of the universe is with Allah alone, Who has no partner or equal; that the universe emerged from a single source and represents a single reality; and that man is unique – Allah created him and honored him with free will and the responsibility of *khilāfah* over the universe on the basis of truth and justice.

Glorify the name of your Guardian-Lord most High, Who has created, and further, given order and proportion; Who has ordained laws, and granted guidance (87:1– 3).

No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him: [if there were many gods], behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! Glory to Allah! [He is free] from the [sort of] things they attribute to Him! (23;91).

Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators? (52:35).

He said: "Our Lord is He Who gave to each [created] thing its form and nature, and further, gave [it] guidance" (20:50).

[Such is] the artistry of Allah, Who disposes of all things in perfect order; for He is well acquainted with all that you do (27:88).

He has created the heavens and the earth in just proportions, and has given you shape, and has made your forms beautiful: and to Him is the final goal (64:3).

No want of proportion will you see in the Creation of [God] Most Gracious. So turn your vision again: do you see any flaw? (67:3).

If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne; [high is He] above what they attribute to Him! (21:22).

There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees [all things] (42:11).

And if any one believes in Allah, [Allah] guides his heart [aright]: for Allah knows all things (64:11).

That is because Allah is the Reality; and those besides Him, whom they invoke, are but vain falsehood: Verily Allah is He, Most High, Most Great (22:62).

### ***Khilāfah***

Man's vicegerency on earth and in the universe requires him to act as guardian and deputy of Allah in dealing with the earth, the universe, and other creatures. The Muslim, with his *fiṭrah*, *'aqidah*, methods of thought, free will, and the ability to learn with which Allah has honored him, does not view man's position in the universe as being other than that of a responsible guardian. Man cannot achieve his purpose, fulfill his role in life, or have peace of mind unless he continually acts and takes decisions concerning the management of his environment in the natural universe. The principle of *khilāfah*, according to Islamic thought, defines the purpose of man's natural desires and guides him. In this manner, these natural desires are directed towards truth, justice, and reform.

Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us? (23:115).

He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed (67:2).

Behold, your Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth...' (2:30).

And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: Behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect (45:13).

It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so travel throughout its tracts and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes: But unto Him is the resurrection (67:15).

The dimension of *khilāfah* in Islamic thought explains the enormous energy of the first Muslims, and the incomparable energy of the Prophet and his companions who never tired of working, sacrificing, and striving in jihad. In the space of a few years, the whole of the known world had been enlightened by the truth. Divine guidance to mankind was renewed, and a movement for civilization and reform began from which every place on earth benefitted.

### **Moral Responsibility**

The third principle upon which Islamic thought and methodology is predicated is that of moral responsibility. We cannot understand Muslim thought if we do not consider the dimension of responsibility in that thought. Even during the worst periods of backwardness, the factor that preserved the Muslim's consciousness and prevented him from extinction was his conscience, his awareness of his responsibilities and shortcomings. For this reason the Muslim mind continued to be restless, and never accepted the reality of its stagnation and backwardness. In fact, it is still

doing so. This is because once the Muslim mind has realized its moral responsibility, it can no longer remain indifferent. Hence the history of the Muslim Ummah during the later periods, when it lost its way and fell behind, was the history of anxiety and worry. All that it had left, and all that preserved it, was its sense of responsibility as regards its role as vicegerent. Thus the principle of responsibility represents the other side of the principle of *khilāfah* in the makeup of the Muslim mind. *Khilāfah*, the purpose behind it, and its requisite qualifications (free will, the ability to reason, and the potential for more learning) carry with them man's moral responsibility for his role, and for the decisions he makes in undertaking it.

By using his will and abilities to realize the purpose of his existence, the Muslim will have carried out his responsibility and secured his place in the Hereafter. If he uses his will and ability for any purpose other than those for which they were created, for oppression and corruption for example, he will have failed in his responsibility, violated the honor of his duties, and missed the purpose of his existence. Then his destiny in the Hereafter will be that of the lowest of the low!

Say: "I am but a man like yourselves, [but] the inspiration has come to me that your God is One God: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner" (18:110).

He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving (67:2).

O you people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy (2:168).

But seek, with the [wealth] which Allah has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, and do not forget

your portion in this world: but do good, as Allah has been good to you, and seek not [occasions for] mischief in the land; for Allah loves not those who do mischief (28:77).

You shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly (2:281).

Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that you may receive admonition (16:90).

If any one does a righteous deed, it enures to the benefit of his own soul; if he does evil, it works against [his own soul]. In the end you will [all] be brought back to your Lord (45:15).

Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; that man can have nothing but what he strives for; that [the fruit of] his striving will soon come in sight; then will he be rewarded with a reward complete (53:38-41).

Then are men returned unto God, their Protector, the [only] Reality; is not His the Command? And He is the Swiftest in taking account (6:62).

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it (99:7-8).

The principle of responsibility, as a principle integrated in the Muslim mind with that of *khilāfah*, may explain to us the powers of love and sacrifice possessed by the early generations of Muslims, who set an historical example for all nations and societies. It also explains to us the outstanding example of the earliest Muslims who were free from

greed, hypocrisy, and arrogance, and who were distinguished by their lack of interest in gathering and hoarding wealth. The more capable they became of earning worldly wealth, the less interested they were in gathering and hoarding it. They were among those described in the Qur'an:

And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan and the captive, – [saying] "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks" (76:8–9).

The principle of responsibility is furthermore a guarantee of correct Islamic thought, and of sound methodology.

Actions are but by intentions, and every man shall have that which he intended. (Al Bukhārī and Muslim)

A Muslim cannot be diverted from the path of truth and justice because he knows for sure that his peace of mind in this world and his destiny in the next depend on his carrying out his responsibility to work, strive, sacrifice, and do good in this life.

If the meaning of these three principles, unicity, vicegerency, and responsibility, becomes clear to Muslims, the Ummah will surely be able to find its way, renew the sources of its energy, and succeed in raising its young according to sound Islamic methodology. This, in turn, will requalify the Muslim mind to restore the Ummah to its position as a pioneering and creative force in history.

With a true understanding of unicity, the Muslim mind will find its true direction and will succeed. By playing its role as *khalifah*, the Muslim mind will go forth and succeed. With its integrated methodology, the Muslim mind will be positive and productive.



## **The Basic Concepts of Islamic Methodology**

In order that we gain an understanding of how Islamic thought and methodology work, it is not enough to be familiar with the framework of the principles on which they are built. Rather, it is also necessary to discern the concepts which represent the practical aspects of that framework. It is not enough to know the theoretical aspects of methodology, for that will not afford a true understanding of how the methodology works. If we wish to take practical steps towards reform, we must know the concepts according to which, and on the basis of whose requirements, the Muslim mind works.

In fact, many of the basic concepts of Islamic methodology were tainted by the *jāhiliyah* cultures and philosophies of the peoples who entered Islam. As these were firmly entrenched in the knowledge and practice of those people, they became influences on the Ummah's thought. This situation was exacerbated both by the lack of commitment on the part of, and the Machiavellian practices employed by, the Ummah's political leadership in later periods. The confusion in the methodology of Islamic thought became one of the most potent weapons at the leadership's disposal for weakening the Ummah's understanding of their situation, for gaining oppressive control, and for distracting the Ummah's attention from their (the leadership's) deviant practices and goals.

Among the most important of these methodological concepts are the following:

- The purposeful nature of creation and existence;
- The objectivity of truth and relativity of circumstances;
- Freedom of decision and free will;
- The comprehensiveness of *tawakkul*;
- The causality of deeds.

## **The Purposeful Nature of Creation and Existence**

Muslim thought is based on belief in unicity and the principle of oneness which imply the unity of creation, life, man and reality. This oneness and this unity, in turn, imply the purpose behind creation and existence:

Not for [idle] sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them (21:16).

I have only created the jinn and men so that they might serve Me. No sustenance do I require of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me (51:56–57).

The belief that Allah is the Creator implies that creation has only one source and purpose. According to man's natural common sense and the Muslim's belief in oneness, it is unacceptable for the Muslim mind to be unaware of the unity and purpose of Creation, or of the integration and harmony upon which creation is based. The Muslim mind's natural disposition towards a belief in *tawhūd* guides it in its interaction with the rest of creation. According to this concept of the Muslim mind and its relationship to the rest of creation, a haphazard way of thinking is inadmissible. As befits his human nature and Islamic awareness, the Muslim is a *khalifah*, a witness, and a guardian over creation.

Nonetheless, misunderstandings regarding the concepts of causality and the purposeful nature of creation led to misunderstandings about *tawakkul* and belief in the Divine decree (*qadā* and *qadr*). These in turn led the Muslim mind to a situation of frustration and lassitude in which it became indifferent and fatalistic, and began to dwell on decidedly un-Islamic asceticisms. Thereafter, it was not long before it lost both its energy and its role as a reforming and civilizing force in the world.

The concept of the purposefulness of nature, if understood correctly, is a strong basis which rejects all indifference and inability. Most importantly, it motivates the Muslim to seek knowledge and to strive to understand the relationship between life, the universe, and events around him.

Nor has He a partner in His dominion: it is He Who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions (25:2).

[Such is] the artistry of Allah, Who disposes of all things in perfect order: for He is well acquainted with all that you do (27:88).

### **Objectivity of Truth and Relativity of Circumstances**

The Muslim's *fitrah* explains the concept of the objectivity of truth as meaning that he is a finite creature in a finite universe, subject to comprehensive and precise laws. The laws of the universe are a reality with which man lives; he is subject to them and he interacts with them every moment of his life. Furthermore, while man may be cognizant of the universe and even understand some aspects of the natural system and the laws which govern its existence, he is unable on his own to comprehend the whole of it, or even to fathom its purpose. The Muslim mind, however, accepts and interacts with these laws as a result of the insight it has gained, and the principles it has learned, through revelation. In this way the Muslim mind is able to understand the purpose of life and human existence.

The Muslim mind and common sense are given insight by the light and guidance of *wahy*. For the Muslim mind, reality is objective; it is aware of its existence and dimensions, and seeks to interact correctly with it and with its laws. The Muslim mind is totally objective. It is not governed by whims, and it does not scorn the truth. Righteousness motivates it, and its efforts are directed towards seeking the truth in harmony with the laws of the universe.

### **The Concept of Success**

According to the Muslim mind, the concept of success in life does not lie in permissiveness and corruption, but in discipline, awareness, and harmony with nature. There is no contradiction in the Muslim mind between what is true and what is good for human existence, whether individual or collective. Nor is there any conflict in the Muslim mind between the spiritual and the material, or between what is good for this life and what is good for the Hereafter. All of these represent parts of the reality of existence; they harmonize with it and are integrated with it.

The Muslim occupies a position of care and responsibility in whatever work he undertakes and in whatever role he plays. He strives to deal fairly with everything around him. He conducts his affairs by consultation and seeks truth and justice. If he fails to work in this way, he will not achieve his objective.

Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock (al Bukhārī and Muslim).

The lives of the believers are equal in value; they fight as one against their enemies; and the least of them can have a say in general affairs (Abū Dāwūd, al Nasā'ī).

The Prophet said, "Religion is sincerity." When the Companions asked: "To whom?" the Prophet replied: "To Allah and His Book, and His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk" (Muslim).

Muslims conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, with no *'aṣabīyah* (ethnocentrism), nationalism, factionalism or sectarianism, and with none of the negative implications of oppression, tyranny, or corruption.

Although reality, according to the Muslim mind, is an objective matter, this does not imply narrow-mindedness. Even if reality is one in essence and unchanging, man's position in it, either as an individual or as part of a society, is a minor position which changes according to time and place. This means that that outlook, position and application are all relative. The way that the Muslim mind deals with reality differs in accordance with the differing needs and conditions of man. The child is not like the adult; the capable man is not like the incapable; the learned are not like the ignorant; education is not like passing judgement; peace is not like war; and plenty is not like famine. Although the Muslim mind is distinguished by its comprehensive belief in unity, it is also multifaceted and is able to

provide different solutions for different needs, according to the time and the place, without losing its bases or guidance.

## **Freedom**

If we hope to understand the concept of freedom, we must understand the conditions necessary for practicing it. Freedom is a right, an attitude, and a responsibility like any other. It cannot be practiced in isolation or chaos. More than anything else, it needs to be regulated because it has the most serious bearing on man's life and the meaning of his existence. Freedom of will in general, and of worship in particular, are the rights of the mature and sane individual who is able to understand the meaning and effects of freedom and to bear responsibility for his actions in his own life and that of the society around him.

In the case of children and the insane, it is wrong to take advantage of their shortcomings or to undermine the duties of the guardians who are responsible for their affairs until they become able to bear those responsibilities for themselves, either by attaining intellectual maturity or by regaining their mental balance. On the basis of man's right to freedom of worship and his responsibility in using that freedom, we find that the army of the first Muslims opposed the forces of oppression with faith and determination, defending man's right to freedom of worship, enabling him to carry out his responsibilities, and resisting aggression.

The Islamic perspective on the freedom of worship is that man is free to choose the ideology which he believes and adheres to, whether it is Islam or anything else. Man alone has the right to make this decision, and he is responsible for it. The Islamic state and society are duty-bound to guard this right, respect this decision, and guarantee that this right is upheld for every person in every land, even those outside the lands of Islam.

To understand the aspects of man's free will and Islamic practice, we have to learn to distinguish between the different concepts involved. These concepts may be summarized as three dimensions: the dimension of belief, the

dimension of Islamic thought, and the dimension of social behavior.

### **Freedom of Belief**

Islam clearly insists upon freedom of belief for all human beings. Hence this freedom was the basis of all *da'wah*, the Islamic social system, and Islam's greatest battles against the forces of oppression. On the basis of this concept, the Islamic state itself guarantees freedom of worship for its non-Muslim subjects. From this concept we can understand the meaning of the letters which the Prophet sent to kings and rulers, calling them to Islam and asking them to stop oppressing their subjects so that they would have freedom of worship.

He [Moses] said: "It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors on earth; so He may try you by your deeds" (7:129).

Say: "O men! Now Truth has reached you from your Lord! Those who receive guidance, do so for the good of their own souls; those who stray, do so to their own loss" (10:108).

[Such is] the artistry of God, Who disposes of all things in perfect order (27:88).

Is it not His to create and govern? (7:54).

The nature of man's free will is something which his natural common sense can understand clearly, as explained in the Qur'an:

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it! (91:7-10).

Yea, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: so that He rewards those who do evil, according to their deeds, and He rewards those who do good with what is best (53:31).

Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged (45:22).

### **Freedom of Decision, Free Will and Responsibilities**

The concept of a human's freedom of will and the responsibility it entails constitute the third basic principle on which Islamic thought and methodology are based. We cannot understand the meaning of the Islamic message for life, or the meaning of the Prophet's life and jihad, or the conflicts of the first Muslims with the Persian and Roman empires, unless we understand the concept of free will and the individual responsibility entailed by this freedom.

Deeds illustrate the quality of will, whether it is good or evil, whether it follows truth, goodness and justice, or whether it is corruptible by its own desires. Finally, deeds will be measured in light of the individual's role as *khalifah*; and the Hereafter will represent and reflect the quality of one's will and deeds in this life.

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it! (91:7–10).

We sent down the [Qur'an] in Truth, and in Truth has it descended: and We sent you only to give glad tidings and to warn [sinners] (17:105).

For We had certainly sent unto them a Book, based on knowledge, which We explained in detail, — a guide and a mercy to all who believe (7:52).

**We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and  
We will assuredly guard it [from corruption] (15:9).**

**Attitudes of oppression, injustice and compulsion do not defend Islam or make the Islamic outlook any easier to understand. Instead, such attitudes represent aggression against the essence of the message, reality, and aims of Islam.**

**Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error (2:256).**

**Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject [it] (18:29).**

**If your Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one People (11:118).**

**Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe! (10:99).**

**If any one does a righteous deed, it enures to the benefit of his own soul; if he does evil it works against it [his soul]. In the end you will [all] be brought back to your Lord (45:15).**

**Based on the knowledge of divine *wahy*, the Islamic outlook was and still is sure of its energy and ability to prevail, not because of the force the state is able to bring to bear, but because it represents reality. As long as the Islamic outlook continues to adhere to correct methodology and structure, it need not fear conflicts and contradiction, because the strength of the Islamic *fitrah* will always direct the Ummah.**

**The only way we can protect Islam is to understand, know, and explain it well, and to ensure that the structure of the system of Islam is sound. Ideological and intellectual freedom has nothing to fear from an Islamic state, or from the principles, aims, and system of Islam. In fact, Islam**



guarantees ideological and intellectual freedom. Likewise, the vision and system of Islam have nothing to fear from ideological and intellectual freedom.

Freedom of thought in Islamic society is like a deep river flowing towards its destination. When it widens it becomes even more resplendant. On the basis of man's will and the relativity of the position of the truth, Muslim thought enjoys a tolerance which guarantees freedom of thought and belief, and a multiplicity of conflicting intellectual and ideological positions.

Within the Ummah there is little reason to fear the destruction of its bases from conflicting opinions. Rather, it provides room for free scope and balance, and provides stability and growth, because Islamic thought, with its clear vision based on the guidance, values, concepts, and principles of *wahy*, will remain strong. New growth and creativity are the products of an Ummah that has agreed upon its basic principles.

Cultural maturity is a necessary condition for people to be able to exercise their right to freedom, especially freedom of belief, because a primitive cultural environment, or cultural backwardness in some form of bedouinism, barbarity, or primitiveness, could mean that man is culturally, socially, or mentally immature in such a way as to make him unable to take responsible decisions. Certainly, this will disqualify him from his right to freedom. This means that he should be cared for until he reaches maturity, and should not be given the right to freedom or to bear responsibility for it until then.

This is what Islam tried to do at the beginning with regard to the primitive, idolatrous tribes of desert Arabia when, in its relationship with them, it resorted to every possible means to help them to rid themselves of their primitive practices and shortcomings, to liberate themselves from the social and cultural backwardness in which they were still living, and to end their hostility towards the Muslims and their allies. The Muslims' sense of responsibility towards man left them with no choice but to subject these barbaric tribes to the cultural system of Islam, and to

rescue them from their savage social behavior and idolatrous myths. Hence Islam clearly declared that as far as these tribes were concerned, the matter was not one of man's freedom of will and worship, but of subjecting them to the system of Islam and ridding them of the barbarity in which they were still living.

They are those with whom you made a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they have not the fear [of Allah] (8:56).

In a Believer they respect not the ties either of kinship or of covenant! It is they who have transgressed all bounds (9:10).

O you who believe! Truly the pagans are tainted; so let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque (9:28).

And fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together. But know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves (9:36).

And fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah sees all that they do (8:39).

The desert Arabs say, "We believe." Say: "You have no faith; but you [only] say, 'We have submitted our wills to Allah,' For not yet has faith entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His prophet, He will not belittle aught of your deeds, for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (49:14).

Islam's attitude towards the primitive, idolatrous desert Arabs was one of concern and seeking to provide the qualifications required for the right to freedom of will. It was not an attitude of denying the freedom of will to the quali-

fied man, or of going back on its basic attitude to man's freedom of worship. Islam's attitude was clear: it respected and preserved the right of the *ahl al kitāb* (Christians and Jews) to freedom of worship, despite their hostility and aggressive plotting. Islam also gave this right, stated clearly in the texts, to the people of other civilizations who were also qualified to make such decisions, such as the Persians and Magians, in spite of the fact that they were idolaters and worshippers of fire. It should therefore be perfectly clear that freedom of worship is a basic Islamic concept; and that the formation and application of Islamic cultural thought and methodology will never be correct unless this dimension is properly understood.

### **Freedom of Thought**

The dimension of freedom in human thought stems from and complements the dimension of the freedom of worship. Freedom of thought is related to one's moral freedom, but comes within the framework of ideological commitment. In an Islamic society, one is free to act according to one's own conscious moral convictions, to make ideological or intellectual choices, and to take decisions on the basis of these convictions and choices. If one is forced to do something of which one is not convinced or which one has not freely accepted, as it goes against one's nature, then that is Islamically unacceptable. So, according to Islamic methodology and thought, the final decision rests with the individual, and is related to his or her free will and the choice which it entails, a choice about which he or she alone will be asked, and the consequences of which he or she alone will have to bear in this world and the next.

Consult your heart ... even though people again and again have given you their legal opinions. (Aḥmad)

The one who strays does so at his own loss: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another (17:15).

In order to realize the purpose of existence and carry out the responsibilities of *khalifah*, freedom of thought and intellectual conviction are basic necessities. Oppressive abuse of thought and conviction denies the meaning and responsibility of life, and is unacceptable to Islam and its methodology. Islamic thought can only be built on the basis of commitment to the rights of freedom of worship and thought.

An Islamic society is one where there is freedom for creativity. But in the end, that society's progress, principles, and creativity are related only to the purpose of existence which is to reform and not to corrupt. Likewise, social behavior is based on the freedoms of worship and thought. This is not a theoretical or abstract matter, but a practical one.

Human behavior and action have a collective nature, that is, they must be carried out on the understanding that they interact with and complement society at large. The collective dimension of social behavior does not mean the suppression of the individual's will. Instead, it means that the individual's freedom of action in society must be controlled.

The individual's freedom of worship and thought should be controlled by society's beliefs and practices. Likewise, the regulations, laws, and public institutions of society are all intended to achieve the aims which that society has agreed upon, to facilitate the individual's performing to the best of his ability within those limits, and to enable him to express his wishes, way of thinking, and convictions through his actions. Society's regulations and public systems are based on the outlook of the majority. Even if an individual has beliefs which stem from his own convictions, he still cannot act in a way which goes against the public system, because individual behavior on the basis of freedom of thought and conviction, with no regard for society's regulations, will make that freedom a means of spreading confusion throughout society. In this situation, all rights and freedoms will become forfeit, and all meanings of human existence will be lost.

The legitimacy of an action depends upon whether that action adheres to the aims and general regulations agreed upon by the majority. The legitimacy of the majority's decision is, in turn, based upon its desire to realize the basic goal of human existence which, according to the Islamic concept, is to carry out the responsibilities of being a *khalifah* on earth. Any individual action which transgresses the regulations laid down by society loses its legitimacy. However, the regulations themselves will lose their legitimacy if they are not intended to preserve the individual's rights to freedom of belief and thought.

Individual Muslim behavior and the system of public legislation within Muslim society derive their legitimacy from a commitment to Islam and to its goals, purposes, principles, and values. Muslim legislators within a Muslim society cannot ignore the goals and values of Islam in the rules and regulations they propose because those rules are meant to release man's potential so that he may carry out his responsibilities as a *khalifah* on earth. Likewise, the individual Muslim's actions and behavior cannot ignore the regulations of the Muslim system as defined by the majority of Muslims on the basis of their commitment to Islam.

One of the basic principles of the Islamic system is that everything is lawful (*halāl*) except that which has been expressly forbidden in the clear texts of *wahy*, or that which is determined to go against the basic interests of society.

In the light of this principle, we can understand the concept of enjoining good and forbidding evil (*al amr bi al ma'rūf wa al nahy 'an al munkar*) in Islam. As freedom of thought and belief, it represents advice, exhortation, guidance, and direction. As social behavior, it represents jihad, action, sacrifice and the ability to protect society from being destroyed and losing sight of its objectives of renewal and bringing about reform.

### **The Principle of *Tawakkul***

*Tawakkul* means trust in Allah and acceptance of His divine decree (*qadā'* and *qadar*) in every aspect of life. *Tawakkul* means that the believer's heart has faith in the

power, wisdom, and justice of Allah, and believes that it is He who is in control of all things.

The *tawakkul* of the believer stems from his belief in the unseen and the predicates of the unseen world which Allah, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, controls; He alone has knowledge of it.

A Muslim's understanding of *tawakkul* is a natural and sensitive understanding which represents one of the most important sources of his or her psychological strength and energy; the source from which spring patience, forbearance, determination, contentment and happiness.

Verily, the decree, all of it, is Allah's (3:154).

O yes! Decree and creation belong to Him alone (7:54).

Of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you (17:85).

Nor shall they compass any of His knowledge except as He wills it (2:255).

Your reach is over all things, in Mercy and Knowledge (40:7).

The Muslim's belief in the divine predicates and the methodology of his thought concerning them are that everything will ultimately be for the good, because the true Muslim gives thanks when he is blessed and is patient at the time of trial. Likewise, when he has good fortune in this life, he will be content. And if bad fortune befalls him and he is patient and trusts in Allah, he will find his reward in the Hereafter. The Muslim's belief in the divine predicates is that a Muslim's efforts will ultimately succeed, whatever material successes or failures these efforts may have in this life. It is the belief that ultimately the truth will prevail and the jihad of the Ummah of truth will eventually be victorious; and that falsehood will fail and its supporters

will finally be defeated in the conflict between good and evil throughout history, when all shall rise to face Allah.

And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience (47:31).

And We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To Us must you return (21:35).

And those who strive in Our [cause], – We will certainly guide them to Our paths (29:69).

And strive in His cause as you should strive, [with sincerity and under discipline] (22:78).

O believers! If you will aid [the cause of] Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly (47:7).

"I only desire [your] betterment to the best of my power; and my success [in my task] can only come from Allah. In Him I trust and unto Him I turn" (11:88).

An excellent reward for those who do [good]! - those who persevere in patience, and put their trust in their Lord and Cherisher (29:58-59).

But that which is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord (42:36).

And to Him goes back every affair [for decision]: then worship Him, and put your trust in Him (11:123).

An important distinction needs to be made here. *Tawakkul* is not the same as *tawākul* (fatalistic acceptance). *Tawakkul* is a Muslim's trust and acceptance of the divine predicates

which no one can know, or understand, or control, except Allah. The meaning of *tawākul*, on the other hand, contains elements of inertia, inability, and general incompetence, for it indicates a refusal to strive in accordance with the laws and standards which Allah has laid down for humankind. The fatalism inherent in the concept of *tawākul* spells both disobedience to the commandments of Allah and defiance of nature, *fiṭrah*. Shortcomings in striving to know and use the appropriate means and to follow the natural laws do not stem from trust in Allah, or *tawakkul*. Rather, finding and using appropriate means are the essence of man's responsibility in this life; it is that by which his will is tested, and it is the purpose of his existence. But *tawākul* is a corruption of this sort of faith. Hence, when a bedouin who had confused *tawakkul* for *tawākul* came to the Prophet and asked about this matter, the Prophet explained it clearly: "Take the appropriate action, then put your trust in Allah."

Following the same principle, 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb answered those who thought that he was fleeing from the decree of Allah when he refused to enter a land which was infected by the plague. They thought that neglecting to find the correct means, or that failing to work according to the natural laws which Allah had imposed upon the universe was true *tawakkul* and reliance upon Allah. 'Umar's reply was very clear: "I flee from one decree of Allah to another."

If one becomes infected, that is the decree of Allah; and if one seeks to protect oneself from that infection, that too is the decree of Allah. Everything happens by the will of Allah, and striving to use the appropriate means in accordance with the natural laws also stems from the decree of Allah. It is a way of obeying Him. Certainly, it does not imply *kufṛ*, or that one is not relying upon Him.

From this clear distinction between the meanings of *tawakkul* and *tawākul*, and in the light of what man's *fiṭrah* dictates, and Allah's commands to man to be a *khalīfah* on earth and to manage and care for it, we can easily understand that *tawākul* is unnatural. Certainly, Islam does not teach it. On the contrary, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Islamic meaning of *tawakkul*, or with the first



Muslims' beliefs. In fact, it contradicts every aspect of the life of the Prophet and his Companions, their jihad, the efforts they expended in accordance with the natural laws, their planning, and their ways of thinking.

### **The Causality of Human Nature**

If we understand the above, we will also appreciate that causality is a basic concept in the life and thought of Muslims. *Fitrah* and *'aqidah* explain that Allah created the universe, subjected it to laws and standards, then entrusted it to man to care for, to master, and to strive to civilize and reform. Allah enabled man to carry out his responsibilities and express his will by using the appropriate means in accordance with the natural laws. So the Muslim mind and *fitrah* have no way to carry out their responsibilities of directing and subjecting creation, unless they adopt the appropriate means and strive to apply them in all fields of life.

He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion: it is He Who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions (25:2).

Glorify the name of your Guardian-Lord Most High, Who has created, and further, given order and proportion; Who has ordained laws and granted guidance (87:1-3).

[Such is] the artistry of Allah, Who disposes of all things in perfect order: for He is well acquainted with all that you do (27:88).

[Establish] Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: [let there be] no change in the work [done] by Allah (30:30).

Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the

recompense of what it has earned, and that none of them be wronged (45:22).

Many were the ways of Life that passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected the truth (3:137).

Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends (18:84).

But no change will you find in Allah's way [of dealing], and no turning off (35:43).

Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; that man can have nothing but what he strives for; that [the fruit of] his striving will soon come in sight; then will he be rewarded with a reward complete (53:38-41).

And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect (45:13).

Surely, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: so that He rewards those who do evil according to their deeds, and He rewards those who do good with what is best (53:31).

He [it was] Who created death and life, to test you [in order to know] the best among you in deed (67:2).

He will give you stewardship over earth, and see what you do (7:129).

Nor did We create heaven and earth and all [that lies] between in jest (21:16).

This understanding of the meaning of life clarifies for human beings that their responsibility in this life depends

on how they use the laws of nature ordained upon all creation by Allah. The role of humans, therefore, revolves around the ways in which they put these laws to use. Then, by dealing in an innovative manner with creation for practical purposes, humankind develops and prospers.

Unless there is an appreciation in humans for the principles of causality, they will never be able to understand how they are responsible for their actions. When their minds cease to innovate, their actions will be stillborn, and their ability to perceive and understand will suffer decrease. This should explain the reasons for the success of the Prophet's methodology: jihad, ijtihad, organization, thought, and respect for the laws of nature.

The basis of Muslim strength and ability, as well as creativity, stems from faith in the face of obstacles and challenges, and in the determination to discover and use the appropriate means in accordance with the laws of nature. It is only when Muslims exercise this manner of strength, ability, and creativity that they become deserving of the aid, succor, and success promised by Allah to those who truly believe.

The early generations of Muslims understood this, and the result was that they were successful. If Muslims today have any notions of achieving success and the aid of Allah, they will do so only if they seek the means appropriate to attaining their goals, political, scientific, educational, social, technological, or whatever.

If Muslims become content to live with their own shortcomings, they cannot realistically expect Allah to fulfill His promises to them. If they concern themselves with no more than the discussion of points of theology, they will continue in their backwardness. For true Muslims, there is no way that they will truly carry out their responsibilities unless they work in harmony with the natural order of the universe, unless they understand the requirements of their *fitrah*, unless they take guidance from their creed, and unless they adopt the methodology ordained by Allah for dealing responsibly with the universe.

Allah's promise is the truth...and whose word could be truer than Allah's? (4:122).

### **Islamic Methodology: Means and Application**

Let us now discuss the areas in which the methodology of Islamic thought may be applied. Owing to the influences of backwardness, the isolation of the intellectual leadership, and the concept of religion as understood through the filter of Western experience, the areas in which Islamic thought and methodology may find practical application have been relegated almost entirely to the spheres of the spiritual and personal concerns of individual believers. Plainly, however, the scope of this unique thought and methodology is potentially far greater.

It is clear that Islam directs the efforts of believers towards the fulfillment of their role as *khulafā'*. In short, everything in the seen world should be understood by Muslims as the legitimate field of their endeavors. There they may put to use their energies and abilities in order to deal with all that they require, and do so on the basis of the guidance, principles, values, and natural laws that pertain to the purpose of their existence as expounded by the revelation from the unseen world and the knowledge of Allah.

On the basis of this understanding, therefore, we may say that the methodology of Islamic thought is a comprehensive methodology which directs the activities of Muslims through all phases of reform and development.

Since the methodology of Islamic thought is distinguished by the comprehensiveness of its scope of application, it needs also to be distinguished by the comprehensiveness of its means. Life, in all its aspects, is the field of application for Muslims. In it they are obliged to understand, to seek knowledge, and to strive with every means at their disposal to direct the affairs of their lives toward their goals. Among the sound means of acquiring knowledge and understanding there are none that Muslims are to ignore, whether these be material, semantic, artistic, scientific, empirical, rational, quantitative, qualitative, theoretical, or

analytical. But any means which inherently contradict the objectives of man's mission and nature, means that lead him astray into either meaningless or evil pursuits, must be rejected. If the Muslim mind is to regain its equilibrium and begin to fulfill its reformational responsibilities, it must extract itself from its preoccupation with petty controversy and devote itself to the creative adoption of the means with which to achieve its goals.

Having perceived that the methodology of Islamic thought is comprehensive in nature and scope, we come to the realization that the structure of Islamic knowledge, thought, and culture must be based on the everyday realities of life at the levels of the individual, society, the Ummah, and all of human civilization. The kind of knowledge to be sought and used, therefore, is that which is sound in its principles, aims, and structure. Knowledge without these characteristics will be worthless when measured against the standards of Islamic teachings and principles. Any structure of Muslim knowledge, thought, or science that does not provide the Muslim mind with the means to achieve the best possible understanding and performance is not a true Islamic structure or methodology for thought, knowledge, or life. Without a comprehensive methodology, in terms of both scope and application, Muslims will never be able to fulfill their trust, propagate the message, or regain their position as God's vicegerents.

You are the best of people evolved for humankind;  
enjoining right and forbidding evil, and believing in  
Allah (3:110).

In view of the success of Islamic methodology as practiced by the early generations of Muslims, despite all the challenges they faced and their lack of experience in setting up institutions, we have no recourse but to study that methodology and the innovative *ijtihad* it produced, so as to understand better how principles were put into motion. The early generations and those who followed close behind them were able to preserve for us the texts of revelation

from which they drew their inspiration and derived the principles of their methodology. These, in turn, became the subject of much academic inquiry and study. Owing to the strained relations between the scholars, however, and the political leadership of the Ummah, no attention of similar significance was paid to the practical spheres of life. Thus, very little *ijtihād* was applied to questions and issues of politics, economics, and society in general. The result of the repression of *ijtihād* in these spheres has been that until this day there has been no formulation of these sciences from a purely Islamic perspective. In other words, the sort of integrated methodology needed to understand and deal Islamically with the realities of life and society was never developed.

In fact, Islamic thought has not progressed much further than to record the principles key to the methodology which governed the formulations and strategies of the early generations, including the secondary source methodology (discussed earlier) that included *maṣlaḥah*, *daf' al ḍarar*, *'urf*, *istihṣān*, and *istishāb*. So in order to make Islamic thought and methodology of use to the Ummah, we must examine the earlier methodology and then distinguish between sources, means, and fields of study and application.

Islamic thought must undertake a methodological study to articulate the Shari'ah's aims, purposes and directives so that these may serve as introductions to Islamic studies in various fields of life: politics, economics, psychology, education, the arts, and technology. Then, in the light of these general introductions, specialized methodologies may be established for each one of these fields. In this way, Islamic thought will be able to play its role in contributing to the social sciences. Islamic religious and educational institutions can no longer confine their studies to the texts of revelation, or remain isolated from the fields of social and technological studies. All of these are different aspects of human life and activity; and all of them represent fields in which Islam has some application. It is therefore the Muslim's responsibility to develop the methodological and

disciplinary principles according to which these Islamic sciences can be established.

In order to establish the basic Islamic premises representing the aims, values, and tenets of Islam, Muslim thinkers will first have to classify the texts of revelation, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Thereafter, they will have to do the same with the literature of the classical intellectual legacy. In this second exercise, they will have to sift through all those works, and determine which of them showed biases, either political or sectarian, or the influence of the myths, legends, and *isra'iliyyāt* which crept into many of the later works of that legacy. Such a classification could be carried out in the various disciplines and sciences, each in accordance with the dictates of a modern Islamic perspective. This classification is necessary so that Muslim students, researchers, and specialists will have easy access to the revelational texts and the intellectual heritage, and thus be enabled to derive from them comprehensive sets of aims, values, and principles. Then, in the light of these, Muslim scholars will be able to begin to work creatively in their various disciplines.

Clearly, the situation of the Muslim world today is one of suffering and confusion. Contemporary Islamic thought and sciences offer no answers to its needs and challenges. On the contrary, these seem only to add to the average Muslim's confusion. Under the circumstances, then, Islamic thought has no alternative but to begin reforming the existing secular sciences by laying down the premises necessary for the establishment of uniquely Islamic approaches in all fields of knowledge.

The texts of the Sunnah need to be classified according to which hadiths are sound in both form and content, and in a way that will facilitate dealing with this material, in terms of subjects or key words, by researchers. Then, besides classifying and regulating the texts on a methodological basis, and presenting the hadith reports clearly, there need to be historical studies of the Prophet's times and those of the early generations: studies that will assist researchers in better understanding the cultural and

social circumstances under which the hadiths were revealed, and to which the efforts of the first generations responded.

### **A Word in Closing**

Academic circles in the West today and the secularist Muslims who follow them attempt to weigh Islam on the same scale they use to weigh all religions. To their way of thinking, Islam, like all religions, should be allowed to have no connection with modern society and the policies which govern it. In their estimation, Islam and religion in general are little more than ideas from the past, or mythological lore of no consequence to the present age. Such ideas, they hold, belong in museums, or should at best be confined to the realm of the personal spiritual experience.

Still, if this sort of thinking is in any way valid in relation to religions other than Islam, religions in which the original teachings and beliefs have been corrupted and often replaced with the incredible, this is certainly not true of Islam. It is very important to realize that the methods of presenting Islam used by its adherents today are less than adequate for explaining its eternal truths, or for showing how it differs from the others, or its relevance to the world of today. This can only be accomplished through the sort of serious scholarship that was mentioned above, scholarship that ultimately transforms ideas into action and a living reality which demands recognition and respect from all quarters of contemporary society.

O you who believe! Respond to Allah and to His Messenger when He calls you to what will revive you!  
(8:24)

We revealed the Book to you in explanation of everything, and as guidance, mercy, and good tidings to those who believe (16:89)

Then is one who walks headlong, with his face downcast, better guided? Or one who walks evenly



**on a straight path? (67:22)**

**He it is that sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion, so that He may proclaim it over all other religions (61:9)**

**Who is better spoken than he who calls to Allah, and does good deeds, and says: 'I am one of the believers,' (41:33).**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Requirements for Establishing the Islamic Civilizational Sciences**

In this chapter we shall consider some of the more important elements, as well as the steps and stages, required for the establishment of Islamic civilizational sciences. When we speak of sciences here, we refer to all human knowledge and learning, including those sciences that deal with human society (i.e., the social sciences and the humanities), the sciences of technology, and the natural and applied sciences.

Earlier in this volume, it was mentioned that the classical Islamic discipline of *uṣūl al fiqh* contained the foundations for serious academic inquiry into the various aspects of life. These early foundations also included the precursors of academic inquiry into the social sciences. Unfortunately, the general principles relating to *ijtihād* in the classical *uṣūl al fiqh* studies were never allowed to develop significantly. This was also true for rational inquiry into the issues and conditions of humanity from the Shari'ah perspective. Thus none of these early indications or promises ever materialized in the form of methodological foundations or well-defined academic disciplines that used rational inquiry to study various aspects of life, especially the field of social studies. It should be obvious, then, that there is no point in relying on the collection of legalistic rulings and judgments from the classical discipline of *fiqh*,

or even on its general principles, as the intellectual and academic basis for solutions and alternatives, for that discipline never provided the Muslim mind with the capacity to initiate or renew, or with the rational and intellectual tools needed to deal with the realities and responsibilities of social life.

This statement is meant to underscore the previously mentioned need to seek new foundations in Islamic methodology for the social sciences and the humanities, and for the natural sciences and technology as well. In this way, the sciences of revelation will complement these sciences and provide humanity with knowledge guided by revelation on the one hand, and by reason, intellect, and the laws of nature on the other.

In this study, we shall attempt to take a few steps toward establishing the existence of viable sources of derivation for the social sciences in Islamic thought. In addition, we shall study the matter of a preliminary work plan for the Islamization of these sciences.

### **Classifying Islamic Texts**

Without easy access to the revealed texts, it is inconceivable that either the Islamization of knowledge or the Islamization of the social sciences will occur. Such access needs to be accurate and yet simple enough so that any Muslim scholar can deal with it. It was also explained earlier that the issue of providing access to the revealed texts requires not only rearranging the subjects, but also ridding them of all obscurities.

But classifying the texts of revelation, and especially the texts of the Sunnah, requires that the methodology for dealing with them be presented in a new way, so that scholars and educated Muslims may bypass the technicalities and academic niceties that have historically characterized studies of the Sunnah. Only in this way will scholars and generalists benefit from the wealth of material contained in those texts.

In order that the texts be understood and applied properly, it is essential that lexical and historical studies be

undertaken to place each one in its respective context. Only in this way will the student or researcher fully understand the texts' higher purposes, underlying principles, and basic concepts. A proper interpretation of the texts is impossible without first clearing away the influence of circumstances existing at the time and place of their revelation or, in the case of Sunnah texts, articulation. By such an academic preparation, such texts may become living representations of unambiguous meaning and significance. Likewise, it is important that this academic groundwork be undertaken in the most reliable and authentic manner possible, so that commentary on the text is never mistaken for the text itself, and so that matters of less-than-certain authenticity may not be confused for the unmistakably authentic. Thus, by means of an established academic methodology, the meanings and contexts of each text will become clear. Moreover, texts for which such clarification is not altogether possible may be left to be understood in the light of the greater perspective of the *sīrah*, the history of the first Islamic period, and the general principles and higher purposes of Islam.

Moreover, it is essential that these ordered and authenticated texts issue from reliable institutions of learning or research, or from qualified and trusted scholars. It will also be necessary for scholars and researchers to adopt a positive attitude toward such studies and compilations and then study and criticize them in a constructive manner. Likewise, Muslim academic circles must give this task the priority required to ensure that the work is completed. In this way, they will do Islamic thought a great service. It is also essential that modern information technology be used to collect and classify the revealed texts. Another project would be to index the contents of all major texts of the classical heritage (*turāth*). This would allow Muslims to become acquainted with the work and experiences of their ancestors and to derive benefit from the fruit of their intellectual labors.

At the present time, the International Institute of Islamic Thought considers this issue to be among its priorities and

is therefore engaged in its promotion. It is hoped that all Muslim individuals, organizations, and academic specialists will work together for the successful conclusion of this undertaking.

### **A Comprehensive Civilizational Outlook**

As Muslims prepare to shoulder a more serious role in the social sciences, they should realize that they are not beginning from scratch. On the contrary, Muslims have made valuable contributions to the history of civilization. Nevertheless, as other communities make enormous strides in this area, Muslims have begun to view the foot race for preeminence in the civilization of the modern world as a challenge to Islam.

Since becoming aware of this challenge, Muslims have begun to learn about the efforts of others in this area of endeavor. In addition, they have begun to establish relations with the hope of obtaining that which they have missed. Unfortunately, however, not very much has been accomplished, and the gulf dividing them from other communities continues to grow wider, despite all the efforts and money spent by Muslims.

It is quite obvious that greater efforts to translate the science and literature of other communities, or to increase the number of students sent to their universities, will not change this unfortunate situation. Moreover, the reasons for this sorry state of affairs may be traced to the Muslim mentality of imitation, its methodology of taking only half measures, and the evaporation of its religious fervor and psychological self-esteem.

It should also be noted that what is needed for the establishment of a sound relationship between Islamic and Western thought is the provision of comprehensive studies to the Muslim mind and Muslim student. These studies should focus on contemporary thought and civilization, their history, values, objectives, and their complementary relationships. In this way, our intellectuals will be able to free themselves from either drowning or becoming dissolved in the sea of Western thought. They will also be enabled to

deal independently with the issues of that thought. The end result will be that Islamic thought will benefit from the experiences of other nations without having to sacrifice its own foundations or distinguishing features.

It is also important to distinguish between being overwhelmed by the thought and culture of others and selecting and adopting what is truly beneficial from that thought and culture. When a careful and attentive selection is being made, questions of faith, identity, intentions, and principles cannot be bargained or trifled with. Rather, the matter is merely one of choosing the most beneficial means available and then using them in a way that will be of the most value to the Ummah. Such a form of borrowing may thus be termed a studied and ordered breakthrough. This is also the foundation for successful grafting between civilizations. The Prophet used this technique when he dealt with the People of the Book. He also directed his companions and Muslim society to use the same method. The West used it in its early encounters with Islam and Islamic civilization during the latter's golden age. Borrowing from the Muslim world did not change the identity, beliefs, or fundamental orientation of the West. On the contrary, the West fought every Islamic influence of a religious or doctrinal nature and used every possible means of propaganda and censorship. Quite often, for example, it fabricated falsehoods about Islam, the Prophet, and major Muslim personalities.

It is for this reason that a sound and comprehensive understanding of contemporary society is essential for any sort of cross-cultural exchange. Indeed, such an understanding makes it possible to benefit from the learning and technology of others without having to sacrifice one's values, principles, identity, and beliefs in the process. Therefore, great care should be taken in regard to mistaking imitation for exchange. This process of borrowing must be done on the basis of the equality of both parties, not one being the leader and the other the follower.

This is the mission that the International Institute of Islamic Thought has undertaken. By providing Muslims with comprehensive studies of Western social sciences and

civilization, as opposed to mere translations, the Institute is seeking to enable the Muslim mind to deal correctly with Western civilization. In fact, the Institute hopes to publish a comprehensive work on the beginnings and objectives, the historical progression and accomplishments, and the strengths and weaknesses of Western civilization. Such a work will fill a gap that has existed for far too long in contemporary Islamic thought. Indeed, the Institute welcomes the cooperation of all Muslim scholars and thinkers in making a success of this important project.

### **Premises of the Social Sciences**

The purpose of the social sciences and the humanities is to conduct methodical inquiry into three realms:

- (1) the natures and relationships of beings and the universe,
- (2) the reality and the potential of society and of the challenges it faces, and
- (3) the systems, concepts, policies, and alternatives necessary to the life of society.

Given all of this, however, what is the connection between the objectives of revelation as articulated by Islam and the various fields and disciplines in the social sciences?

The way to make this connection is to classify the premises of the social sciences alongside the corresponding fundamentals of Islam in order to define their framework and clarify their objectives and purposes. If this is not done, the resulting studies will consist of no more than statistics, charts, and analyses that draw their inspiration from sources other than Islam and revelation.

There are two kinds of desired Islamic premises as regards the social sciences. The first are general premises having to do with the general principles of Islam. These premises define the major values and priorities of life in Islam, Islamic systems, and the Islamic personality. The second kind is that of vital academic work which includes:

- (1) the premises and foundations of every science and discipline, including the social sciences;

- (2) the nature, reality, potential, and relations of each discipline;
- (3) the purposes, values, orientations, and Islamic methodological guidelines for each discipline;
- (4) discussion of each academic field in the light of these principles and values; and
- (5) the landmarks of knowledge and the major issues which clarify the Islamic view of that knowledge as distinguished from the non-Islamic vision and objectives, and the effects that these have on society under different circumstances.

Even though these premises may be traced to the revealed texts, they will nonetheless be derivations obtained through *ijtihad* and will thereby represent rational inquiry and the Islamic response to various civilizational challenges. As such they will represent examples of free and creative Islamic thinking that is open to discussion, criticism, and correction. Undoubtedly, as the Islamic contribution gradually grows stronger, these premises will mature and be absorbed into the mainstream of knowledge. In this manner, the Islamic contribution to the social sciences and all branches of knowledge will increase. Likewise, the Islamic treatment of these subjects will become distinct in terms of its outlook and contributions.

It is important for us to understand that Muslims must bring about the requisite civilizational and methodological changes in Islamic thought and thus release it from its particularist and theoretical confines as well as from the effects of its long battle with the political leadership. Muslims must also develop a sound and comprehensive methodology for their thought so that they may reopen the door to *ijtihad* and overcome the sort of mentality bred by *taqlid*. If Muslims cannot succeed in such undertakings, the Ummah's current deplorable situation will not change. Moreover, the efforts of contemporary Islamic movements and organizations will come to nothing, as happened with their predecessors.

Our study of contemporary Islamic movements that have sprung up in deserts clarifies that the reason for their initial



success was that they began in an environment closely resembling that of the Prophet's time. It is obvious that Islamic movements characterized by imitation, particularism, and a merely historical and descriptive understanding of Islam, its institutions, and its civilizational foundations will never flourish away from a remote desert. The failure of these movements was inevitable, even if some did succeed in coming to power at local or national levels, for they were totally unprepared to deal with the challenges of modern society. Thus, before they suffered either military or political loss, they had lost on the battleground of thought and culture.

In this way, one Islamic movement followed another, each one as culturally and intellectually unqualified as the next to effect any sort of positive change in Muslim society, to renew and reform it, or even to save it from the forces threatening its existence. Perhaps a study of their leaders (i.e., al Sanūsī in Libya, al Mahdī in Sudan, Shah Walī Allah in India, and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb in Arabia) would shed more light on this analysis.

In order for an Islamic movement to succeed in the modern Islamic world, it must first seek to reform the methodology of Islamic thought and the way it looks at civilization in general. Only in this way will the efforts and jihad of the Ummah rise above the oft-heard emotional and sentimental appeals that do nothing to produce the changes in thought and culture needed to combat contemporary challenges, to clarify the Ummah's identity and personality, or to recast its approaches and social institutions in an Islamic mold.

Unless changes are made in methodology, no constructive efforts can take place, and no undertaking will amount to anything. In fact, such efforts represent a steady drain of valuable resources, while the gulf between the Ummah and the rest of the world grows even wider. The Ummah stands to witness the continued forfeiture of territory, wastage of resources, loss of allegiance, and the befalling of even more disasters unless it begins to address properly the real issues confronting it.

The importance of reforming Muslim thought and methodology should now be quite clear. It is equally important that we realize that our suffering will increase and that time is not on our side, despite the wealth of our religion, our history, and our lands, as long as our thought, our psychological make-up, and our culture remain deformed and disabled.

It is our responsibility to look at ourselves critically and to face up to our own shortcomings. This is not easy, but rather bitter and painful. However, if we are to be honest with ourselves, overcome our emotionalism, and put aside our inflated estimations of our abilities, accomplishments, and selves, such an undertaking cannot be avoided. Only if we do this will we be able to benefit from the lessons of the past and put them to use for the future.

To expand on our treatment of Islamic methodology, it is now appropriate to discuss some of the premises that distinguish the Islamic perspective from contemporary perspectives on civilization. Indeed, on the basis of these premises, one might begin to hope that one day the Ummah will make important original contributions to humanity.

The inclusiveness of the Islamic concepts of human nature and *fitrah* is what makes the Islamic perspective so complete. This perspective, in addition to providing a proper and unique basis for study, research, and analysis in the social sciences and humanities, also promises to make positive contributions to humanity. Our discussion of these premises will concentrate on the following topics:

- the dimensions of human existence in Islam: a collective singularity and a comprehensive plurality;
- The purpose of existence and the reason for order in the universe; and
- The impartiality of truth and the reality of human nature and social relations.

### **The Dimensions of Human Existence in Islam: A Collective Singularity and Comprehensive Plurality**

Human existence, viewed from the Islamic perspective, is distinguished by its comprehensive plurality within a

unified human singularity. This outlook represents a very important methodological assumption with far-reaching consequences for the study of behavior, human nature, and the Muslim personality in particular.

To a great extent, religions and ideologies are either limited to, or simply focus on, a single aspect of human existence. Thus, to varying degrees, all other aspects are ignored. So, in spite of the successes and achievements of these religions and ideologies, the people who subscribe to them remain, both individually and collectively, confused and subject to inner conflicts.

Western materialism, at the level of the individual, focuses on the senses and on pleasures and desires. Then, in spite of all that Western civilization has accomplished in terms of physical comfort and pleasure, the individual finds him/herself enveloped by psychological maladies; and society finds itself subject to the negative effects of these maladies as they multiply and become more acute.

Likewise, materialist totalitarian Marxism concentrates almost exclusively on material and economic concerns. Thus, it has taken as its highest objectives production and the freeing of humankind from material needs. Yet, in spite of that, the individual in the Marxist system is no less prone to the psychological maladies that beset his/her Western European counterparts. Thus, both ideologies have failed miserably to provide the individual and society as a whole with a sense of well-being and security.

The religions of the far East which belittle the desires and needs of humankind in ways even more severe than the doctrines of self-denial and abstinence taught by Christianity have also failed to solve the problems of backwardness and hopelessness that confront their followers individually and collectively. It was the lack of faith in these religions that led whole populations, like the people of China, to seek deliverance in materialist ideologies and totalitarianism. Thus, the shortcomings in these religions should be obvious to anyone who pauses to consider them. Nor should it surprise anyone if people turn and run from these religions and from the emptiness they represent.

But Islam, as articulated by the indisputable texts of revelation, is distinguished by the way in which it deals with the nature, being and needs of humankind. Islam acknowledges that humans have natural desires, aspirations, and longings. Indeed, these are considered by Islam to be favors which Allah has bestowed upon humankind. Thus, if they are put to proper and constructive uses, they will afford pleasure and satisfaction as well as beauty and renewal of strength and life.

Islam also acknowledges that humans have material and economic needs and considers these to be a means of living, fulfillment, innovation, and establishing an order of truth, justice, and well being for all members of society. Thus, Islam refuses to relegate humankind to the level of mere matter, for it refuses to suppose that humankind is no more than the stirrings of the spirit. Rather, Islam sees humankind as both matter and spirit, body and soul, with an earthly existence and a heavenly goal. Thus, every deed or material achievement in human life is, from the Islamic perspective, an outward form, or a material expression designed to achieve a spiritual objective that gives meaning to existence.

As Islam sees it, a human is a material being with desires and longings, and with the need to work in order to survive. At the same time, however, a human being is a soul with a higher spiritual purpose that causes it to strive in the ways of goodness and reform. It is for this reason that every sort of worship or act of remembrance and devotion prescribed by Islam is really very simple to perform. In addition, these acts bring to those who perform them benefits of both a spiritual and a material nature. Cleanliness, for example, comes of *wuḍū'*, orderliness comes of *ṣalāh*, patience and forbearance come of *ṣawm*, generosity comes of *zakah*, and equality comes of *ḥajj*. The objective in every instance is to prepare the soul to perform good deeds, to honor trusts, to bear the responsibilities of *khilāfah*, and to do good on earth through reform and civilization. Consider the following verses of the Qur'an:

**And Allah forbids all shameful deeds, reprehensible actions, and rebellion: He advises you so that you may take these matters to heart (16:90).**

**Have you seen the one who denies the final Judgment? That is the one who turns away the orphan and does not encourage the feeding of the poor (107:1–3).**

**If anyone does a righteous deed it enures to the benefit of his/her own soul; If he/she does evil, it works against it [his/her own soul] (45:15).**

**He who created life and death, that He may try which of you are better in deed (67:2).**

**Then anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, shall see it. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it (99:7–8).**

**The Prophet of Allah said:**

**A kind word is charity.**

**In your sexual satisfaction there is charity.**

**A person was sentenced to the eternal Fire for mistreating a cat, while another person was thanked by Allah and forgiven for giving water to a dog on a hot day.**

**The Islamic perception of the human being is that as the facets of his/her existence, needs, and personality multiply, he or she is, at the same time, a single and complete entity endowed with both material and spiritual aspects that are as agreeable as they are inseparable. There can be no felicity or balance for a human being in this world if any one of these aspects is ignored or put to incorrect use.**

By means of this perception, the menial and limited life of a human being in this world takes on a whole new dimension. Life is to be followed by life, and death is not the end of one's existence. Life was given to humans for a purpose, and in life situations humans are free to exercise their own will. Then, the eternity that follows this life will be the result of the nature of one's life in this world. In other words, one's position in the next life will depend on the kind of life one led in this world. Only this perception of human life reflects the reality of its composition and destination as well as its *fitrah*. Therefore, unless one achieves more than the mere satisfaction of one's physical needs and desires in this life, one will never achieve psychological and emotional balance, stability, or security. On the contrary, one would resemble an animal who would stoop to any depravity in order to survive a life that is destined to end anyway. Such an animal knows nothing of where it came from, or why, or where it is going, or how. All it knows is that it came, and that it is going. Its limited understanding, however, is unable to determine with any sort of certainty the objective toward which it must head, or the purpose for which it was placed on this earth.

The individual in this world, when faced with worldly calamities, changes, and trials is incapable of finding true happiness in life unless he/she recognizes that there is another dimension to it, one which corrects and puts everything right. Otherwise, what kind of life would it be? An animal's life would clearly be better for, after all, an animal has no understanding and would therefore never miss things like justice or fairness if they were to be withheld from it.

Thus, the Islamic concept of the afterlife is an important one for the way in which it contributes to the mental balance and felicity of the individual. A correct Muslim life, owing to its singularity, comprehensiveness, and belief in the afterlife, will lead to contentment, felicity, and security. The effort one expends in the course of it will never be allowed to go to waste: not the patience, not the thanksgiving, and not the trust in Allah's justice and wisdom. These

are the provisions a Muslim takes with him/her on the journey of life. And thus the self rests satisfied and appreciative because its worldly life includes aspects of both the mundane and the sublime.

It is not difficult to imagine, then, what confusion and difficulty will beset the Muslim personality, and society as a whole, if the individual Muslim's perception of the afterworld is adversely affected. Certainly, the issue of the afterlife is not a secondary one. On the contrary, its prominence is such that it deeply affects both Muslim society and the individual.

From the Islamic perspective of the human being as a unified singularity, no conflict is seen to exist between the individual and the societal aspects of life. Rather, both are manifestations of a single being and its needs and both have, as material and spiritual realities, their own dimensions and ramifications. Human society, in both physical and theoretical terms, is composed of individuals. Likewise, the individual can neither exist or survive without society. Human life is therefore a combination of these two dimensions, and the Islamic concept of human life is therefore not one of conflict. Another result of this logic is that Islam is antithetical to all forms of oppression, tyranny, injustice and corruption.

What needs to be noted in the matter of how Islam confronts corruption is its distinguishing between what is unambiguously laid down as divine commandment and what is no more than opinion, or interpretation, or *ijtihad*. Matters of interpretation, then, return finally for the consideration of the Ummah or, more specifically, those entrusted with the responsibility of solving the Ummah's political and legislative problems (*ahl al ḥall wa al 'aqd*). So these are matters in which no decision can be correct unless it has received the approval of the Ummah through the process of *shūrà*.

## **The Purpose of Existence and the Reason for Order in the Universe**

We have previously discussed the topic of approaches, including the purpose of existence, as a component and a basic assumption of the sort of Islamic methodology that guides all forms of research and academic endeavor through the various branches of knowledge. It is this component, in fact, which protects Islamically oriented academic inquiry from deception, ignorance, and inadvertent deviation. In this way, academic inquiry undertaken from an Islamic perspective may proceed, with the insight provided by the *fitrah*, toward the establishment of a universal order of goodness, reform, and civilization in which there is no room for corruption, deviation, perversion, superstition, or *kufi*.

O Our Lord! Surely You have not created this in vain!  
(3:191)

## **The Impartiality of Truth and the Reality of Human Nature and Social Relations**

Islamic thought, with its approaches and concepts springing from belief in Allah and His oneness, includes a very basic assumption in the way it looks into any field of knowledge. This general and basic assumption is that truth and reality, right and wrong, and good and evil are in fact neutral realities which must be understood in the light of both the nature which Allah has created in humankind and the revelations which He has sent to guide them. From this standpoint, the Muslim mind is a scientific one which seeks knowledge on its own terms and according to its own objective rules, rather than on the basis of whim or presupposed notions. For this reason the efforts of the Muslim mind will not be wasted and will not go astray.

If the Truth had been in accord with their desires,  
truly the heavens and the earth and all beings  
therein would have been corrupted (23:71).



**And who is more astray than one who follows his own desires, devoid of guidance from Allah? (28:50).**

**So have you ever seen anyone [like one] who takes as his god his own vain desire? (45:23).**

**If the contemporary materialistic mind is forced in its study of the hard sciences and technology to be objective, that same mind will be transformed into a refractory devil when loosed upon the social sciences and humanities. Then, in the name of scientific inquiry it rationalizes all manner of aberrations. It is for this reason that we witness a never-ending succession of "schools" in the social sciences, each with its own theories and prognostications. In the meantime, however, society remains in a state of confusion, unable to find relief from the problems that beset it.**

**Materialist studies in the social sciences completely ignore the element of revelation. Instead of viewing this as one of its major weaknesses, materialist scholarship in the social sciences claims that its field is complex and incomprehensible to non specialists. Social sciences which rely solely on human reason, however, will inevitably go astray. This is because, on its own, the human mind is incapable of understanding the complete objective truth about, and the higher purposes of, the human experience.**

**The Western intellectual heritage that ignored and mistrusted revelation as a source of knowledge came about as the result of deliberate distortions to the concepts of religion and prophethood. One of the only Western schools of thought to reflect the *fitrah* and to attempt to understand its concepts in a truthful and objective manner was the school of natural law. This school, however, never progressed for the reason that it had no connection to true and unaltered revelation. The Western concept of religion was badly distorted when the revelational sources available to them were interpreted in ways that contributed greatly to superstition and unscientific beliefs, not to mention social injustice.**

Academic research in the social sciences from an Islamic perspective should confidently and objectively inquire into life, the universe, nature, and everything else. In so doing, it will need to proceed in the light of the teachings, objectives and values of revelation. Only in this way will it not lose its way, or fall victim to its own inclinations.

In view of the preceding, it should not be surprising that Western scholarship in the social sciences has not been able to achieve anything like what it has achieved in the hard sciences and technology. Nor is it anything to marvel over that its successes in technology have been paralleled by failures in its institutions at the levels of society, the family, and the individual.

The objectivity of truth and reality is a living and dynamic concept in which relations are regulated by the *fitrah*, the natural laws of the universe, and values that distinguish between right and wrong. This concept is one that ignores the sophistry of diseased minds that cry out in the name of knowledge and free inquiry, and then attempt to belittle society's most basic standards of decency. Such minds do not balk at defending even the most disgusting perversions, and presenting them in such a way that they appear to be the rule rather than the exception. Such thought and blind methodology will never result in other than perversion, corruption, and deviation that further tear the fabric of society and destroy its family structure. If this is allowed to continue in Western society, it will lose all the values it acquired from revelation (through Christianity) and Islamic civilization (chiefly at the time of the Crusades).

Among the factors distinguishing Islamically oriented social studies from the non-Islamic is that Islamic social studies must always be mindful of its objectives and higher purposes. This is the guarantee that they will not stray from the truth, or from what is right, or that they will produce utter depravity in the name of academic freedom. Thus, whatever is unjust, oppressive, or overweening will remain unjust, oppressive, and overweening in spite of the academic terminology in which these may be disguised, or the terms of the arguments in which they are presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **The Premises of the Social Sciences**

If there are such things as general methodology and premises to the Islamic perspective on knowledge and the various sciences, there are also premises and methodological issues that are particular to each scientific field and discipline; and it is the responsibility of the contemporary Muslim scholar to determine exactly what these premises are so that these may be put to use, without confusion, as the need arises.

From the beginning, it has been my opinion that the new Islamic social sciences should be distinguished by these premises, and that they should attend to the explanation and clarification of the reasons for each set of premises and the extent to which they represent a truly Islamic perspective, respond to the Ummah's needs, and actually produce results.

There are several fields of study which need to be noted for the nature of the means and the methodology required to deal with them from within the overall framework of the Islamic perspective. Among them are those dealing with the study of the texts of revelation, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the way that these have been preserved. Other fields include the *maqāṣid* or higher Shari'ah purposes, the understanding of human nature and society, ways of dealing with society and helping it to achieve its ideals, social institutions, social policies, the establishment and

development of society, and the achievement of Islamic ideals for society.

Each of the fields mentioned here may be divided quite naturally into several subjects and disciplines. Our concern, at this early stage in the Islamization of knowledge, is to determine the importance of the field known in contemporary Western terminology as the "behavioral sciences" which include psychology, sociology, and anthropology. It is quite important that a start be made toward "Islamizing" these sciences because they are the ones that represent, on the agenda of today's scholars and thinkers, the proper fields for the study of human nature, the nature of society, the meaning of man, and the fundamental assumptions concerning man's nature, constitution, and needs. Moreover, they are the ones that influence, through their premises and theories, all the other social sciences and humanities.

No doubt, subjects like education, political science, economics, administration, and communications as well as the philosophy of each of these sciences are based in the main upon premises posited in the behavioral sciences, the findings of its research, and the concepts it has developed in relation to the nature of man and the patterns of his behavior. Then, if no Islamic premises are developed as alternatives to these premises, no real Islamization of the social sciences and its various disciplines will be possible.

All the efforts to Islamize the various branches of knowledge rest upon a single precondition; a proper understanding of the *fitrah* and the dynamics of human relations. Since such an understanding can only come about through the behavioral sciences, their Islamization is quite logically the first step toward the Islamization of the rest of the social sciences. Likewise, if the Islamization of subjects like education, political science, and economics is accounted among the priorities of Islamization, then the Islamization of the behavioral sciences is clearly a step toward the achievement of success in those spheres.

In order that this endeavor be successful, it will first be necessary to establish graduate and postgraduate programs, centers for research, and teaching departments in these subjects so that scholars and thinkers may together begin to develop sound Islamic perspectives on the issues.

### **Islamization and the Science of Education**

Having exhausted themselves looking for solutions to their problems, having failed to address the issues of their weakness and their backwardness, and having lost all hope of ascendancy in the physical, military, legal, and political sciences, Muslims turned toward the sciences of education, administration, and economics. Finally, they turned toward media and mass communications.

Then, amidst the bitterness of their failure to Westernize or modernize themselves using approaches other than Islamic, a reaction took place within the Ummah toward Islam. The attention of Muslims turned toward the concepts of Islamic *aṣālah* (innovative application of original Islamic principles) and the adoption of Islamic ways in the life and social systems of the Ummah. This, it was hoped, would deliver them from their problems and enable them to regain their constructive energies and abilities. Among the most important manifestations of this attitude is the undertaking to Islamize certain of the major applied social sciences like economics and communications, and the establishment of teaching departments and centers of research at universities.

The objective of all these efforts is undoubtedly a sound one. It is important to note, however, that these two particular fields, economics and communications, are concerned with means. Therefore, even though it is imperative that these two fields be Islamized, the fact remains that unless the educational and intellectual foundations of Muslims are Islamically oriented, undertakings in these fields will never be of value to Muslim society. Clearly, unless Muslim society including its political institutions is put in order, changes of this nature will amount to very little.

It is for this reason that Muslim scholars need to direct their reformative energies first of all toward education and political science. The forms that this attention might best take would include seminars, conferences, curriculum development, centers of study and research, and specialized academic departments.

At this stage it might be useful to note that among the most manifest aspects of the Islamic personality in recent times has been the inconsistency between what it claims and what it actually does or has the capacity to do. Despite the faith of Muslims in the superiority of Islam and the fact that the Ummah is the carrier of the eternal message of Islam to all mankind, the Ummah has not represented Islam or even reflected Islam in its daily life, its institutions, or its practices. Islam is barely present in the life of the Ummah, except perhaps as a myth to be celebrated in song. Even at the individual level where Islam may be expressed as values, character and behavior, it is presented in an incomplete and unsound manner with the result that Muslims have lost the power to inspire others to look at Islam as something desirable or worth considering as a way of life for themselves.

If one is familiar with thinking on Islamic education in recent centuries and its superficiality, one will easily discern that a comprehensive and imaginative solution to its problems will never take place without serious academic study of the subject. Random observations, no matter how insightful, will never accomplish anything. So in spite of all the observations made by Islamic thinkers in regard to the noble objectives of Islamic education, there remains a lack of concerted academic effort in the behavioral sciences and, in turn, in the study of humanity, its nature, and the ways in which it took shape and evolved.

The methods by which values, principles and fundamental Islamic concepts are instilled in students are clearly inappropriate for their mentality and level of development. In fact, the manner used by the Qur'an and the Prophet to address the pagan Arab tribes (and Quraysh) is the one that has most influenced Muslim teaching. Thus, even today

Muslim teachers use this style, without bothering to consider the condition of those they are addressing. It is for this reason that Muslim children are subjected to the harshest sort of schooling and upbringing; as if they were mature sons of Arab tribesmen who, like those the Prophet attempted to educate, need to be made aware of the consequences of their arrogance and continued refusal to accept the truth.

When an adult is taught a subject like the articles of faith, the subject is introduced in a way that appeals before all else to reason. But when children are presented this material, it needs to be organized in such a way that it encourages and develops the personality that will remain with the child throughout his/her entire lifetime. It was for this reason that the Prophet of Allah said, "The best of you in *jāhiliyah* will be the best of you in Islam; so long as you develop your understanding of Islam." In other words, those who develop strong and sound characters in their childhood will grow up to have such characters when they mature. Then, having attained maturity, their understanding and faith will serve to direct their strengths and abilities toward noble and worthwhile objectives.

Instructive discourse directed to a child is first of all a process of building fundamental character. Such discourse when directed to an adult, however, is more of the nature of common sense advice and rational counsel. Among the most important matters with which we need to concern ourselves is the way that we approach our children from stage to stage during the period of their mental and emotional development. We need to study the ways to approach them and how these differ from the kinds of methods used in the instruction and guidance of mature adults.

There can be no doubt that growing children need to be addressed in a way that will implant within them the seeds of a strong character, that will enhance their sense of independence and self-reliance, and that will encourage them to fulfil their mission in life with pride and the desire to excel. In this way, their characters will develop the traits necessary to assist them in bringing the Ummah success in

its mission to mankind. It is equally as important that their instruction not be undertaken in a rough and admonitory manner that will only serve to arrest the development of the traits mentioned above and disrupt or impair the development of their relationship with the Almighty, the Merciful and Mercy-giving. In other words, the religious instruction children receive at the earliest stages of their development must be positive if it is ever to promote love for religion, pride in it, and the desire to contribute to it. One who has acquired such love and pride in childhood will grow up with patience, motivation, and the ability to make sacrifices. One, on the other hand, who has grown up fearing religion and in awe of its teachings will develop psychological and emotional defenses that will remain in place throughout adulthood. Such a one will never learn to do more than the required minimum. Thus, traits like sloth, unreliability, and lackadaisical attitudes come to dominate the personality. In recent centuries, this is exactly the kind of character that has developed in the majority of Muslims.

When we consider our religion, we realize that the Muslim has a special place with the Almighty and that, in spite of what happens, the Muslim will eventually be rewarded with paradise. The Prophet said: "Whoever declares that there is no god but Allah will enter paradise, even if he/she fornicates or steals." Muslim children are not responsible for their actions until they attain the age of maturity. Thus, there is no need to attempt to hasten their development, or to shoulder them with responsibilities that they are incapable of bearing.

In all of this the example of the Prophet, upon whom be the peace and blessings of Allah, needs to be kept in mind. The Prophet's treatment of children was always loving and encouraging. For example, his kindness to his nephew, Ibn 'Abbās, is well known. The Hadith literature has preserved for us instances of his delivering the Friday *khuṭbah* while holding his grandsons in his arms, of his making *sajdah* in salah (as the imam in the mosque) with his granddaughter on his back, of his kindness toward Anas ibn Mālik (who was a young boy at the time), and of his annoyance with the



bedouin who confessed to him that he, the bedouin, had never kissed his own children.

Certainly, when a message is presented to Muslim youth at the proper time and in the proper way it will have a positive effect on their growth and development. This was the case with the Companions of the Prophet who accepted Islam after they had matured, people like Abū Bakr, 'Umar, Khālid ibn al Walīd, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, Abū 'Ubaydah 'Āmir ibn al Jarrāh, and many others.

The correct starting-place for Islamic education, therefore, is not admonition and intimidation but caring and love, beginning with the love of Allah, the Almighty Creator, the Merciful and Forgiving. From there one may move on to love of the Prophet, of good deeds, of truth, justice, life, *khilāfah*, reform, jihad, and the desire to meet Allah and enjoy the divine countenance in the eternal abode.

In education, perhaps more so than in any other field, we notice how important it is that the objectives and higher purposes of revelation complement the efforts of academic inquiry and rational thinking in the social sciences. Thus, academic study of the human *fiṭrah* and relationships is an effective means of achieving the objectives, and realizing the higher purposes, of Islam. Our experience with Islamic education over the past few centuries proves to us that good intentions are not sufficient. Rather, it is essential that we learn how to actually achieve the good that we hope to see done.

It may be important at this juncture to mention that even after the time of the *khulafā'*, it remained the habit of the city-dwelling Quraysh to place their young children in the charge of bedouins who would raise them along with their own as desert Arabs. Obviously, the upbringing that children received at the hands of the bedouins was not only physical, but psychological as well. In the open expanses of the desert the child grew up with unencumbered horizons, free of the forms and other restrictions imposed on the individual by society. In such an atmosphere and at such an early developmental stage, traits like self-reliance, independence, and bravery will naturally become a part of

the child's essential character. Thus, this remained the practice among royalty and nobility in the early centuries of Islam, because they knew that it was the best possible sort of preparation for the responsibilities of leadership that would later become their lot. After the initial period of development in the desert, the children returned to the cities and towns to begin their formal studies with their tutors and instructors. That was the way their education was completed.

Any introduction to Islamic education must include mention of the methods used by the Prophet in his discourse with children and youth, and the love, care, and patience that he exercised in dealing with them. Indeed, there is nothing in the historical record to indicate that the Prophet ever struck a child or treated the young with other than respect. There is no room for misunderstanding in regard to the concepts of positiveness and love being somehow contradictory to the concept of discipline. Rather, it should be clear that discipline is something that children develop through practice, accustomization, and the example of others. In learning discipline, moreover, children are aided by the positive aspects of their character which urge them to seek success and the acceptance of those whom they love and respect.

Showing love to a child, then, must not be understood as being the same as "spoiling" the child. Likewise, it is quite important that admonishing the child not be understood to be the same as teaching the child discipline. Such understanding is both incorrect and reprehensible. What is needed in bringing up children is both love and discipline. If we are successful, we can raise our children to be successful.

Another matter of some importance is that our present-day leaders, scholars, and educators have to realize that the educational and reformatinal tasks with which they are faced are different in several ways from those which faced the Prophet in the early days of Islam. The people toward whom he directed his message were strong and hardened, but the problem with them was that they were overly proud,

stubborn, and tribalistic. On the other hand, the Ummah today and its youth might best be described as infirm, dissipated, unambitious, and lacking confidence.

In many ways the Ummah resembles the children of Israel during the period of their slavery in Egypt when the Prophet Mūsà was forced to wander with them in the wilderness of Sinai for a period of forty years while a new and stronger generation came of age. Only then were they able to leave the desert and go to the holy land where they reestablished a society of Islam, *tawhīd*, and prophethood.

It is important here to understand that the replacement of creative intellect with superficiality occurs when the collective mind of a nation is no longer capable of dealing realistically with changing situations so that it fails to keep abreast with developments and balks at accepting challenges. This is precisely what happened to the children of Israel and their rabbis. The result was that when a poor person among them committed a theft, they applied the severest penalty, but when a rich person did the same thing, they allowed him to go free. It was for this reason that the teachings and mission of the prophet 'Īsà focused on bringing the Israelites back to the basics, to the positive aspects of love for one's fellow humans, and of sincerity and care.

Thus, the undertaking to reform education and upbringing in the Ummah today is not of the nature of training for a mature and developed people. On the contrary, it is a treatment for an infirm and feeble people who have lost their strength, determination, ingenuity, diligence, and love.

Muslim educators need to understand their mission well. They must strive together to produce a well-defined Islamic theory of education with clear-cut objectives and methods. In particular, they must distinguish between the psychological and intellectual aspects of education. In this they will have to consider the psychological makeup of the Ummah and the ways in which it needs to be reformed.

It is also of importance, in the light of what revelation tells us of the varied spiritual, emotional, and material dimensions of human beings, that Muslim psychologists

and sociologists renew their efforts to Islamize psychology and the other social sciences so as to provide the Muslim teacher with a knowledge and awareness of the human *fitrah*, how it develops, and how best to deal with it.

### **Islamization and Political Science**

Political science revolves around the study of politics, the priorities, principles and institutions of the Ummah, the methods by which political leadership may be chosen, clarification of the general political agenda for the Ummah, organization of the Ummah's political system, statutes, and bylaws, the legislation necessary to maintain the system, the administration of that system, the direction of its energies, and its potential. All of these topics represent vital issues for the Ummah in the present day, from both an ideological and a constitutional point of view.

The study and the practice of politics hinge upon a proper understanding of these elements, the ways in which they interrelate, and the vestiges that they leave behind. Politics also demands the ability to present solutions and the capacity to keep abreast with change in a way that guarantees the well-being, development, and stability of the Ummah. Thus, the study of the historical models produced by the Ummah, though certainly not an end in itself, is something that might be beneficial, for they represent an important source of the kind of lessons the Ummah needs to learn if it is ever to move forward. In these studies it would be advisable to pay attention to the roles played by both the formal and the informal political institutions. Such a study could shed light on the reasons those institutions developed in the ways that they did and thus assist in the renewal or creation of appropriate institutions, systems, and organizations. Indeed, unless the Ummah is able to develop for itself political institutions that suit its particular circumstances and values, it will never achieve its ends.

What we need to understand is that the political leadership of the Ummah as well as its political institutions and processes need to reflect the true nature and thought of the Ummah. Otherwise, no leadership or public political

institution can ever hope to prosper, develop, or survive. If we ever expect to put the politics of the Ummah back on the right course we must realize that the key to all this is the kind of education and upbringing that we provide for our youth. Certainly, both the systems and the leadership of the Ummah reflect its thought and personality. Moreover, the nature of a system will never change unless its psychological and ideological foundations undergo change. Thus, if we seek to alter the systems, leadership, and institutions of the Ummah, we must start at the foundational level, in the way that the Ummah thinks and feels.

Correct Islamic politics must first of all be the product of a healthy Ummah that is capable of producing sound and true ideas. The political leadership and institutions of such an Ummah must of necessity be based on the trust the Ummah has in them, on the participation of its members in their administration, and on the mature advice that the Ummah presents to them.

It is for these reasons that the political thought of the Ummah is in serious need of revamping. Certainly the same is true in regard to education. Only if this is done will the Ummah's political and educational systems reflect its particular religious and psychological constitution, and only then will the nature of political life in Islam be understood, or its objectives be grasped. Academic studies in political science must help the Ummah to regain its wholeness and social sensibilities, to perform at a societal level, to renew the vitality of its institutions, and to direct its political leadership towards serious Islamic commitment. If this happens, the political leadership of the Ummah will finally gain the trust and support of the Ummah.

It is essential that Islamic political thought and institutions deliver the Ummah from the failings and humiliation that have left it with a clearly discernible slave mentality, bereft of free will and independent action. The intellectual and political leadership of the Ummah must call a halt to the culture of psychological and academic terrorism that has taken concepts like truthfulness, objective thinking, and pride in one's identity and

transformed them into slavery, *ṣaghār*,<sup>1</sup> fatalism, *taqlīd*, and finally into misery and degradation. Rather, we must ensure that people come to understand Islamic thought as the champion of honor and decency as well as the representative of truth, goodness, sacrifice, *khilāfah*, and reform.

The present depressed state of the Ummah, its weakness, its decline, its dread of its enemies, its capitulation to their ambitions and machinations, and its infighting are all reflections of the Ummah's slave mentality, that developed as a result of infirm thought and twisted psychological upbringing.

Moreover, in the field of Islamic political studies a distinction must be made between the letter of revelation, the interpretations of academic studies, and the decisions of legislators and politicians. Academic studies undertaken by thinkers and scholars are quite different from the word of revelation, nor are they the same as the decisions of social legislation and political activism. Rather, they represent a rich source of ideas for the Ummah, and a means by which its vision may be clarified. The different points of view held by scholars in regard to political and social legislation do not detract in any way from the opinions held by supporters of either side in such issues. Thus, no one opinion should be taken as anything more than an aid to the Ummah's understanding of the issue at hand. Therefore, the greater the number of ideas produced by the Ummah's scholars, the greater the chances that the Ummah will consider social and political legislation in an objective and mature manner, and in accordance with its convictions and outlook. In this way decisions about social and political legislation will actually reflect the convictions of the public as well as the greater interests of the Ummah, even if they do not always conform to the opinions of certain individuals or parties.

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<sup>1</sup> The mistaken interpretation of this concept led to the institution of humiliating non-Muslim subjects. See chapter two, p. 50. (Trans.)

Certainly, among the most important tasks confronting scholars of political science is to define the constants in the makeup and thought of the Ummah. Scholars will also need to explain how best to deal with these constants in the legislative and administrative spheres, and how best to deal with challenges without overturning the entire executive and constitutional framework of the Ummah.

It is now very clear that neither Eastern nor Western institutions will suit the political needs of the Muslim world. The Ummah of Islam, unlike these others, considers service to truth and justice to be its sacred duty. Likewise, the truth that it seeks in *wahy*, *fiṭrah*, and reason is objective. Consultation is considered by the Ummah to be a fundamental method for arriving at the truth, when following the direction of truth is considered the best way to achieve the Islamic "good" on both the public and the private levels. Here we can see that the Western party system is not interested in arriving at the objective truth, nor has it been devised to achieve the dynamism of Islamic *shūrà*. On the other hand, the totalitarianism represented in the Eastern Marxist states is even further removed from these essential Islamic concepts.

Both materialism and rationalism form the foundations of contemporary Western civilization. If there are any religious aspects to Western civilization they are remnants of a heritage which refuses to die and one which, by the way, borrowed heavily from Islamic civilization.

In the light of this rational materialism, democratic systems came about that considered the voice of the parliamentary (or party) majority to be the best possible way to achieve what is best for the individual and society. Democratic decisions, then, are the decisions of a majority taken in the interests of their own political party. Marxism, on the other hand, came about as a reformational movement that deified the human mind to the point of denouncing organized religion and openly declaring its own atheism. Thus Marxism viewed economics and material prosperity as the goal of all human aspiration and history. With this understanding at its ideological foundation—that

the life of the individual is relatively unimportant when compared with the material progress of humankind in history—it should come as no surprise that totalitarianism and dictatorships held sway in Eastern Europe for so long.

At this point it might be of interest to point out that the West's rejection of revelation deprived it of spiritual and moral guidance, and this is why it fell into the trap of materialism. Ultimately, it is the limited nature of human reason and understanding that is the real cause of the social, ethical, and economic problems that beset the West.

Another point to remember is that Islamic thought differs from Western thought in its fundamental approach to humankind. Islam recognizes all the various aspects of human life, and takes as its objective in this life the exercise of free will in deciding between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood. This approach or philosophy is what makes the truth objective, falling outside the person of the individual and his/her will. As such, then, it becomes something that he/she is to strive for and seek. It is for this reason that the Islamic concept of rule, *al hukm*, is not the same as the democratic concept of majority rule, but rather the concept of mutual consultation or *shūrà* in all matters of importance to the Ummah, and of the free exchange of ideas in seeking the truth and solutions to problems. In this process only the teachings of *wahy*, the laws of nature, and the needs and requirements of the Ummah are to be taken into consideration.

The approach and the purpose of *shūrà* are therefore other than those of democracy, though in some aspects there are resemblances between them, like the need to abide by the majority decision when there is ambiguity concerning the truth, or when a decision must be made on an issue on which there is no clear consensus or *ijmā'*. Of course, the supposition here is that the majority opinion will be the right one.

The institution of *shūrà* and its systems must reflect the nature of this concept (*shūrà*) in searching for the truth in the texts of Revelation, the dictates of *fiṭrah*, and the laws of the universe. It is for this reason that *shūrà* will, of



necessity, differ from democratic institutions and processes which strive for autonomous decisions springing from the interests and opinions of those belonging to the ruling party or coalition.

Then, if the Islamic political system differs in its approach and purposes from the Western democratic system, the institutions of the Islamic political system must reflect those differences. It is therefore essential that an Islamic political system embody the freedom of choice and all that follows from it, like the freedom of faith, thought, and organized social action. At the same time, it is essential that the system reflect the convictions of the Ummah and its ideology. None of that will be possible, however, without truly representative leaders who are both elected to office and in possession of the personal qualifications that will enable them to benefit from the advice and counsel given them by supporting institutions.

The foregoing exposition should have clarified the reasons for the importance of comprehensive vision in the attempt to understand these systems and compare them with others. This should also assist us in chalking out the major features of an original Islamic system that will benefit from the experience of others rather than attempt no more than to imitate them when it is clear that their approaches and their objectives are significantly different from those of the Ummah.

So then which system best expresses the Islamic spirit in the field of politics? And how is this system to be brought about?

The Islamic system will undoubtedly be distinguished by ideological and constitutional conditions and qualifications for which guarantees will have to be provided. Likewise, experience will be necessary in methods of education, raising political awareness, and working within the Islamic political system and its supporting political and legislative institutions. The organization of political parties will have to be based on competence and flexibility so as to ensure that the Islamic vision is represented by appropriate counsel and experience. What this may well mean is that the Islamic

system will comprise several levels of authority as well as several consultative and legislative bodies, depending on the practical needs and exigencies that may arise.

The means of political expression and organization must be flexible enough to allow the elected representatives of the Ummah to be politically active in constructive ways. Thus, political parties in the Islamic political system would resemble parliamentary groupings which submit neither to restrictions nor to previously determined party positions. The responses of such groupings to events would be based on their objective convictions, perceptions, and understanding, as well as on advice generated through *shūrà*.

Perhaps one of the most important steps taken recently by ruling parties in certain Islamic countries was, in addition to allowing the formation of political parties other than their own, that they took certain personalities from the leadership of the Islamic movements into the ruling parties. Thus, practicing and sincere Muslim leaders have been able to gain the confidence and respect of the masses for their wisdom and understanding of political realities.

The developments we see in the contemporary political life of what are commonly known as the "developed" nations of the world clarify for us how the Ummah may expand its role in regulating political life and protecting it from corruption. We may also learn how to build political forums and develop political activism in a way that guarantees greater independence for the political leadership, more objectivity in their decisions, and better representation of the Muslim public and their interests in general. All of this should encourage Muslim scholars and legislators to think of suitable alternatives that better serve the interests, needs, and nature of the Ummah. When this is accomplished, the need for imitation and grafting will have disappeared.

Looking at the increasing size of the Muslim Ummah and the way that its population is spread out over the globe to include many different lands, peoples, cultures, and historical experiences, we may readily understand that perhaps the most suitable form of government would be one

that distributes the responsibilities for ruling in Islamic lands at the local, state, and central levels in a flexible federation. Such an arrangement would facilitate matters for the leadership and provide the populace with better opportunities for participation in shouldering the responsibilities of government.

The Islamic premises to Islamic political science and to Islamic political action need to transgress the present understanding of *khilāfah* as merely a historical institution which needs to be copied and practiced in the same way that it was practiced by the early generations of Muslims. Instead, *khilāfah* should be understood as a dynamic system that aims at achieving lofty objectives through the establishment of values and principles in daily human life, and through attending to the religious and temporal interests of its citizens. On that basis, there is nothing to prevent earnest Islamic inquiry into systems, procedures, and institutions for the purpose of redesigning them in ways that better serve the real interests of the Ummah.

Many who study the *khilāfah* and find it to be a rigid system based on the centrality of power and authority have not truly understood this political system. Whatever system of government the Ummah chooses for itself in order to realize its spiritual and temporal aspirations is the one that should be understood as the *khilāfah* system, and thus deserving of the Ummah's support. Students should pay no attention to historical forms, because to adhere to forms while ignoring the essence is the result of inexperience.

Among the premises of Islamic political science is knowledge of the role played by the purposes and objectives of Islam in the life of the Ummah, in its organization, in its potential, and in the differences of its interests and perspectives. The concepts of myth and reality, on the other hand, form the framework of Western political thought on this issue, which views values and principles with disdain for the reason that they do not reflect the reality of present-day situations and needs.

So, if the Westerner is to be excused for his pessimism (owing to the corruption of revelational sources available to

him in his culture), there is certainly no place in Islam for myth. The objectives, principles and guidance brought by Islam are not supposition or imagination but rather derived from creation, *fitrah*, and the truth on which the heavens and earth were erected.

Islam identifies other sorts of opposites: good and evil, truth and falsehood, guidance and deviation, rectitude and corruption. But Islamic society does not recognize myth as opposed to reality. Rather, there is truth, guidance, and rectitude in opposition to falsehood, deviation, and corruption. Conditions in society will then differ on the basis of how much influence is exerted on individuals and society by these opposing variables.

Another important factor will be the clarification of contemporary Islamic thought from all the controversies and circumstances that beset the Ummah from an early date in its history and became the reason for specialized or localized interpretations of the sources of revelation in ways that served the political interests or ambitions of one group or another. Indeed, this was how the elements of *tawhūd* and *shūrà* were separated early on from governing the affairs of the Ummah. Instead, scholars sought out texts and historical precedents that would serve to substantiate the political claims of their patrons, with the result that the Ummah lost its ability to shoulder the responsibility for the mission of Islam and establishing its order on earth.

The Islamization of political life really means the Islamization of ideas and education; and the Islamization of the fundamental polity, its leadership, and its organization. The meaning of Islamization is adherence to the fundamental values and purposes of Islam by means of practical, sound, and realistic *shūrà*, and by educating the Ummah and the political base in the fundamentals of that adherence and its forthright ways.

Another matter of importance for us to realize is that in the final analysis the important thing is the social and intellectual perceptions that are reflected by political decisions. Ideally speaking, such decisions should be the result of interaction between the texts of revelation and the

higher purposes of Islam with *fiṭrah* and reality, by means of the leadership's perceptions, decisions, and practices. It was in illustration of this relationship that the Qur'anic text was revealed:

Obey Allah, and obey the Prophet, and those in authority among you (4:59).

The kind of obedience and experience referred to here will never come about through mere academic inquiry into the texts of revelation, but rather through practical interaction between the text and reality as represented by committed Islamic leadership acting on behalf of the Ummah, reflecting its true situation, and responding with true *ḥikmah* to its needs and the challenges it faces. Otherwise, the texts of revelation (the Qur'an and the Sunnah) become destructive, divisive, misleading, and conducive to unrealistic thinking.

The Ummah must never lose its resolve to establish committed Islamic leadership for itself. Indeed, only through such leadership may the Ummah benefit from the teachings of revelation. If we are successful in reforming our thought, we will undoubtedly be able to reach the concepts and means upon which the broad Islamic social base may be established. Then, from that base, able and committed Islamic leadership will surely spring forth.

The Islamic thought which showed so much promise when it produced the genius of al Māwardī, Ibn Taymīyah, al Fārābī, and Ibn Khaldūn, needs now to spring up anew, to develop, and to complete its methodology in order to provide the means by which the Ummah may play its proper role in civilization.

### **Islamization, Science, and Technology**

At an earlier stage in the life of the Ummah, under pressure from the cultural and scientific pressure that was exerted upon it by the West, educated Muslims confused two things: firstly, the objective nature of truth and universal laws: secondly, the personalization inherent in the

way that individuals and societies make use of these truths and universal laws. Thus, educated Muslims accepted everything Western civilization and science produced, supposing this to be objective and neutral.

The truth of the matter, however, is that Western civilization, like all other nations and civilizations, sprang from its own particular set of beliefs, psychological elements, and historical factors. Its development was also influenced by its loss of confidence in revelational sources when it discovered that these had been tampered with and altered. Thus, the material needs of humankind became so important that the individual and his/her desires attained a sort of sanctity. In this way, all ties to spiritual life were severed. It is for this reason that while Western society provides its people with an abundance of material goods and comforts, it is plagued by psychological problems and social strife that constantly destabilize society and threaten it with destruction.

It is therefore extremely important for Muslims to realize that not all of Western knowledge and science is objective in nature. If it is not difficult to see how the social sciences are clearly subjective, it should not be difficult to see how the hard sciences are really any different in this respect. If there is a difference, it is one of degree only. Indeed, scientific studies are not undertaken in a haphazard manner. On the contrary, these spring from decidedly human objectives and from subjective considerations undertaken by minds shaped in the Western mold and determined to achieve their objectives. All the sciences of foreign civilizations need to be seen in this perspective.

There is no way to speak truthfully about objectivity in science other than from an Islamic perspective. This is because Islamic thought, in its study of the particulars of nature, the laws of nature, and natural phenomena, does not proceed from limited rationalist vision only, but combines this with the comprehensive and universalist knowledge of revelation so that all science and knowledge emerge with their objectives properly designated, thus satisfying for humankind both temporal and spiritual needs.

The Islamization of knowledge in general and of the hard sciences in particular does not necessarily mean that the material or professional particulars of a science will be any different. Rather, its significance is in its providing guidance to scientific research and endeavors so that these are directed toward the achievement of what is truly in the best interests of humankind. Thus, Islamization means correct direction, correct objectives, and correct philosophy. In this way, Islamic knowledge is reformational in nature, constructive, ethical, rightly guided, and *tawhīdī*.

The challenge confronting Islamization is that it present to humankind a vision in which science is put to the service of humankind and *khilāfah* in order to fulfill the responsibilities of reformation and constructive custody of the earth.

It is strange indeed that in the shadow of Western civilization there should be nothing greater for humankind than to compete in the arms race or to produce swifter and more deadly means of destruction. In this arrangement, truth always resides with those who possess the most arms, power, and wealth. Certainly, the present situation is one that goes against the grain of humankind's *fiṭrah*. In fact, humankind has now reached a juncture where divine guidance has become all the more important to its future, where the comprehensive vision of Islam is urgently needed, and where the establishment of constructive and reformational civilization is essential.

Without a living example, however, it will be difficult for humankind to comprehend the vision of Islam or apply its solutions to their problems. Thus, only if Muslims discharge their responsibility to themselves by applying this vision and those solutions will humankind ever understand the efficacy of the Islamic solution.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Islam and the Future**

**At the end of this study it must be emphasized that reform is of equal importance to the Ummah and humanity alike. It is therefore essential that the attention and efforts of Islamic workers and leaders be directed toward three fundamental matters:**

- 1. the future of the Ummah; i.e. working among Muslim youth;**
- 2. the role of academic institutions in achieving Islamization and clarifying the Islamic perspective toward knowledge, civilization, and the preparation of new generations qualified to carry the eternal message of Islam to all of humankind;**
- 3. guiding the future course of human civilization in fulfillment of the Ummah's responsibility to correct the progress and thought of humankind.**

#### **The Future of the Ummah's Character**

**It is obvious that the thought of the Ummah as it stands at present is in need of reform. It is equally obvious that the psychological makeup of the Ummah as it stands at present is defective. Even if individuals and even entire generations are capable of ingesting new information and ideas, that intake will be superficial and significantly different from the processes involved in true character-building. "The best of you in Islam are the best of you in *jāhiliyah*, so long as you**



acquire an understanding of Islam," said the Prophet. It was for this reason that the free and daring Arabs of the desert, after they converted to Islam, were able to achieve so much in a remarkably short period of time.

The role of the present generation of Muslims is first to understand the nature of the present environment, assess the range of possible activities and available capabilities, and then propose workable and worthwhile ideas. For this to happen it will first be necessary to build exemplary schools for the young in which they may develop strong characters and unshakable faith in the objectives and precepts of Islam.

Any hopes that change will come about in the Ummah lie in the investment to be made in the future, and in the emotional and intellectual preparation of youth to perform their duties for civilization as a whole. If today's generation does its duty and prepares the following generation for the future, then it will have discharged its responsibility successfully. On the other hand, if it supposes itself to have the ability to do the job on its own, it will have missed the point and wasted its energies.

The importance of the role to be played by the present generation is in its formulating sound approaches and suitable means for the proper preparation of future generations. Once we have understood this lesson, it becomes essential that we focus on three major tasks:

1. provide energy and resources for constructive work, and protect the same from depletion;
2. generate sound ideas from an Islamic perspective;
3. direct resources toward translating Islamic vision into material that may be used in the education and upbringing of youth.

What this means to Muslim intellectuals and leaders is that the first priority of the present generation needs to be the renewal of Islamic thought through the articulation of sound Islamic perspectives.

At this beginning stage, the work of building for the future of the Ummah will have to be carried out in the intellectual and educational spheres, as these are the ones from which the required reformational energies may be generated. Under the present circumstances, then, the Ummah should expend on its political and military organization only as much as will ensure that its building and reformation may proceed apace.

The responsibility of the Ummah's leadership at the present time is to explain to parents and teachers the meaning of psychological development, its importance to the Ummah, and the elements required in bringing it about. If this is done, future generations will never suffer from the backwardness and decadence that have beset Muslims over the past several centuries. The future of the Ummah clearly depends upon change taking place in the development of the psychological and intellectual makeup of the coming generations. The more effort we expend in preparing our young for their responsibilities, the closer we come to achieving our goals.

It is the responsibility of the Ummah's thinkers and scholars to concentrate their energies on reform of the Ummah's thought, on clarifying its vision, and on presenting these to the Ummah in such a way that its institutions may derive benefit from them.

It is the responsibility of the Ummah's thinkers and scholars to study the historical development of the Ummah in order to determine what influenced the course that it took, and where it went astray. Only then will the Ummah be able to set out on a new path and produce the kind of ideas that will lead it to a better future.

It is the responsibility of the Ummah's thinkers and scholars to review the foundations of Islamic thought, the vital relationships between its constituent elements, and the roles that these play in generating new ideas for society.

It is the responsibility of the Ummah's thinkers and scholars to return to Islamic thought its originality, integrity, and comprehensiveness. Only in this way can the deviations of the past be avoided. And only if this is done

will the thought of the Ummah become anything more than a mirage.

It is the responsibility of the Ummah's thinkers and scholars to study the *uṣūl* and methodology of Islamic thought so as to develop unique Islamic disciplines not only in the service of the texts of revelation but in the sciences of life and society as well. Certainly Islamic thought is capable of making valuable contributions to education, politics, economics, administration, and communications as well as to the philosophies of the hard and theoretical sciences.

The Ummah's thinkers and scholars need to accept that the responsibility for putting the Ummah back on the track of progress is theirs alone. All others will merely follow in the light of their vision and counsel. Thus, their success in presenting their ideas will determine the success of others in bringing those ideas to fruition.

Another of their responsibilities at this difficult stage in the life of the Ummah is to increase the Islamic consciousness of those who claim allegiance to it. This can come about only if sound methods of character building are employed from an early stage in the educational process. Indeed, the youth are our future and our strength. The Ummah must begin now to prepare the people it needs for tomorrow.

In this undertaking, the educators of the Ummah need to consider the role of parents in bringing up children. Indeed, in these matters nothing compares in importance to the conviction held by mothers and fathers in general about how to raise children. To a great extent, the development of values and character depends upon the relationships between parents and children. Any effort expended in the school or in society which does not win the approval of parents is therefore doomed to certain failure.

Any chance of success, therefore, that thinkers and educators may have will rest entirely on their ability to bring the issue of education and proper upbringing to the attention of parents. When that happens, both the parents and the home will play their part in achieving the desired results. In this basic way, then, the Ummah will be able to

overcome whatever obstacles are placed in the way of its reform and development by any institutions or systems.

### **Islamization and Academic Institutions**

Our discussion of the future will not be complete without mention of the role to be played by Islamic academic institutions in achieving the goals of Islamization and formulation of an informed Islamic perspective. It is obvious that in the final analysis the crisis of the Ummah is in clarifying its values and basic concepts within an established and competent societal structure. It has also become quite obvious that the efforts and sacrifices of the Ummah in the political and military spheres will never do anything to lift it from the depths to which it has already fallen. Rather, the gulf between the Islamic peoples and those of the developed nations continues to widen day by day.

The practical application of Islam's lofty civilizational ideals and its advanced social systems will never be possible unless Islam's epistemological sources and its unique methodology become a part of the Ummah's makeup and, in particular, become ingrained in the education of all Muslims. Thus, the major arena for change, in addition to the family and home environment, will be the Ummah's educational institutions. Clearly, if these institutions are to succeed in their mission to become the instruments of change in our society, they must not continue as poor imitations of the Western institutions they were established to emulate blindly. Nor must our Islamic educational institutions remain in perpetual need of sending its best brains to foreign universities for the purpose of qualifying, or training, or upgrading skills. Instead they must concentrate on providing an intellectual atmosphere that will encourage and ensure the development of truly inquisitive minds, original thinking, and creativity.

It is thus essential that the educational institutions in the Islamic world realize their own importance and change their mentalities by openly ascribing themselves to the Ummah, its resources, religion, thought, and objectives. They must then offer programs that put the resources of the

**Ummah to optimum benefit. In this way they will be able to meet the real challenges that stand before them, and to fulfill the true needs of the Ummah of Islam.**

**It is no longer acceptable for our educational institutions to present no more than literal translations of Western or Eastern sciences and knowledge. Nor is it any longer acceptable for Muslim intellectuals to be satisfied with merely reproducing and rehashing the thought and efforts of others.**

**The educational institutions of the Islamic world should take as their starting point the universal truths, convictions, and purposes of which the Islamic quintessence is composed. In order to achieve this, these institutions will have to establish academic centers, units, and associations that will strive to formulate and develop Islamic academic methodologies in every branch of knowledge. The Islamization of knowledge needs to begin by developing suitable methodologies in the various branches of knowledge and by preparing general introductions to each. These foundations may then become the framework for Islamically oriented research and ijthihad that seeks to guide the upbringing and development of new generations of Muslims.**

**In order to ensure the success of the efforts to bring about Islamization in the various branches of knowledge it will be necessary to direct the energies of researchers, scholars, teachers, and students toward the new Islamic intellectual framework. The goals, Islamic premises, and propositions that this is to be based on must be articulated, and a new mentality developed. Then the academic heritage of Islam and other nations may be classified. These are the kinds of efforts that represent the only way to realization of the requisite academic ability and maturity.**

**The opening of academic departments for the Islamic social sciences in certain universities within the Islamic world, such as departments of Islamic economics, Islamic communications, and Islamic civilization, and the opening of research centers such as the centers for Islamic thought and Islamic economics, and the teaching of certain Islamic**

social sciences, such as Islamic international relations, Islamic political thought, Islamic political systems, the political development of the Islamic world, and so on, all of these are good and positive steps in the right direction and need to be encouraged in every possible way.

Among the most pressing problems faced by the new Islamic social studies is the shortage of resources. If we look at any center, unit, or department, we will discover that its resources are limited and that it suffers from a lack of qualified personnel.

At this stage it is not enough merely to open a center, or a teaching department, or to teach a new subject without providing qualified specialists and the support they need to carry out their mission. The practice of giving qualified persons the responsibility of teaching the Islamic disciplines or social studies and then burdening them with administrative chores without adequate staff assistance is a practice which must not be continued, especially not at this sensitive stage of the Islamization process. Such scholars need the time to be able to conduct research into their subjects of specialization. Thus, to burden such scholars in such a way is more likely to block progress than to encourage it.

The way to the success of the movement for the Islamization of knowledge and learning is continued, diligent effort. The matter is far more complex than the making of an announcement in the media.

The first step required in the Islamization of knowledge is that Islamic educational institutions undertake the following important tasks:

1. To classify and index the texts of *wahy*, the Qur'an and the Sunnah; to facilitate the understanding of these texts and their purposes for researchers and students; to facilitate access to these texts and the ways to deal with them.
2. To edit, classify, and index the specialized, encyclopedic texts of the intellectual heritage, so as to facilitate the understanding of their content by researchers.

Here, the process of acquainting Muslim students with the classical heritage of Islam is an important part of instilling within them a sense of identity and cultural integrity. Unless this is accomplished, every effort to reform Islamic thought will be a waste of time.

3. Islamic universities and educational institutions need to recruit qualified scholars who combine specializations in the social sciences with sound backgrounds in the Islamic intellectual heritage. By means of their studies and research, they should clarify the desired academic vision and methodology. To begin with, specialized centers of research and graduate departments could be established. Continual efforts could then be made by graduate students and researchers to gradually prepare curricula and textbooks that would replace the imported texts presently used at nearly every level of our educational systems.

The widespread ineptitude which allows the publication and use of unsuitable textbooks indicates the attempt to avoid the responsibilities which would otherwise lead to success. To continue in this manner can only mean more disappointments.

4. Islamic educational institutions need to increase awareness among leaders and educated Muslims in general of the issue of Islamization, its priorities, and the place of those priorities on the agenda of the Ummah as a whole. These institutions need also to open their doors to these people through organizing and sponsoring seminars, conferences, and lectures on the subject of Islamization. Educational institutions will need also to encourage the establishment of academic societies and the publication of academic journals devoted to the subject. Indeed, the time has arrived to transform Islamization from an empty catchword into a well-organized and worldwide movement.
5. Islamic academic institutions must now begin to direct graduate research and programs toward the subjects and issues of Islamization. In this way they will be able to produce the academic manpower needed for the

coming stages. No longer must our universities depend upon the return of people whose minds and attitudes have been transformed into tools of the cultural invasion.

Thus we need to be certain, by means of organized planning and diligent work, that we are fulfilling our responsibility to the Ummah. In this way will we be deserving of Allah's pleasure and His *tawfiq*.

### **The Future Course of Humanity**

If the future of the Ummah of Islam is to depend upon the degree of success it achieves in reforming its methodology, thought, education, and organization, as well as laying the foundations for new Islamic social sciences, then the future of all bewildered and threatened humanity rests on the degree of success achieved by Muslims in presenting a living example of Islamic teachings.

Islam provides humankind with a reason for living, and with an ethical code by which to live. It affords humankind with insight into the *fiṭrah* and the dimensions of its universal relationships; with the seen and the unseen, the individual, society, and the universe. Islam provides humankind with the foundations for a stable society, progress, security, and world peace.

Islam protects the institution of the family, upholds the principles of justice, self-sufficiency, personal and collective responsibility, freedom of belief and thought, *shūrà*, and the oneness of all humankind in terms of their origins, interests, and destiny. It is this perfect Islamic vision which is capable of treating the ills of modern materialistic society and the dangers it has produced. Certainly, the moral bankruptcy of modern society is no secret to anyone. Under the shadow of materialism, the world is divided into north and south, white and black, rich and poor, overfed and underfed, colonizer and colonized, master and slave. To people today, peace is nothing more than the suppression of their fears about the unleashing of the forces of mass destruction by one or another of the nations, classes, or camps competing for supremacy.



In view of the serious flaws in their societies, the developed nations of the world have never had greater need of Islam. This is because Islam embodies concepts capable of mending those flaws.

These concepts may be summarized in two points:

### **Islam's Society of Unity**

Islamic society stands on the foundations of unity and the concept of brotherhood. As such, it focuses on answering the basic needs of the individual and the interests he/she shares with others in terms of the family, the neighborhood, the nation, and humankind in general. If the materialist powers of the contemporary world stand on the philosophy of confrontation, then the philosophy of Islam, collective security, is the philosophy of tomorrow. Allah says:

O people! Heed your Lord Who created you from a single life and then created from it its mate. Then He scattered from them countless men and women (4:1)

O people! We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and nations in order to know one another. Verily the best among you in the sight of Allah are those who heed Him (49:13)

Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the differences in your tongues and coloring (30:22)

People were no other than a single community, but then they fell to differing (10:19)

Do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy, neighbors who are near and who are not so near, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (4:36)

On that account We prescribed for Banī Isrā'īl that whoever slays another, for other than the crimes of

**murder or depravity, will be as one who has slain all of humankind (5:32)**

**Never forget generosity between yourselves (2:237)**

**Address people with kindness (2:83)**

**Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who neither war against you nor drive you from your homes, from dealing kindly with them and justly (60:8)**

**If you do retaliate, then retaliate in a manner no worse than the way you were attacked. But if you are patient, things will be best for those who are patient (16:126)**

**Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you; but do not transgress (2:190)**

**If they cease, then let there be no hostility except against oppressors (2:193)**

**Let not your dislike for a people cause you to deal unjustly. Deal justly, for that is closer to *taqwà* (5:8)**

**When you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned (6:152)**

**When you make a decision between people, decide fairly (4:58)**

**Assist one another in goodness and *taqwà*, but not in wrongdoing and aggression (5:2)**

**If two parties among the believers fall to fighting among themselves, then make peace between them. But if one should then break the truce against the other, fight the one breaking the truce until it**

complies with Allah's ruling. Then if it complies, make peace between them with justice, and be fair; for Allah loves those who are fair. Certainly, the believers are brothers. So make peace between your two brothers and heed Allah so that you may be shown mercy (49:9–10).

### **Islam's Cultivation of Knowledge**

This point is related to the meaning of knowledge and the ways in which academic research is carried out. Materialist thought is essentially based on rational, empirical, and inductive methods so that it proceeds from experience and knowledge of the real world and extracts from these theories about the laws that govern life and the universe. There is no connection between this thought, however, and revelation. The main reason for this has to do with the Western lack of confidence in any of the major religions. This state of affairs arose when it became common knowledge that the texts of Christianity in particular had been tampered with, and filled with a great deal of unreasonable, contradictory, and incredible material.

When we understand the amazing complexity of the social nature of human beings and the number of factors which may come together at any given time to influence human behavior, we realize how badly the social sciences and the unceasing progression of social theories have floundered.

Moreover, as the consequences of mistakes made in these fields are imperceptible over the short run, and as they are nearly impossible to rectify once they have begun to take effect, we may come to have an even greater appreciation for the distinguishing factor in Islamic knowledge. Islamic knowledge agrees with rationalist, materialist knowledge in relation to the *fitrah* and natural laws of the universe. Rather than stop at the point of gathering that knowledge, however, Islamic knowledge passes on to cultivate and refine it, and to prevent its shortcomings from having any sort of negative effects on society.

Thus, the Muslim has access to any number of approaches and convictions revealed through divine *wahy* and dealing with the basic issues of social behavior. It is for this reason that even if a Muslim develops incorrect notions on the subject, *wahy* is there to correct them. So, at one and the same time, Islamic knowledge puts both empirical and inductive knowledge together with the sources of *wahy* so that Muslims may deal and transact as they please, so long as their dealings and transactions leave no ill effects on society. Muslims may thus earn their livings and order their family affairs in accordance with their particular circumstances. So the teachings of Islam should not be understood as shackles and chains, but as beacons and landmarks along the way of life.

Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, injustice, and rebellion (16:90).

These two points, Islam's society of unity and its cultivation of knowledge shall, if the Muslims understand them well, be very important in the world of tomorrow. Human society will no longer be able, in the future, to pay tomorrow for the mistakes it made today. In the decisive battles of history the numbers of dead rarely exceeded a few hundred persons, and nearby nations remained relatively unaffected when their neighbors fell to fighting. Nowadays, however, the whole world is in danger of becoming a battlefield.

When humankind realizes its capacity to destroy itself and the planet on which it lives, then it will realize its need for decisive regulations as prescribed by *wahy* in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Only by understanding this will humankind save itself from falling into the depths of destruction. Nor will its way out be anything other than unity and the search for common interests.

In order to achieve their goals, Muslims need to understand the mission with which they have been entrusted.

Thus have We made you a middlemost nation to be a witness unto humankind (2:143).

So whosoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whosoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it (99:7 – 8).

The responsibility of Muslim scholars and thinkers is all the greater for, if they are able to clarify for others how sound the concepts of Islam really are or establish an exemplary society, they will save not only themselves and their own societies, but humankind and civilization at large. Then they will achieve a society of peace and security, guide the efforts of science and material progress, and establish the *khilāfah* society on earth that Allah commanded.

### **Islamization is the Issue of the Ummah**

The objective of this study was to describe the overall condition of the Ummah and then place it before Muslims so that they may discuss the problems of society and seek the means of relief for individuals, the Ummah, and all of humankind. The most that can be expected from this effort in the direction of achieving these higher goals is that it may help to promote inquiry into Muslim thought and impel the Muslim mind toward objective consideration of the reasons for the Ummah's backwardness.

It is clear that the Ummah is in no real need of resources, opportunities, or values. Rather, what it is lacking is a methodology for sound thinking. Indeed, the problems of the Ummah are clearly connected to confused thinking, obscured social vision, improper and inadequate education, and the decline of its institutions in general. The result is that it is divided and has begun to resemble an enfeebled and cringing slave.

It is hoped that Islamization in general and the Islamization of knowledge in particular become the most important issues on the Ummah's agenda in the coming decades. It may also be hoped that the leadership of our contemporary Islamic movements will not look on Islamization as

in any way depreciative of or detracting from the value of their own efforts. Rather, political action and mobilization without sound ideas or people capable of delivering them is surely wasted.

It is essential to understand this problem as the Ummah's problem, and as a preparatory stage for it to pass through before it can take its rightful place as a leader of world civilization. Thus, the issue is not one of coming to power, or ruling over a locality, or establishing a political party. Thought is an element that works at a more fundamental level, one that qualifies any undertaking or program for producing real results.

It is also essential that the efforts being undertaken in different fields become coordinated so that they complement and support one another. Giving priority to one matter over another, it should be remembered, does not mean that one of those matters should be ignored and forgotten. So, along with whatever political efforts are being made at the present time, academic and intellectual efforts must also be made. In fact, political efforts can be understood as defensive in nature and aimed at allowing the Ummah to develop itself and its resources for the reform of its mental and intellectual strength.

Another matter to clarify is that academic work has its own levels and scope. Among these are the fundamental, or those having to do with methodology, epistemology, philosophy, etc. Among these too are the practical, applied, strategic, and dynamic levels. The problems of the Ummah, it should be emphasized, are related to the more fundamental and complex of these. The success of the practical and applied levels hinge almost entirely on the soundness and depth of the methodological matters at the fundamental level. This may explain why the strategic ideas of 'Abd al Raḥmān al Kawākibī in his book *Umm al Qurā*, which was written nearly a hundred years ago and explained in the clearest possible terms how a contemporary Islamic revival might be brought about, never amounted to anything other than a few localized achievements that changed nothing of real significance to the Ummah as a whole.

Rather, it is hoped that efforts will be increased so that work toward Islamic reformation may be carried out as a challenge at the international level.

Undoubtedly, if this much of the issue has been clarified for the thinkers and scholars of the Ummah, and if they are sincerely determined to pass the message on the Ummah at large, then the matter will catch on and spread like a spark in kindling. The lessons of history in this regard are perfectly clear. Nations possessed of sound ideas and clear thinking are those which burst forth like spring floods with new and greater achievements. But with the passage of a relatively short time, the situation always changes.

The thinkers and scholars of the Ummah must focus their determination and attention first of all on the reform of Muslim thought and the clarification of its vision for the Ummah and its leadership. Thereafter, should it be the will of Allah, the Ummah will take over with the work of building for the future and progressing toward new horizons.

To close: May Allah give us wisdom and guidance, deliver us from the rubble beneath which lie the ruins of the Ummah and humankind, and make us righteous workers who heed the call and follow the best of it.

All praise to Allah, Creator of the Universes!

# IIIT English Publications

## A. Islamization of Knowledge

- 0- B004 *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*, 3rd edition (1416/1995).
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- 2- B010 *Toward Islamic Anthropology: Definitions, Dogma, and Directions* by Akbar Ṣ. Aḥmad (1406/1986).
- 3- B007 *Toward Islamic English* by Ismā'īl Rājī al Farūqī (1406/1986).
- 4- B009 *Modelling Interest-Free Economy: A Study in Microeconomics and Development* by Muḥammad Anwar (1407/1987).
- 5- B014 *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge*. Papers presented to the Second International Conference of Islamic Thought and the Islamization of Knowledge (1409/1988).
- 6- B016 *Toward Islamization of Disciplines*. Papers presented to the Third International Conference on Islamic Thought and the Islamization of Knowledge (1409/1988).
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- 14- B057 *Islam and Economic Development* by M. Umer Chapra. Published jointly with the Islamic Research Institute (Pakistan) (1413/1993).
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- 17- B080 *Contributions of Islamic Thought in Contemporary Economics*. Papers presented to the conference, jointly held by IIIT and Al Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt Edited by Misbah Oreibi. (Forthcoming, 1409/1988) .

## **B. Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought**

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- 2- B011 *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism* by Yūsuf al Qarāḍāwī. Published jointly with American Trust Publications, 2nd revised edition (1412/1992). Translated from Arabic.
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- 12- B049 *Association of Muslim Social Scientists: Proceeding of the Twenty First annual Conference*. Edited by Muna Abul-Fadl (1413/1993).
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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Across the Muslim world today, if anything is self-evident, it is that the Ummah is badly in need of reform. On this point it can be stated with confidence that Muslims are agreed. Poverty and injustice characterize the face of Muslim lands from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Pollution and corruption are the order of the day in the societies where the gulf between them and the developed countries of the world has never been wider. Politics in the Muslim world are all too often the politics of desperation, economics the economics of deprivation, and culture the culture of despair.

*Crisis in the Muslim Mind* examines the intellectual and historical roots of the malaise that has overspread the Ummah and threatens to efface its identity. First published in Arabic in 1991 this important work (in an abridged English translation) is designed to familiarize educated and concerned Muslims with the nature of the crisis confronting them, and to suggest the steps necessary to overcome it.

