

TAHA JABIR AL-ALWANI

# Islamic Thought

An Approach to  
Reform

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

ISLAMIC THOUGHT:  
AN APPROACH TO REFORM



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*An Introduction to the Structures of  
Discourse in Islamic Thought*



DR. TAHA JABIR AL-ALWANI

*Translated from the Arabic by*  
NANCY ROBERTS



THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT  
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## FOREWORD



Of knowledge, we have none, save what  
You have taught us. (The Qur'an 2:32)

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has great pleasure in presenting this treatise on: *Islamic Thought: An Approach to Reform*, a passionate call to reemploy knowledge within a systematic epistemological framework based on divine Revelation. The IIIT's school of thought stresses the importance of presenting all subjects and disciplines currently taught in curricula from an additional Islamic perspective. It has encouraged and inspired a number of researchers and scholars particularly in the field of the social sciences to participate in this ongoing project and the author, Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, a well-known scholar, writer and specialist, is a firm believer in its principles and an important contributor to its development.

The original Arabic edition of the work, *Iṣlāḥ al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, was published by the IIIT in 1995, and generated a positive response as well as at times spirited remarks from scholars. We hope that this English edition, with its ground-breaking paradigm and ideas, will not only make an important contribution to the field, but also attract wider attention and generate greater interest among readers, students, and specialists alike to challenge the huge impact of positivism which has, in a manner, severed the relationship between the Creator, the created universe and man, driving a wedge between knowledge and Revelation. However, it needs to be emphasized that this is not a book waging war against knowledge and science per se but an attempt to strive and to bring (in addition to what has been said) the Islamic approach towards study, knowledge and disciplines with a view to renew and re-discover the long-forgotten, neglected heritage of Islamic thought.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate

sincere and serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. Its programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last twenty five years have resulted in the publication of more than two hundred and fifty titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into several other languages.

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the translator, Nancy Roberts, who, throughout the various stages of the book's production, co-operated closely with the editorial group at the London Office.

We would also like to thank the editorial and production team at the London Office and those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this book including: Fouzia Butt, Shiraz Khan and Saddiq Ali. May God reward them, the author, and the translator for all their efforts.

Rabi<sup>c</sup> II  
May 2006

ANAS S. AL-SHAikh-ALI  
*IIT Translation Department*  
*London, UK*

## FOREWORD TO THE ARABIC EDITION

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings upon our master Muhammad (ṢAAS)\*, seal of the prophets, and upon his descendants, his Companions, and all those who follow his guidance, from now until the Day of Judgment.

In the difficult circumstances through which the Muslim nation is passing, words become a sacred trust and a ponderous responsibility which must be understood, discerned, and given its proper due. Indeed, many a word whose hearer has failed to heed it will cast him “seventy autumns” into perdition,<sup>1</sup> while many a word carelessly uttered has broken loved ones’ hearts, separated families, and shattered concepts. They have distorted our perception of constants, treated variables as though they were unchanging facts, and brought untold harm which can only be perceived by those who comprehend the value, importance, and influence of words. This being the case, a discussion of the structures of intellectual discourse and theses becomes a multifaceted exchange of great significance and seriousness.

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is pleased to present this important study on the reform of Islamic thought as a contribution to greater understanding of the written and spoken word, awareness of the responsibility which it entails, and the realization of its importance in the circumstances faced by our Muslim nation. This study will contribute to the second part of the continuing series entitled, “Missing Dimensions of Contemporary Islamic Discourse” and “The Reform of Islamic Thought: An Introduction to the Structures of Islamic Discourse.” Taha was instrumental in compiling these series.

The reader will note many points of agreement between the present work and the book entitled, *Iṣlāh al-Fikr al-Islāmī Bayn al-Qudurāt wa*

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\*ṢAAS: *Ṣalla Allahu ‘alayhi wa Sallam*: May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This prayer is said by Muslims whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned, or whenever he is referred to as the Prophet of Allah.

*al 'Aqabāt: Waraqat ʿAmal*, which was published by the Institute as a working paper in its Islamization of Knowledge series.<sup>2</sup> The present book includes the most important points contained in the original working paper together with numerous additions and modifications, the most important of which are the illustrative diagrams prepared by Muhammad Buraysh<sup>3</sup>, IIIT's part-time advisor in the area of cultural studies.

Although the revisions made in the original working paper called for some modification in the title, the Institute was nevertheless keen to keep the Preface by Umar Ubaydah Hasanah in its original form. However, the majority of this unique group of thinkers viewed the difficult financial conditions faced by the Institute as part of the pressures being brought to bear on the Muslim nation. Consequently they saw them as an obstacle to overcome, and chose to persevere in their tasks in solidarity with the Institute. We can view their stance as evidence of their appreciation of and faith in the Institute and its mission, and as a testimony to the promise and success of our cause, God willing.

We would like our readers to be aware that although this message in its most recent formulation contains the features of general discourse, it nevertheless retains a significant degree of intellectual and cultural specificity. We trust that the ideas presented here are of importance to everyone who has a share in the concerns raised by the current intellectual and cultural crisis. Nevertheless, its reading will require patience and objectivity, as well as a sense of the importance of thought and culture in the building of the new Islamic civilization.

The trying times being experienced by the Muslims may cause people to be less attentive to thought-related issues since, rather than addressing immediate concerns, the discussion of such issues is the means of implementing the long-term treatment for which we are calling. However, the Ummah's ongoing frustration, failure and resultant sense of humiliation and disorientation serve to highlight an inescapable question, namely: If the Ummah had retained sound doctrine and correct ways of thinking, if its will had been liberated and if its people had been properly brought up and prepared, deriving strength and protection from their full autonomy, would what has happened to them ever have been possible? If this intellectual crisis had not taken root, and were it not for the absence of cultural identity and unity, would it have been possible for external forces to

take over the Ummah, destroying the potential it had amassed and sending it “back to the drawing board”?

The Ummah’s need for intellectual reform, cultural presence and civilizational witness is greater than its need for food and air, and we hope that the message communicated in this book can serve as a reminder of this fact. Given that it addresses itself first and foremost to Muslim youth, who stand to benefit most significantly from its message, the Institute welcomes their comments, criticisms and opinions in response to any part of this series.

May God grant success to us all in doing what He loves and approves, and may He help our Muslim nation pass through this ordeal, treat its wounds, and experience complete healing and recovery. He is the One who Hears and Responds.



## PREFACE TO THE ARABIC EDITION

Praise be to God the Most Bountiful, Who taught human beings what they did not know, entrusted them with accountability before His law, and commissioned them to serve as His vicegerents on earth by building civilization and directing humanity toward their Maker in accordance with the guidance provided by Divine Revelation and human reason. Praise be to God, who has declared dialogue, discussion and deliberation in a spirit of kindness and respect the ideal way to achieve intellectual conviction which is formed inwardly and generates faith, and which is the proper guide of human behavior.

May blessings and peace be upon the best teacher human beings have ever known, who declared striving and the building up of intellectual strength through the Qur'an to be the highest, most noblest form of jihad, and who declared the intellectual arena to be the realm of exchange among civilizations and between Islam and its opponents. As God declares, "and do not defer to [the likes and dislikes of] those who deny the truth, but strive hard against them [by means of this divine writ] with utmost striving."<sup>1</sup> The entire jihad waged by those who were bent on denying the Truth was aimed at preventing the word of Truth and correct knowledge from reaching people's minds. They conspired against it, stirred up controversy over it and placed it under siege, since the word of Truth alone is the means by which to reform human beings and reshape them culturally: "Now those who are bent on denying the truth say [unto one another], 'Do not listen to this Qur'an, but rather talk frivolously about it, that you might gain the upper hand.'"<sup>2</sup>

There can be no doubt that the Muslim persona is in crisis today, having forfeited much of its methodology and good sense. Its civilizational witness has suffered a retreat, as a result of which it has become unable to evaluate, review, and discern the causes behind its failure and ineffectiveness or to identify areas of malfunction and neglect. It has ceased carrying

out its mission as a leader and witness to others. Consequently, it has come to be situated outside of the historical context, the reality being witnessed at present, and the hoped-for future.

The civilizational absence, or crisis, being suffered by the Muslim nation today is not due to a paucity of values. On the contrary, God has provided a complete set of values for the Muslim community and pledged Himself to preserve them in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Otherwise, the Islamic message would not be characterized by both permanence and finality. In other words, the problem or crisis being suffered by the Muslim mind is not one of values. Rather, the problem in its entirety lies in the inability to deal with values, and with the intellectual production which serves to bridge the gap between these values, with their premises and aims, and the age in which we live. Such intellectual production helps to bring the Islamic vision to bear on contemporary life. In this way, it highlights the finality of the Islamic message and its ability to contribute to the solutions of human problems in a progressive, evolutionary manner unconstrained by the limits of time and place. This is the function of thought, or the world of thoughts, in relation to which we are in a state of crisis. Consequently, there is a confusion between what we term the intellectual crisis being suffered by the Muslim mind (which has rendered it unable either to deal with values or to apply them to human reality) and the illusion that the crisis lies in the values themselves. And it is this confusion which lies at the root of a large number of fallacies, weaknesses and psychological barriers which continue to perpetuate backwardness in the name of piety. Hence, we believe that one of the fundamental requirements for the development of Islamic knowledge at the present time is the elimination of the confusion between, on one hand, the inherited principles and programs or intellectual conduits necessary for life's dynamism and, on the other, the unchanging values and ideas which convey ultimate aims and purposes.

The decline from which we are suffering is due, first and foremost, to a crisis of thought. The reason for this is that the intellectual paradigm of Islamic civilization and of the Islamization of knowledge has stopped at the limits of the minds of the past, as though God had created our minds simply in order for us to put them out of commission and cease utilizing them. It is as though we consider what was produced by the minds of our forebears to be the end of the road, as it were, the outer limit of the time-space

dimension with respect to the permanence of the Islamic message, the result being the civilizational deficit from which we now suffer. Faced as we are with this, we have no choice but to examine ourselves in order to discover the causes underlying the crisis, understand its effects, identify the areas of failure and success, and draw inspiration from our existing values in order to arrive at a modern intellectual formulation capable of recovering the civilizational witness on which we once prided ourselves. In doing so we can reclaim sound criteria and rebuild the Muslim nation which bears witness to the world: "so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you."<sup>3</sup>

The desired process of cultural transformation will take a lifetime or more, and requires numerous and varied approaches. After all it is, in reality, an attempt to re-shape human beings, which is one of the most difficult, complex and intricate of all tasks. This is particularly the case given the complex factors which influence the human personality, not to mention the fact that in such a process, human beings are both the object of treatment and the ones implementing it. This multidimensional process is one which must involve education, the media, and parenting, and is influenced by both intellectual and cultural resources. Hence, the process of reforming people's ways of thinking, reshaping culture, and rectifying knowledge's course in such a way that it is regulated by its founding premises and achieves its Islamic aims, calls for a balanced and comprehensive vision. At the same time, it requires that we specify the roles played by the various relevant factors, since it is inconceivable that reform and rectification of this nature could take place in one aspect of human life in isolation from all others.

It is on this basis that we have chosen to station ourselves on this intellectual frontier, if you will, directing our energies toward the most important and difficult of causes, namely: the reform of mental processes, the building up of intellectual strength, and the selection of cultural resources in light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. All of this is based on our belief that these processes constitute the womb which nurtures and gives birth to civilizations which are capable of resuming Islamic life and constructing viable human cultures. However, the choice of this particular frontier is not an alternative to any of the various movements which aim for civilizational

reform, awakening and renewal. Rather, it is an ongoing condition for the rectification of the courses being followed by any and all of such movements.

Therefore, given the enormity, complexity and intricacy of the task, it is necessary to exert all of our effort in the direction of correcting our points of departure, defining our aim, verifying the possibility of accomplishing what we have set out to do, studying precisely the steps to be taken, and discerning priorities. Then we must clarify the idea, present it well, redress its deficiencies, acquire the elements needed to communicate it to others, study the conditions of its recipients, and undertake an accurate reading of the reality in which we live. Yet, however much we accomplish of the foregoing, it remains imperative that we rely fully upon God and derive inspiration from the prophets, their message and their example. We must absorb and apply the lessons contained in previous theses while avoiding their errors and benefiting from their positive content. And clearly, it will be necessary to arm ourselves with patient endurance. For the difficulty inherent in the cause of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge is that the wall of backwardness has grown thick, while the spirit of civilizational dispossession has taken such firm root that it may well be said that many aspects of the sciences and other areas of knowledge in the present day have abandoned their Islamic underpinnings and discarded their original aims, thereby placing themselves outside an Islamic framework.

Moreover, if we are aware that many of the Prophet's Companions took a decade or two to fully embrace Islam – and this despite the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, the Prophet's eloquence, and his eminent ability to declare and communicate the Islamic message – we will likewise be aware of the tremendous distance and the magnitude of the task before us.

Another point to which attention must be drawn in this connection is that it is natural for methodological theses and studies, or those which attempt to identify the features of this or that method, to require a good deal of dialogue, discussion and mutual exchanges of ideas and points of view. Only in this way can the idea being proposed be tested and clearly formulated, and its foundations firmly established. It is characteristic of such studies to remain open-ended in order for the soundness of standards to be verified, methods to be clarified, and results to be tested for reliability. Consequently, there is nothing wrong with repetition in relation to issues

of method provided that there be variety in the means by which such issues are raised and dealt with, thereby allowing everyone the opportunity to understand the varied dimensions of the question at hand.

The problem may be that most movements striving for cultural rectification, awakening and renewal have occupied themselves to a significant degree with treating what might be literally termed 'intellectual defeats' and restoring images, as though their primary concern was with the repair of objects rather than with reforming the ideas which give rise to them. In doing so, they have not given fundamental criteria and norms the attention they deserve and as a result, the rent in the fabric widens even as they labor to patch it. And so long as the method remains defective, the same defect is bound to persist in its resulting outcomes.

Consequently, as we see it, no choice remains but to revisit the issue of reforming the method itself and correcting the standards upon which it rests in order, thereby, to rebuild the normative Muslim nation, the nation of the middle way which is capable of being a witness to others in emulation of the witness borne to them by the Prophet: "And thus We have willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you."<sup>4</sup>

There are many who possess the mistaken belief that objects and material products have nothing to do with ideas. However, this belief represents an unfortunate state of infantile thinking. For in fact, objects are a concrete embodiment of ideas, and it is ideas which call forth objects. Similarly, objects carry within them the climate and culture of their underlying ideas; they do not come into being in a vacuum but, rather, are the fruit of an intellectual system or framework. Consequently it may be said that every product represents, in reality, a corresponding ideational value. This is true, for example, of the basis of an object's production, its aim and its purpose, as well as the culture which is spread through dealing with given objects. Hence, the use of certain objects embodies a given culture, and it is through this culture that their use spreads. We may also say that the civilizational dispossession which has afflicted us is a result of ideas. Indeed, ideas are more dangerous than objects, which simply constitute an ideational symbol.

It is the Muslim nation's intellectual framework and cultural identity which define its features and sketch out its course, and which give it

confidence in the validity of its religious and philosophical underpinnings, to the soundness of its aims, the authenticity of its foundations, and the consistency of its ideas with its objects. The problem which we face is that the Muslim nation has, to a large degree, come to be situated outside the Islamic context in both its ideas and its objects. Hence, the transformation proposed and indeed required, is that human beings once again become conscious servants of their Maker, as a result of which their prayer, acts of worship, living and dying all become devoted to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds. And with this renewed devotion, they can experience deliverance from their dogmatic, intellectual, economic and social idolatry. As things stand now, today's Muslims no longer suffer a guilt complex if they limit themselves to nothing more than the required rites of worship, that is, even if their lives are being lived in a context entirely at odds with what such rites embody. After all, science has been divorced from wisdom, knowledge from creation, and religion from life.

In this attempt to shed light on the concepts basic to the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge, the Institute does not claim that it has introduced some sort of innovation, or that it has been able to offer a unilateral solution to the problem of thought and deliver the Muslim nation from its cultural crisis. Rather, it is simply an attempt based on our faith in the importance of each single brick in the larger edifice. This is the principle to which the Prophet referred to when he declared,

My position with respect to the other prophets might be likened to a man who, having completed the construction of a house and added the final esthetic touches, left an empty space where one of the bricks would have gone. Afterwards, people began walking around the house and saying in bewilderment, "If only he hadn't left that one brick out." I am to the other prophets as that brick is to the house this man built. I am the seal of the prophets.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, the present attempt neither rejects nor denies previous attempts. On the contrary, it strives to lend each the attention it deserves, considering all of them to be bricks in the larger edifice, and experiences from which it needs to learn.

Hence, this paper does not claim to offer a definitive solution and

redress existing defects single-handedly, thereby bringing an end to the crisis of the Muslim mind by virtue of some magic potion. Rather, it seeks simply to spark interest in the subject at hand and call upon others to engage with it, while shedding more light on some aspects thereof. In doing so, it strives to sound a cultural wake-up call as it were, and to serve as a catalyst to constructive action, honing the intellectual effectiveness of the Muslim nation in relation to what we see as the issue most central to the Ummah's present crisis.

This being the case, we do not wish to refer to this study as a book, or even as a book in the making with the specifications required by such a designation; rather, we have referred to it simply as a working paper presented as a subject for discussion and a file which remains open to any and all serious contributions. Should we disregard the theme of this study, we are bound to pay a heavy price out of our civilizational presence and, indeed, our very beings.

May God grant us sincerity in our intentions and wisdom in our actions, and may He inspire us with right guidance. Indeed, He is the Most Blessed of all masters.

UMAR UBAYDAH HASANAH  
Qatar, 1991



## INTRODUCTION



# Why the Call for the Islamization of Knowledge

One of the most important conditions for the effectiveness and influence of any Islamic activity is that the Muslim audience have a precise understanding of the nature and content of the discourse being addressed to them. In other words, the recipients need to have a clear understanding of the idea being conveyed by the discourse, as well as its premises, its goals, and its practicality. When the spirit of the discourse, as it were, permeates its audience and when they perceive the glaring inconsistency between the reality in which they are living and their hope for an Islamic civilization, they are also made aware of the challenges which must be met and the obstacles which must be overcome in order to realize this hope. Consequently this should inspire a sense of responsibility before God and others.

Similarly, a true understanding and appreciation of a given discourse requires the fulfilment of a number of fundamental conditions. For example: Those seeking to convey the message need to understand the nature of those being addressed and the psychological, social and historical structures which serve to shape the climate in which their audience lives. They need to study the various dimensions and entry points to the recipient's personality and character and identify the type of discourse which is most likely to influence him or her. In addition, the discourse should be free of unnecessary complexity and avoid both excessive brevity and excessive generalization. As such, it should be intelligible, fluently expressed, well-constructed, simply presented, and easy to relate to. Similarly, the message's recipients need to be fully aware of their practical role in the action to which the discourse is calling them. They must be aware of the details and aims of this role, the means by which it can be fulfilled, the obstacles and challenges it entails, and their own position in the action program, as well as the place occupied by their role in the overall scale of priorities.

Such conditions need to be fulfilled for the successful communication of any discourse which aims to motivate its audience to some sort of action. However, they become all the more vital when the intention behind the discourse is to communicate the content of the Islamic message with its various dimensions: as revelation, as thought, and as a call to the general populace with their many and varied languages, customs and perceptions. Moreover, the fulfilment of such conditions becomes even more urgent when the discourse concerned is not limited to a single individual or even generation but, rather, extends its concern, care and guidance to all nations, including both the present and future generations.

The reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge constitute the central issue for which the IIIT has taken responsibility and awareness of which it seeks to spread based on its belief that it is a matter of particular urgency at the present time. The IIIT likewise believes that the dual issue of intellectual reform and the Islamization of knowledge are among the most important foundations of the contemporary, integrated Islamic civilizational enterprise being proposed as an alternative to the Western civilizational enterprise. In relating to this latter enterprise in virtually all of its aspects, the Islamic nation has suffered severe hardship given the West's antipathy to the Islamic nation's creed, its disregard for our nation's psychological and social makeup, and the way in which it has bypassed our nation's civilizational and historical character.

As we see it, the issue of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge has not received the attention it merits; despite its critical significance, it has not become a matter of concern to Muslims in their daily lives. It is also our belief that the causes which underlie the failure to lend this vital issue the required attention have not been carefully studied with the intent of identifying areas of inadequacy and correcting the practical steps being taken. There have, from time to time, been serious attempts in this direction. However, they have not gone beyond individual efforts to the institutional realm. Hence, although they have contributed somewhat to perpetuating ongoing endeavors to bring about cultural reform, they have fallen short of the mark.

In order to formulate the desired Islamic civilizational scheme, contemporary Islamic discourse needs to give the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge a place of highest priority. For in our view, it is the issue which holds the key to many aspects of our present crisis and it is the

torch needed to banish the darkness of the intellectual and scientific turmoil in which the Muslim nation has continued to wander for more than a century now.

There can be no doubt that in the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th Century, the Islamic reform movement exerted tremendous efforts and made monumental sacrifices, as a result of which it made a number of achievements. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the achievements realized are incommensurate with the sacrifices made. Despite all these efforts, the qualitative leap which has to be made in order for Muslims to transcend their current state has yet to be achieved, a fact which calls for a painstaking review of all that has been done thus far. In doing so, it is hoped that we can help any future reform attempts to avoid the failures of the past and to adopt the appropriate content and direction.

As we see it, the most important cause underlying the fact that the achievements realized thus far (in the realm of reform) fall so short of the sacrifices made, is that the attempts which the Muslim nation made to bring about reform, renewal, and change during the aforementioned period of time dealt with some issues while failing to deal with others. Consequently, renewal and reform did not encompass all of the varied causes behind the present crisis or prepare the Ummah to resolve it. Rather, most reform movements have been preoccupied with responding to the outward manifestations of the crisis and its direct effects on people's daily lives. As for its roots and causes, they have not been sufficiently researched, studied and treated. In saying this, our intention is not to fault such efforts or to belittle the services and gains they have provided, foremost among which is the preservation of the Ummah's identity and a sense of belonging thereto.<sup>1</sup> However, it does serve to highlight the clear need for a reform effort which is epistemological and methodological in nature and which is able to outline not only the effects and implications of the current crisis, but its causes as well. Such an attempt would seek to offer the Ummah a sound method for rebuilding on the same foundations which undergirded Islamic civilization in its initial phase. These foundations include, first of all, restoration of people's fundamental humanity without regard for accidental accretions and characteristics, and a call for all people to take part in building a society whose members are united by the bonds of an open social contract free of racism, classicism and regionalism. As such, early Muslims were able to find their way to agreement amongst themselves where other

nations had been divided. Another foundation for the original Islamic civilization was the sense, first of all, that every human being is the equal of every other and, secondly, that all facts relating to the physical and metaphysical realms are within human beings' grasp. They believed that they were capable of discovering these facts through means of perception which are varied, graded, interdependent and harmonious. For beyond instinctual means of perception lie sensory means of perception, followed by rational means of perception. These rational means of perception lead to premises which in turn lead to the awareness of metaphysical realities via Divine Revelation, acceptance thereof and surrender thereto. Hence, addressing this call in the manner in which it was addressed to human beings in their unqualified humanity was sufficient to engage the human potential in the most perfect state of readiness and to enable them to dispose of their powers in an unlimited way.

The foundation of perception upon which the original Islamic civilization was founded was the defense of every pathway of perception even if it entailed incongruity and ambiguity. Based on this foundation, all paths were restored in the advance toward the ultimate end; otherwise, they may have become ossified or faltered on their way to the goal. In this manner, human beings experienced an inward security and stability which gave them confidence in their full humanity. That is to say, their reason, their creed, their material perceptions and their intuitive sentiments were brought into a state of harmony and cooperation, with none of them blocking, or alienating from, any of the others. However, such a process does not come about through human planning or relative human thought. Rather, it emerges from a creed inspired by God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, who Hears all and Sees all. In this way then, there emerge human beings who are effective in carrying out the tasks entailed by their role as God's vicegerents on earth and as those who, by virtue of this role, are put to the test by their Maker.

It follows, then, that in order to recover their effectiveness, Muslims do not need to reconstruct or even renew the religion itself. Rather, what they need is the epistemological and methodological awareness which will enable them to generate the will, ability, determination and efficiency needed to renew their modes of understanding and of perceiving personal piety. In addition, they need the ability to rectify the course of their practical lives and behavior by means of ideas rooted in the Islamic creed and Islamic sources of personal piety.

Hence, the point at which reform should begin is the realization of human

beings' humanity and the building up of a sense of security within the consciences of individual Muslims in order for all of their human perceptions to be in harmony. In this way, people will be able to overcome the woes of confusion, turmoil and conflicts among ideas, beliefs and emotions. Instead, peace will reign among doctrines, truths arrived at through reason, and those passed down through oral and written tradition. In this way there comes to be a conscious harmony between spiritual and material realities while human beings' powers of discernment are released to travel about the earth, as it were, and read the cosmos with unrestricted liberty. Then, if they experience uncertainty concerning the true purpose of things or the nature of the path, Divine Revelation will be there to provide correction and guidance. We have been called to read the cosmos in order to be guided thereby and in order to thrive and grow in righteousness. When this takes place, we ourselves bring together the two readings, the reading of Divine Revelation and the reading of the cosmos. The Divine Revelation is that which grants human beings assistance and stability, providing them with reliable guidance in their reading of the cosmos and enabling them to regain their strength and effectiveness and to make a new beginning. In this process, they find themselves able to fulfill the conditions of civilizational achievement, yet without being dominated by a sense that their own civilization should supplant all others.

The attempts at renewal which occurred during the aforementioned period of time were based for the most part on premises which should have been closely examined. Some renewal and reform movements were based on the belief that our Islamic legacy on the level of thought, method, creed, law and knowledge is complete as it stands, and that there is no need to re-examine any part of it. They believed it would be sufficient for them to place the Ummah's hands on its tradition and make it aware of its treasures, and that the Ummah would find in this tradition everything it needed. After all, the Muslim nation in the periods during which this tradition came into being was not in the sorrowful state in which it finds itself today. Therefore, or so the argument went, all Muslims need to do is to take the industries and material technologies which they need from the West, while clinging to their heritage in order to achieve the required civilizational leap. Some of these movements, on the other hand, believed that what they needed to do in order for the desired goal to be achieved was to undertake certain revisions of the

Islamic heritage while reviving and reproducing some aspects of it. Then it had to create awareness of it by teaching it in the language of the modern age. Others, by contrast, considered that the task of renewal and reform would be facilitated if it became possible to elucidate or re-explain many of the theses of the Islamic legacy in such a way that parallels and comparisons could be drawn between it and contemporary thought. If this could be done, they believed, the wheel of change would begin to turn in the desired direction.

Everyone reiterates the famous words spoken by Imam Mālik, “Those who live in the latter days of this Ummah will only achieve righteousness and well-being by means of those things through which their earliest predecessors achieved them.” Moreover, we have become increasingly aware of what served to reform early Muslims. Nevertheless, a return to the methodology of rebuilding human means of perception through a reading of both Divine Revelation and the cosmos has not been given its due by renewal and reform movements. At the same time, those who have drawn attention to the need for renewal movements to begin with a re-reading of the Qur’an have been faced with a number of problems. Such problems include, for example, the question of the relationship between the Qur’an and the environment associated with the original Islamic discourse and the descent of revelation, and the relationship between the Qur’an and the disciplines now known as the Qur’anic sciences which were formulated around its various texts (including, for example, the science of *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*,<sup>2</sup> the science of *al-muḥkam wa al-mutashābih*,<sup>3</sup> the occasions of Revelation, hermeneutics, etc). For a certain understanding, historical mode of thought and cultural complex have projected themselves onto the texts of the Qur’an, thereby rendering any alternative understanding suspect and subject to the accusation of being either unnecessarily allegorical, or merely a personal point of view with no authoritative claim.

This being the case, renewal movements have failed to see that from the beginning, they must arrive at a method for reading the Qur’an as though it had only been revealed to them themselves, and in their own generation. If they could do this, they would be able to deal with the qualitative, radical changes which have taken place in thought, method, knowledge and life in a manner which is based on the Qur’an itself and which appeals directly to its authority. For most of the questions and challenges posed by the current world civilization cannot be answered by means of independent human interpretations based on the drawing of analogies with the sayings of those who went

before us or on extrapolation from their schools of thought. Rather, in order to answer these questions, we must appeal to the Qur'an itself, for it is the Qur'an, and the Qur'an alone, which is capable of offering this type of cosmic answer and authoritative, unique solutions.

Nor do we need a new reading of the Qur'an which relies on approximations, comparisons or allegorical interpretation. Rather, there must be a reading which causes the Qur'an itself to yield its definitive answers and solutions to the challenges and questions of every age and generation. For this divinely inspired book contains the elucidation of all things until the end of time, while its preservation, its resistance to change or alteration, its perfection, completeness and comprehensiveness are among the most important justifications for belief in the Prophet Muhammad as the seal of the prophets and in the discontinuation of prophethood subsequent to his advent.

Therefore, renewal of the religion cannot be equated simply with revival of the heritage of our forefathers, which represents a summation of their thought concerning the religion and their understanding thereof. Nor can modernization be equated with imitation of the West and following in its footsteps. Rather, true renewal derives its substance from the reconstruction or reformation of the Muslim mind, and restoration of its connection with the Book of God in its capacity as the sole creative source – together with the cosmos – of thought, knowledge, creed, law and method. Similarly, genuine renewal entails repairing what has been broken in the connection between the Muslim mind and the Sunnah as well as all other aspects of the age of revelation and prophethood. For the Sunnah and the facts of the Prophet's life are the sole binding sources of explanation and clarification of the Qur'an.

This being the case, the Islamization of knowledge is one of the most important foundations of Islamic religious renewal, the process of rebuilding the Ummah as a 'pole' of the nations, and the contemporary Islamic civilizational enterprise. The Islamization of knowledge constitutes the missing dimension of plans for renewal and reform or, at the very least, the dimension which such plans have failed to give the attention and care it deserves. Hence, if the IIT devotes itself to standing at this frontier and strives to highlight this dimension, this in no way implies a disparagement of any individual, group or movement. On the contrary, it is a stationing of ourselves on a frontier whose protection is necessary for the well-being and safety of all other frontiers as well. Hence, if other movements, institutions, and parallel Islamic trends have

been preoccupied with their daily concerns and challenges, of which there are many, then one might hope that they would be grateful to God for having assigned someone else to fulfill this particular duty. Indeed, they ought to assist, support, bless, and guide our efforts in order to benefit from them and make use of their anticipated benefits, if not immediately, then at some point in the future.

The modernization enterprise failed within the framework of subordination to the West, and it nearly undertook of its own accord to turn the initiative over to factions of the “Islamic awakening” – as it was referred to in Western circles in the early 1980’s. However, in most regions, the Islamic awakening movement continued to occupy itself with expansion, relying in some places on the renewal heritage of reformers [the likes of Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Rashid Rida, al-Afghani and al-Kawakibi] until it had exhausted it. And before long, it was discovered that the hindrances found within the legacy were no less perilous than those associated with modernism. Thus it was that the Islamic awakening began to grow lethargic in most places, while entering a phase of outright retreat in others. In doing so, it acted contrary to God’s ways as related in the messages of His apostles, which do not retreat after their initial advance but, instead, continue their march forward until they have achieved their aims. In light of this retreat, moreover, there were some who began a process of dusting off and polishing up previous modernization projects, particularly the secularist ones. Finding itself allied suddenly with the followers of Marxism, Leninism and others of their ilk, the West began to breathe new life into them so that through them, it could confront the awakening, or the Islamic tide. This was followed by the appearance of successive studies on the modernization project and the reasons for its failure, a phenomenon which prepared the way for its abandonment by the Ummah once more, if only due to its preoccupation with other concerns, and the destruction of whatever happened to remain of its effectiveness and realism.

Attempts were thus being made to persuade a defeated, helpless Muslim nation that the modernist Westernization enterprise had failed due to causes which ought to be eradicated. One of the most important of these proposed causes was the nature of the Muslim mentality itself. It was claimed that this mentality, with its makeup and structure, bears primary responsibility for the failure of the Western civilizational enterprise in the Islamic world. The Islamic mindset, by virtue of its heritage-bound makeup, had simply not

understood the Western civilizational enterprise. Rather, it had misunderstood it and therefore, had rejected it and failed to give it a proper reception. It [the Islamic mindset] had not interacted with modernism in the way that Westerners had. Otherwise – or so claimed the proponents of this argument – it could be said without a doubt that this enterprise is, by nature, a successful one and that its success in virtually all times and places is a scientific inevitability. After all, it is a scientific, global enterprise: a fact which is confirmed by its success in places like Japan, Korea, India and other countries of the world.

As for the crime of thwarting this enterprise, responsibility for it rests squarely with the Muslim mind and the history-bound Islamic culture! For the intellectual constitution of the Muslim individual, his psychological makeup, his Islamic legacy, and the history- and language-bound nature of his thinking, have all assisted in the crime of thwarting the success of the Westernization enterprise. Consequently – or so it was said – the Muslim mind would have to be placed on the Western dissecting table so that it could be determined where the malfunction lay and so that some of its parts could be removed. The first step to be taken in this process would be to reshape the Muslim mind, which requires a reading of everything related thereto by way of culture, knowledge, sources, systems, heritage, history and language. The next step would be to select the entry points through which Western ways of thinking could be proposed and win acceptance, by dropping those parts of the Muslim mind which stand in the way of an acceptance of the Westernization enterprise and frustrate its effectiveness and influence. After all, in the Islamic East, this enterprise has not yielded the fruits it has yielded in the Christian West. Hence, it was thought that if a further attempt were made, the Westernization project might enter a successful phase in the Islamic world. Consequently, many Western scholars and researchers, and with them a number of culturally like-minded Arabs, devoted themselves to a search for the entry points through which it might be possible to infiltrate Islamic thought, citing evidence from Islamic thought itself – particularly in the areas of literature, history, and the humanities in general – in favor of the correctness and soundness of Western thought.

Such people believed that the Orientalists had not achieved the desired success in what they themselves were attempting to accomplish. In their view, Orientalists and the leaders of the initial Westernization campaigns had failed to do a proper reading of the Islamic legacy, while their mechanisms and methods were not sufficiently advanced to enable them to

undertake a structural analysis of the Muslim mind. Consequently, the bookshops were inundated with writings on the Islamic legacy and modernity, the makeup, structure and assassination of the Arab mind, the makeup and historically bound nature of Islamic thought, and various other related topics. As we see it, the Orientalists succeeded to a significant extent in creating modes of thought and a cultural milieu in universities, institutes and schools which led to the emergence of this trend and its pioneers, who now carry on the same quest from within the Islamic world.

As for the second proposed cause for the failure of the Westernization enterprise in the Islamic world, and which may be seen as a complement to the first, it was the Orientalists' failure to make appropriate use of traditional Islamic terminology and failure to create the required entry points for communicating the concepts associated with Westernization. Thus, for example, if socialism was presented to a Muslim as the theories of Marx, Engels and others of their ilk, the Muslim mind would hesitate to accept it by virtue of its makeup, structure and cultural heritage. However, when the same theory, with all of its implications, was presented to Muslims as something consistent with the thought of Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī,<sup>4</sup> 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn Khaldūn, the same Muslims would be anxious to adopt it.

Similarly, when the idea of joining the international socialist movement is presented as a struggle on behalf of the poor and deprived against exploiters and colonizers, the Muslim will accept it, especially if those proposing the idea stress to him or her that the roots of this invitation emerged in Islam, and that other movements have made use of the same message. In this way it becomes possible to reinterpret the Rafidite<sup>5</sup> and Kharijite<sup>6</sup> movements, as well as movements of a similar nature such as those of the Karmatians<sup>7</sup> and the Zunj (a certain nation) in order to give an intentional dimension to Islamic history and to increase the chances of the idea's acceptance. The same thing applies to the presentation of democracy as the equivalent of mutual consultation (*al-shūrā*), the republic as equivalent to the caliphate, etc.

When the Ummah becomes lost in this way, removing itself from its Islamic cultural context and allowing others to lead it culturally and present Western thought with all of its Greek, pagan, Crusader-like roots and its Darwinist, Freudian, Marxist, Sartrian, Socialist and liberal schools as the thought of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Khaldūn, it succumbs to a sort of intellectual deception. Such notions are bound to find acceptance in the

Muslim mind. In fact, there are individuals who have undertaken specialized studies of Islamic history and its associated heritage in an attempt to trace many modern intellectual propositions – some of which may be no more than a century old – back to Islamic sources. As a consequence, the Islamic arena has been flooded with concocted terminology such as ‘the Islamic left’ and ‘the Islamic right’. Some have even begun to classify the Companions of the Prophet and their successors as liberals, democrats, socialists, and the like.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, concepts from the Islamic legacy are projected onto some modern Western theories and notions in order to invest these ideas with the same legitimacy as that borne by the original concepts and their associated terms. Such concoction is seen as *ijtihad*<sup>9</sup> and the deviation from or rejection of Islamic concepts is presented as renewal. Banality may disguise itself as art.

In sum, the issue of concepts and ideas should be viewed with the utmost seriousness, and as one which merits a great deal of research and study.

## WHAT HAS THE ISLAMIC ENTERPRISE DONE?

In the form in which it has been presented, the Islamic enterprise has not given the intellectual dimension the attention it deserves. This fact helps to explain the Islamic enterprise’s inability to reach the goals it has set itself and the Ummah’s ongoing affliction with deadly maladies of thought, such as the mindset of collective imitation, heedlessness of the laws of the universe, and disregard for or misunderstanding of the universal nature of Islam. In addition, the encounters with the non-Islamic world required of those responsible for carrying out the Islamic enterprise have left them no opportunity to give the intellectual issue the importance it merits, and this despite the fact that such encounters have yielded an important store of field jurisprudence, thereby revealing the critical nature of this very issue.

An examination of the causes underlying the failure of the theories associated with the Westernization enterprise reveals the urgent importance of the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. For in undertaking these tasks, the Islamic enterprise may be able to redress the causes underlying its weakness and reinforce the factors underlying its intellectual strength. The intellectual-cultural enterprise is thus an attempt to deal with the subjective causes which contributed to the failure of previous enterprises

and prevented them from recognising all the needed dimensions. The reason for this is that the intellectual-cultural enterprise is based on fundamental Islamic premises and a comprehensive perspective; at the same time, it acknowledges the need to achieve balance and moderation and to regulate the relative proportions represented by its various dimensions. Such considerations, while being a distinguishing feature of the proposed intellectual and cultural project, are likewise a tremendous responsibility. We maintain that it is this 'enterprise of the middle way' which will determine the fate of our Ummah's attempts at renewal and the extent to which it will be able to overcome the backwardness which characterizes its thinking at the present time. If such backwardness can indeed be overcome, the Ummah can hope to reclaim its role as a civilization which is not content simply to rescue and rebuild the Muslim Ummah itself, but one which goes beyond this to rescue a suffering humanity threatened with annihilation. Such a revived Islamic civilization is one by virtue of which the Ummah will once again occupy the position of a civilizational witness to all of humanity, which is the essence of its mission. This in no way implies that we can dispense with or bypass the contributions made by earlier reform projects. However, there is a need to correct them in order to benefit from their positive aspects and the practical lessons they offer.

### WHAT DOES THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE HAVE TO OFFER ISLAMIC RENEWAL, THE UMMAH, AND THE WORLD?

This is a legitimate, indeed, important question which deserves an answer. What the Islamization of knowledge attempts to offer Islamic renewal, the Muslim nation and the world at large is the Qur'an in its capacity as the only book which possesses the ability to rescue all of humanity today.

It is the Qur'an alone which possesses an alternative methodological and epistemological vision on a cosmic level. However, bearers of the Qur'an have not yet begun to suffer from this methodological and epistemological dilemma, and have not yet realized its critical importance. The reason for this is that the economic, social and intellectual reality – that is to say, the overall civilizational reality – in the region of the world bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the West and the Pacific Ocean to the East is still dominated by its

primary intellectual heritage and by the mindset of contrasting dualities. Hence, its intellectual and epistemological backwardness prevents it from experiencing 'cognitive dissonance', angst or a sense of the need for a new methodology or epistemology. Rather, the numerous media through which its heritage is passed down and preserved, including Qur'anic commentaries, the Qur'anic sciences and others, constitute readily available references which do not allow people to sense the need for an epistemological methodology for understanding or dealing with the Qur'an.

As for those who deal with matters of the intellect and contemporary culture, the nature of Western thought and culture has taught them that it is Western culture and thought alone which are able to resolve humanity's crises and to create its alternatives. As a result, they do not allow for the possibility of importing anything from outside the Western intellectual and cultural framework.

At this juncture, attention is drawn to another reason which underlies the failure of some who have called for modernism based on current civilizational trends, even when this call has been issued from within the framework of Islamic renewal itself, namely, the fact that the structure of our Islamic reality has not developed or changed on the qualitative level. Consequently, the manifestations of modernity in our Islamic world have continued to be nothing more than imported forms which, as in the case of ideas, do not arise out of these countries' own historical and civilizational experience. The prevailing intellectual, Islamic and social discourse is not without a certain contemporary quality, even when it invokes tradition or takes it as its starting point. However, such discourse is contemporary in its structure and form only, while remaining traditional in content. This fact calls upon us to recognize that the mind which formulated this discourse is still enveloped within tradition; as a consequence, it is separated from the intellectual, epistemological and methodological level of the present age, to which it belongs on the material level alone.

Moreover, given the fact that the formulators of this discourse have not suffered what was suffered by others in producing the current world civilization, they suppose that it is possible to separate ideas from the tools by means of which they are conveyed. After all, they did not witness the arduous birth of the metropolis during the periods when its producers endured the transition from the steam engine to the Industrial Revolution to modern technology

and the age of communications. The formulators of this pseudo-modern discourse do not perceive how people's minds and ideas were reshaped during each successive phase, resulting in a kind of intellectual development taking place side by side with civilizational evolution. However, when contemporary civilization reaches its epistemological zenith, those who have suffered for the sake of producing this civilization will understand easily the meaning and necessity of methodology and epistemology. They will also realize the degree to which they are capable of influencing the processes of intellectual and epistemological renewal.

To demonstrate the truth of this claim, we need only look at the history and philosophy of the contemporary sciences, be they natural sciences, the humanities or the social sciences, and focus particularly on the philosophy of the natural sciences. Such an examination will make clear how the processes of intellectual and epistemological reshaping have taken place along with civilizational and cultural formation. Indeed, it will enable us to see the mutual influence between these two processes up to the time when contemporary civilization reached its most recent impasse. It might even appear to someone observing the progression of events that contemporary civilization and its intellectual and epistemological zenith entered the impasse together. In consequence, cries for help announcing the failure of modernist thought and the disintegration to which it has led are widespread, as well as the inability of post-modernist thought to put things back together. In fact, post-modernist thought has joined the ranks of the deconstructionists. For while modernism and its mode of thought have deconstructed religion, the cosmos and nature, post-modernist thought has deconstructed man himself. And the process of deconstruction is still ongoing. It is here, then, that the depth of the crisis becomes apparent, as well as the depth of the awareness of the crisis and the search for a methodological, cosmic alternative to help human beings put back together what they have taken apart.

The Islamization of knowledge school realize that the crisis is of world-wide proportions. They also realize that nothing can deliver us from this crisis but the eternal, absolute Book of God, to which "no falsehood can attain... openly, and neither in a stealthy manner."<sup>10</sup> For within its chapters and verses, this book alone contains the cosmic methodology capable of accomplishing the philosophical reformulation of our modern civilization. At the same time, however, we realize that the Qur'an is in the possession of an

Ummah which, unfortunately, did not keep up with the world as it produced contemporary civilization. Consequently, it suffers from a crisis of double backwardness – that is to say, both intellectual–epistemological and civilizational backwardness. For this reason, the Ummah is unable to perceive the Qur’an’s great significance for our age, nor is it able to see the latent potential therein or present it skillfully to today’s world on the level of its epistemological and civilizational zenith. Instead, it seeks refuge in its traditional understanding of the Qur’an.

As for Westerners who are aware of the crisis and who are in search of a solution, they are unable to discover the cosmic methodology contained in the Qur’an. The reason for this is that when they approach the Qur’an, they approach it as a religious book; however, they deconstructed religion long ago, forbidding any interaction between religion, science, knowledge and method. Hence, when they go in search of an alternative epistemological, cosmic methodology, they tread all of the philosophical paths known to them and delve into all aspects of the human heritage with the exception of Islam. After all, they only approach it as they would an old opponent, foe or rival.

The situation is reminiscent of the natural treasures once concealed under our lands. Thanks to our backwardness, it was not we ourselves who discovered the minerals which our lands had concealed beneath their sands. Rather, they lay hidden until they were discovered by others after they had achieved progress and realized their importance for their own civilization. And indeed, our fates are still in their hands. We have yet to transcend our civilizational crises or transform ourselves – by virtue of what has been discovered on our own territory – into a civilizational partner on an equal footing with others. On the contrary, we have become increasingly subordinate, while our withdrawal and backwardness have grown more severe. The Qur’an’s cosmic, epistemological methodology lies dormant, while our epistemological and civilizational ‘blindness’ prevent us from unearthing it. Meanwhile, whatever we do discover of it is quickly commandeered by vast, centuries-long accumulation of exegesis and traditional Qur’anic sciences. As a result, it is reproduced as a part of our traditional heritage which the thirsty imagine to be water, only to find upon closer inspection that it is a mere mirage which produces no civilizational impetus and achieves no sort of effectiveness or activity. At the same time, others are prevented from making contact with the Qur’an by a varied historical legacy which includes folkloric myths of the present and

past, and a store of historical memories which are antithetical to everything that bears any connection with Islam. In addition, the periods of colonization and arrogance born of Euro-centrism, Western-centrism and racial prejudice have left a tremendous number of problems in their wake. These problems have revived all manner of conflict, hostility and struggle between Westerners in general and the Muslims: a phenomenon which has drawn even thicker veils between the crisis-ridden West and the Qur'an with its healing powers.

Today the world has reached a point of such widespread intractability and judgement that it currently and with confidence views Islam and Muslims everywhere as a threat to contemporary human civilization. Similarly, the Qur'an (which runs a close second in this respect to Islam and Muslims) has come to be associated with terrorism and extremism and is viewed as a threat. In fact, there are those who hold that normalization of relations in the Middle Eastern context can only take place after certain verses of the Qur'an have been removed from circulation. Those who have grown accustomed to the practice of distorting "the meaning of the [revealed] words, taking them out of their context"<sup>11</sup> are masters at choosing and setting aside such passages in order to empty the Qur'an of its power and effectiveness and force Muslims to read it as disparate, truncated parts. Consequently, the Qur'anic methodology, the laws of its organization and the principles underlying its style remain undiscovered, and Muslims remain in their backwardness while the Qur'an remains a book for the dead rather than the living, and for the life to come rather than for this earthly existence.

If such people perceived the enormity of the crime they are committing against humanity as they go about depriving them of the true understanding of it, they would be overcome with guilt.

The Islamization of knowledge seeks to accomplish a two-fold task of great weight and complexity. It works to counter Muslims' abandonment of the Qur'an and to create an awareness on the part of the Ummah of the Qur'an's distinguishing methodological and epistemological features. In this way, the Ummah can learn how to read the Qur'an in light of the age in which it lives, as well as how to combine the reading of the Qur'an and the reading of the cosmos in order to protect itself from being assimilated by Western-centricity as it attempts to rebuild the world in conformity with its own vision and within its orbit of power. The Islamization of knowledge movement realizes, of course, that it is impossible to preserve the future of the Ummah by applying static,

outmoded logic in the face of attempts at mastery by the West. The West sees the Islamic epistemological paradigm, or what remains thereof, as the antithesis of the paradigm of positivistic civilizational development. Positivistic civilizational development as epitomized in the spirit of capitalism and capital accumulation is based on the idea of the concentration of surplus value in the hands of the dominant classes, and which works to secure control over others' work forces and resources in order to exploit them for the benefit of the center. Given these aims, dominant powers are doing everything in their power to besiege and assimilate Islam. Hence, any attempt to apply Islamic law represents, in its view, an act of aggression against contemporary human civilization which must be prevented by all available means, including military coups and armed revolutions. Similarly, all support for Islamic action is considered to be support for terrorism and extremism! Consequently, according to this view, all sources of Islamic action must be dried up, and any outlets through which Islam might find room to breathe must be blocked.

As a result of this unjust assault, many people are no longer able to distinguish between extremists and mainstream Muslims, between upright Muslims and those who have deviated from the path. For the battle is being fought even on the level of names, appearances and images. Everything that has anything remotely to do with Islam must be exterminated and destroyed. They may target someone who has been referred to as an extremist; then, if someone whom they themselves have described as a moderate should come to his defense or object to what has happened to him, the moderate is likewise branded an extremist and is seen as meriting the same treatment as that meted out to the extremist. After all, the long-term goal seems to be the annihilation of Islam. Moreover, while the Islamization of knowledge works among Muslims themselves to try to achieve the goals mentioned thus far, it seeks at the same time to formulate the Islamic discourse to be addressed to the world at large. In doing so, it attempts to help the crisis-ridden world to discover the solution to its crises and the remedy for its ills in the Qur'an and its epistemological methodology. It strives to dissociate human scientific and civilizational accomplishments from their positivistic philosophical premises so that humanity will be able to restore the connection among the sciences, knowledge, and values. Thus humanity will be able to make use of the sciences it has developed and the knowledge

it has acquired within the context of an Islamic epistemological methodology. This, in turn, can lead to the Islamization of the philosophical foundations of scientific theories by negating their positivistic dimensions and reformulating them within a cosmic framework that encompasses the divine purposefulness in the universe and life. Based on the foregoing, one may clearly see the importance and necessity of the Islamization of knowledge, not only for the Islamic world, but for the world at large. This methodological-epistemological issue rests upon the following six foundations:

- 1) Building up a contemporary Islamic epistemological system.
- 2) Reconstituting the Qur'anic epistemological methodology.
- 3) Developing methods of dealing with the Qur'an as a source of thought, knowledge and civilization.
- 4) Developing methods of dealing with the Sunnah as a source of thought, knowledge and civilization.
- 5) Developing methods of dealing with the Islamic legacy in such a way as to transcend the periods of imitation and discontinuity through which the Ummah has passed.
- 6) Formulating methods of dealing with the contemporary human heritage in such a way as to link it to human thought and civilization as a whole and to overcome their inadequacies and crises.

The importance, or rather the necessity of dealing with this issue brings professors, scientists, thinkers and graduate students face to face with their God-given duties and the critical role that they are called upon to undertake. It renders scientific and epistemological research a sacred mission, and turns universities, institutes and scientific research centers into launching pads for a genuine Qur'anic awakening with the capacity to bring today's world "out of deep darkness into the light."<sup>12</sup> In doing so, such an awakening can place humanity once again on the path of God, the One worthy of all praise,

Unto Whom all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth belongs. But woe unto those who deny the truth, for suffering severe awaits those who choose the life of this world as the sole object of their love, preferring it to the life to come, and who turn others away from the path of God and try to make it appear crooked. Such as these have indeed gone far astray.<sup>13</sup>

## CHAPTER ONE



# The Crisis of Contemporary Islamic Discourse:

## *Motive Forces Behind the Crisis and the Crisis Mentality*

If the Muslim intelligentsia of our day agree on anything, they agree on the fact that all peoples belonging to the Islamic nation, and first and foremost, the Arab people, are passing through a thought-related crisis. This crisis manifests itself in the form of cultural absence, academic backwardness and civilizational eclipse. They also agree that the crisis is embodied in the inability of contemporary intellectual discourse to communicate the true content of the Islamic message as contained in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, Islamic law and Islamic morals. However, they differ concerning the reasons for this inability and the means by which to redress it.

The sense of crisis has led, quite naturally, to the proposal of a number of projects which aim to revive and reform the Muslim mind. In the course of presenting such proposals, diverse interpretations and points of view have been presented. In addition, the Western project has been proposed anew in various forms and with varied approaches, all of which claim that the sense of crisis is only a result of misapplication and not an error in the method adopted or in the way of thinking on which it is based. There have also been efforts to present concocted projects which take their content from the Western enterprise and certain of their colors and costumes from Islamic enterprises.

Under the weighty influence of the [Western] civilizational enterprise and its discourse with its varied mouthpieces, as well as the preoccupation with problems' effects rather than their intellectual causes, most projects have concerned themselves with repairing the world of things while failing to give the world of ideas the attention it deserves. As a result, such projects have lacked a comprehensive, objective vision, the ability to plan as they need to, as well as the ability to engage in ongoing evaluation and analysis. This has led to decline and frustration while further complicating the problem rather than

offering the appropriate solution.

## THE ISLAMIC ENTERPRISE

Given the circumstances of the bitter conflict between the Ummah and its adversaries, the discourse which has emerged from the Islamic enterprise has concerned itself largely with mobilization for struggle. This struggle grew out of the [West's] occupation of the most important Muslim territories during the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the result being that some of them were transformed into regions of protection and influence, while others were turned into markets and vital areas. These developments led to a preoccupation with protecting the Ummah by devoting energy to two main issues, namely: (1) preservation of Islamic doctrine, and (2) mobilization of the Ummah for political, and even military, confrontation at certain times and in certain places. If, after devoting its attention to these areas, there remained any surplus energy, it was devoted to the investigation of juristic questions, the aim being to present them anew, explain them, summarize them, and compare them with legal questions of concern to Western thought.

As for dealing with the crisis of thought by studying it, ascertaining the causes behind it and benefiting from the practical experience of those involved in developing 'field jurisprudence' (made possible by encounters with the non-Muslim world) and then constructing an epistemological and cultural edifice in light of these investigations, such endeavors have not, at least until recently, been given the attention they deserve by the Islamic enterprise.

### DIRECTING CONCERN TOWARD PRESERVATION OF DOCTRINE

It bears noting that a major error has been committed in the call simply to preserve Islamic doctrine. This call is based on the belief that the concepts of Islam as understood and embraced by members of the Ummah will not have undergone significant change so long as they have not denied the Truth of the basic testimonies of faith. This is correct to a large extent; however, it cannot be accepted in an unqualified manner. The reason for this is that

despite people's enduring faith in God and His Messenger, Islamic concepts have nevertheless been distorted and altered to a significant degree. If we deal wisely with this fact, it can constitute the epistemological potential which we seek to construct in a methodologically correct fashion, thereby transforming doctrine into an intellectual and epistemological base.

There is a mistaken belief that simply by charging the Ummah with enthusiasm and reminding them through impassioned rhetoric of the glories of Muslim history, the Ummah can be launched anew toward a thriving Islamic life, a new Islamic civilization, and a comprehensive Islamic unity. It is believed, moreover, that this can be accomplished without constructing a sound intellectual, conceptual, epistemological and cultural world capable of giving direction to the Ummah's movement and anchoring the foundations of its path and approach. These beliefs, which are highly risky, signal the loss of correct vision and a willingness to settle for a subjective awareness of the problem without giving serious thought to how to resolve it. One need only look at the deteriorating situation in which the Ummah finds itself at the present time to acknowledge the validity of this claim.

It is this illusion which has led some to view the intellectual crisis as evidence of a defect in doctrine, and to the resultant belief that working to reform and correct people's doctrine will lead inevitably to the resolution of the crisis.

No one can deny that studying Islamic history, reminding the Ummah of its glories, and recovering and developing the various dimensions of its civilizational character over time are necessary if we are to construct the desired epistemological edifice. However, the problem lies in a failure to fulfill the requirements of intellectual and conceptual 'loading' and 'unloading' – that is, the process of comprehending and sifting through the content of the Islamic legacy – and in the inability to analyze, pinpoint conditions for success, and appreciate the circumstances conducive to action. In order to achieve what we hope to, we must understand the laws which govern the demise and revival of nations rather than being content with reminiscing about our past achievements and seeking refuge from our current state of helplessness. For without the ability to transform thought into strength and effectiveness which course through the Ummah's veins, our Islamic history and legacy will become civilizational and cultural hindrances rather than factors encouraging reform and renewal.

It is not our intention here to belittle the importance of sound doctrine, which constitutes the basic foundation for a sound Islamic cultural and epistemological structure. Indeed, we are fully aware that early Muslims' realization and understanding of the various dimensions of doctrine are what led to independent reasoning and thought by means of which they applied doctrine to people's lives and guided their behavior. Hence they produced a sound epistemological and cultural edifice which served as the basis for a civilization the likes of which world history has never known.

However, particularly among the late scholastic theologians, the study of doctrine became ossified within static molds, areas and statements, as a result of which its concepts were confined within the limits of their logical boundaries and polemical styles. Scholars thus lost sight of the type of thought that emerges from transforming doctrine into action and applying it to a reality which, in its turn, reformulates doctrine while preserving its fundamental principles. Such a dialectic breathes the spirit of renewal into doctrine, enabling it to keep pace with the age, and making it into the framework for a universal vision and an all-inclusive epistemological method and model.

Most [previous] attempts to reform doctrine took place within the framework of scholastic debate and abstract, theoretical understanding. In other words, such attempts allowed no appreciable mental space, as it were, for applying doctrine to reality, correcting people's conduct on the basis thereof, or translating it into paths, approaches and systems that go beyond the realm of Islamic rites of worship. Hence, doctrinal studies were transmuted into mental abstractions devoid of practical benefit, like a tree that bears no fruit.

#### MOBILIZING THE UMMAH FOR POLITICAL CONFRONTATION (SEE FIGURE 1.1)

The Ummah's sense of helplessness in the face of the colonial armies and their foreign civilization left its mark on most of its factions, dividing them into two camps:

- 1) Those who, dazzled by the invading culture, called for political, economic, social and educational reforms based on Western patterns and described Islam as unable to keep pace with the modern, contemporary age. This

camp included among its representatives both those who advocated a complete break with Islam and its legacy, and those who advocated peaceful coexistence with the religion accompanied by the formulation of a civil society unaffected by Islamic law.

- 2) Those who held that the cause underlying the Islamic nation's backwardness was its distancing from Islam and its values. This second camp was divided into: (a) those who viewed the Ummah's malady as resulting from distortion of doctrine, weak faith, and preoccupation with worldly luxuries, and (b) those who saw it as resulting from the abandonment of mental struggle and independent reasoning beginning in the 4th Century AH.

In the first camp's view, the place to begin was with educational, social and political reform even if this led to political violence and the destruction of the Ummah's infrastructures. In the second camp's view, the place to begin was resistance against foreign thought, the revival of Islamic culture, purging Islamic doctrine of impurities, and returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to this view, modern civilization can be absorbed once it has been purged of impurities and adapted to Islamic rulings and values. For more than a century, a bitter conflict raged between these two camps: What one considered a source of progress and advancement, the other viewed as the work of foreign agents, subordination and decadence, and what one saw as a solution, the other viewed it as a source of problems and crisis.

However, the two camps did agree that the means of change were limited to the following three: (1) Reform by means of verbal invitation and political action after building up an educational base, (2) Reform by seeking to attract centers of power in order to take authority [away from them] and bring about change through them and (3) Reform by changing the Ummah's concepts and urging its members to reject the current situation in favor of working to achieve their goal by means of political discourse and the formation of political blocs.

Hence, the concern of the Islamic reform enterprise, in terms of both discourse and programming, was with political entry points. It focused on amassing efforts to mobilize the public to engage in the needed political confrontations, either in order to gain precedence in popular political mobilization, or in response to derision from opponents and their attempts to

defame Islam and Islamic law. As a result of this approach, the crisis was attributed to the presence of uncommitted individuals in authority and influence, or to other phenomena until eventually it was claimed by some that the underlying cause for the malady was external forces. Some identified the fundamental cause of the problem as the presence of the sultan, who did not enforce [Islamic] rulings, while others believed the presence of the United States and other superpowers were at the root of the illness. There were others who resorted to similar facile explanations and improvised analyses which, in effect, treated effects as causes and symptomatic relief as the cure. In doing so, they were forgetting, or pretending to forget, that the root of the malady lay in defects in the thought of the Ummah. In other words, the true affliction lay in the Muslim mind and soul and in a way of thinking which had been remiss in bringing about change in accordance with the unchanging, God-given principle: "Verily, God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves."<sup>1</sup>

#### HINDRANCES TO REFORM (SEE FIGURE 1.2)

It follows that in order to emerge from its present crisis, contemporary Islamic discourse needs to address a number of matters which constitute obstacles to the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. Such hindrances may be summarized as follows:

##### *One: Confusing Doctrine with Thought*

The reason for some people's tendency to confuse doctrine with thought is their failure to draw a distinction between their sources. It is a recognized fact, for example, that doctrine emanates from Divine Revelation with well-defined pillars and fixed boundaries and features, whereas thought is a purely human process of independent reasoning which may be correct or incorrect. Human thought, which is characterized by certain premises, tools and methods, is the fruit of the mind's relating to Divine Revelation, its application, evaluation of reality in light of Revelation in the form of suitable formulations and solutions, and sound rational and epistemological structures.

Such confusion often results from the failure of one's method to properly analyze the situation which calls for reform. It is for this reason that we have focused in the foregoing discussion on the fact that one of the priorities of renewing Islamic discourse is the reform of thought, since thought can only accomplish the tasks it is meant to accomplish if it is accompanied by a sound, clear method upon which it operates and whose guidance it follows.

*Two: The Belief that 'Knowledge Has No Religion'*

Alongside those who confuse doctrine with thought are those who mistakenly imagine that knowledge has no religion, so to speak. Such individuals believe that knowledge professes the religion of whoever possesses it. Hence, even if the religion itself does not produce such knowledge, it nevertheless follows the knower in his religion and school of thought without regard for its philosophy, premises, aims and ends. This belief, however, is based on a failure to perceive the structure and components of knowledge and the conditions for its manufacture and production. Such individuals imagine that if someone adheres to Islamic doctrine and is a person of integrity, then whatever culture or knowledge he acquires will, quite naturally and automatically, become Islamic knowledge and Islamic culture. Thus, when such knowledge enters the mosque with him for prayer, and when it accompanies him on the pilgrimage to Makkah, it will 'become Muslim', and this regardless of whether such knowledge emerged from Darwin, Freud, Marx, Durant, John Dewey, or Durkheim, or from al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldūn, or someone else.

Consequently, one often hears such people reiterating the incorrect claim that culture and thought have no religion or homeland and that there is no way that geographical boundaries can stand in their way. Such statements are frequently made by groups who wish to persuade others to acquiesce to prevailing Western thought as well as the civilization and culture which have arisen from it by virtue of its political dominance and global influence. Such groups delude their listeners into believing that thought and culture, like the ether, reach people's ears, then enter their minds with or without their consent. At the same time, they wish to persuade people that there is no way to achieve reawakening and progress and to enter the modern age without

adopting Western thought and culture and adhering to the way of life inherent in them. After all, or so they say, this is the world's inescapable destiny.

However, this argument is based on a profound confusion. For knowledge is the fruit of a philosophy, a creed, an overall vision, and a theory, all of which serve to produce it and are ultimately inseparable from it. Indeed, such a philosophy, creed, overall vision and theory are, ultimately, what serve as the Ummah's 'cultural generator', as it were. Every creed has a particular conception of the universe, life and human beings; similarly, every kind of knowledge has its own premises and aims. Hence, borrowing knowledge from another culture is like hanging fruit on a tree other than the one which bore it. The tree on which the fruit has been hung will not be able to supply it with water and nutrients, nor will the fruit be able to breathe and thrive through the tree.

### *Three: Limiting the Treatment to the Addition of Extra Classes in Islamic Subjects*

There are others who hold that a sound Islamic epistemological and cultural edifice can be constructed simply by having more lessons on Qur'anic recitation and Islamic jurisprudence, and by memorizing some Islamic songs in school using old approaches and methods, yet without the ability to translate them into intellectual receptacles, as it were, which have the capacity to hold the entire life of the Ummah and its various activities.

The content and methods of teaching the curricula which relate to Islamic culture or civilization at universities today are simply new titles for old themes and traditional methodologies. Therefore, their objectives and the function they serve in promoting the Ummah's revival are not clearly defined. However, what we have concluded after protracted suffering and research is that the current intellectual and cultural crisis cannot be dealt with simply by teaching additional classes on the Islamic legal sciences, by shouting Islamic slogans in the schools, or by adding Islamic labels to various cultural and civilizational curricula in universities and institutes. Rather, there must be a comprehensive treatment which deals with all elements of the Ummah's educational process in order to rebuild it in a sound Islamic manner which treats the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the life of the Prophet and the universe as a single, unified source of knowledge, culture and civilization.

Restricting ourselves to the memorization of Islamic legal texts, reciting selected passages of the Qur'an, and striving to master the rules of Qur'anic recitation, without being equipped with the ability to contemplate and draw lessons from the Qur'an and extend the Qur'anic vision to the art of living, reflects the mentality of those who immerse themselves in a concern for means alone while forgetting, or pretending to forget, the goal towards which they are meant to be striving. There are, without a doubt, numerous Islamic universities, colleges and institutions which specialize in teaching the Islamic legal sciences and which graduate imams of mosques, preachers of Friday sermons, judges who can deal with peoples' personal issues, and instructors qualified to teach Islamic curricula. And this is a laudable, beneficial pursuit which meets significant needs in the life of the Ummah. However, it cannot take the place of the efforts of specialists qualified to reform Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge, since the Islamization of knowledge is a gruelling process of searching for our missing culture. It entails embarking on an arduous journey full of hardships for the sake of rebuilding this culture, then communicating it to the Ummah and to the rest of the world.

#### *Four: Belief in the Universal Applicability of Contemporary Western Culture*

In the present day, Muslims are lapping up culture and knowledge from Western sources - despite their firm roots in Greek and secular thought - in the areas of education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, philosophy, administration, the media, history, law, the arts, literature, and other spheres of the humanities which shape the civilization that produces the Ummah's culture.

Muslims have been deceived, as have others, whether overtly or covertly, by the claim promoted by the West, that Western culture and sciences are universal. This belief is among the most dangerous outcomes of what might be termed 'cultural despoliation'. The West has achieved great success in turning this idea into a firm belief on the part of millions of educated individuals all over the globe, and for a number of reasons. Moreover, this success indicates unequivocally that such cultural despoliation is a fundamental source of the current intellectual crisis. It is indeed a crisis for nations whose

cultures have been marginalized and caused to disappear by every possible means, suffering aggression from their opponents and rejection by their citizens and, thereby, being bypassed and ultimately, abandoned to oblivion.

The difficulty may be that we have limited ourselves to inherited solutions which were produced in a particular era to deal with its problems. In doing so, we have lost the ability to discover the solutions to our own issues and problems through our own efforts and independent thinking. In addition, the contemporary Islamic enterprise has not devoted sufficient resources and energy to the epistemological problem. Instead, it has allowed itself to be distracted from this concern by defensive confrontations and situations which it believed to be more deserving of its efforts and attention.

As for the factors which have led to the spread of the belief in the universal applicability of Western culture and sciences, they may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Victory and defeat, and the effects of the [Western] victory on the mentality of those who have suffered defeat.
- 2) Widespread media promotion of Western culture and values employing a variety of materials and methods.
- 3) Excessive expansion in the numbers of Muslim youths being sent to the West to study the social sciences in schools, institutes and colleges.
- 4) The establishment of Western and theological universities in the capitals of Islamic countries and entrusting them to educate the local population.
- 5) Imitation of the Western educational systems in form and content, importation of the Western social sciences, and conformity to the West in all related areas.
- 6) Abandonment of originality, creativity and independent thinking by the Muslims.

These and other factors have caused many Muslims to rely on acceptance and imitation as their *modus vivendi*. This mentality, moreover, includes both those who have taken refuge in Islamic tradition without being able to read it well or benefit from it, and those who have clung without discussion to the easier alternative represented by faith in the victor's enterprise. Both of these groups have been powerless to comprehend what it is that they are aiming for or to discuss it in a conscious manner, as powerlessness virtually always

leads to the adoption of ready-made solutions.

Representatives of both these approaches – that is, both imitation of Islamic tradition and imitation of the West – are fanatic in their support for such imitation. In defense of proponents of the traditional approach, it may be noted that they are emulating their cultural history; however, they do so by means of blind imitation. Consequently they find themselves incapable of originality or of benefiting from their history for the sake of the present and the future. As for advocates of the Western enterprise, they are even more powerless and prone to imitation than their traditional counterparts. They tend to favor consuming that which is ready-made and imported and which neither they nor their predecessors have had any hand in producing. By following this approach, they perpetuate backwardness and circumvent the angst and concern for their civilization which would goad them to intensify their mental efforts and continue to struggle in the hope of emerging from the current crisis.

### THE TYRANNY OF THE WESTERNIZATION ENTERPRISE (SEE FIGURE 1.3)

The discourse of the Westernization enterprise (that is, the secular enterprise) has prevailed in most Muslim countries regardless of which of the varied justifications and slogans have been used to bring it about. There is no need to describe this enterprise's adherents and those who have gone to battle on its behalf. For they are, quite simply, all groups which have not adopted the Islamic enterprise and which believe in the universality of Western thought and culture. The adoption of the Western enterprise as a way of life, a basis for building civilization in Islamic society, and a prevailing discourse in culture and thought has led to the inability by the Muslims to achieve even the most minimal level of the outcomes which the same enterprise has achieved in the West. The reasons for this include the following:

- 1) The fact that the Western enterprise is an outgrowth of cultures which are at variance with the culture of Islamic society. It does not recognize the realm of the unseen, nor does it believe in Divine Revelation as a source of knowledge.

- 2) Its conflict with the identity of Islamic society, its character, and the elements which go to make up its mentality.
- 3) Its materialism and antipathy toward the Ummah's spirituality and what it requires for psychological equilibrium.
- 4) Its incompatibility with and disregard for the Ummah's history. Its denigration of Islamic culture and legacy, and its mistaken belief that our culture is nothing but a reproduction of Greek and Roman culture.
- 5) Its reinforcement of the arrogance and egocentrism which have caused the West to deny the intellectual and cultural debt which it owes to Islamic civilization.
- 6) Its sanctioning of Western cultural hegemony by pushing other societies to become subordinate to the West and to acquiesce to the West's central intellectual authority, and its disregard for their particularities.
- 7) Its prevention of any progress on the part of those who defy it, and its confinement of such progress or success to those who meet its specifications.
- 8) Its provincialism, its dependence on the law of struggle and duality, and its sanctioning of the spirit of conflict among nations: from the Cold War, to intellectual invasion, to the clash of civilizations, to the end of history as coterminous with the limit reached by Western civilization itself.

Reality and practical experience bear witness to the failure of the Western cultural structure to offer anything of true value to the nations of the Third World, and particularly to the Islamic world. That is to say, an inductive reading of history and of the currently prevailing reality affirms that any attempt to achieve progress and renewal for the Ummah outside of an Islamic framework is bound to fail. Yet, despite the certainty of failure, advocates of the Western enterprise have yet to declare their defeat or to acknowledge the invalidity of their proposed plan for righting conditions in Islamic society. On the contrary, they claim that this failure cannot be attributed to the plan itself but, rather, must be attributed to Islamic society. The reasons for this claim, which have been mentioned earlier, are: (1) the Muslim mentality, and (2) a lack of concern for the proper use of Islamic terminology.

## THE ESSENCE OF THE CRISIS IS INTELLECTUAL (SEE FIGURE 1.4)

By making a careful examination of the weakness that characterizes the Islamic enterprise and, by contrast, the tyranny of the Western enterprise, one may easily perceive the urgent need for attention to the matter of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. At the same time, it is easy to appreciate the enormous responsibility involved in implementing programs characterized by a balance between drawing inspiration from authentic Islamic roots and sources on one hand, and on the other, assimilating and benefiting from modernity.

As we have explained elsewhere, the crisis from which we are suffering at present is, first and foremost, a crisis of thought and the intellect<sup>2</sup> which has led to crises which are political, economic, social and otherwise. At the root of the crisis is a disturbance in our understanding of the sources of thought, a defect in means and methods, and an openness to the teachings of an externally-imposed manner of thinking. We have surrendered to its pressures, and are willing to abdicate the status which befits the Ummah and of which God declares, “You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God.”<sup>3</sup>

Whoever looks carefully at the various maladies which afflict the Muslim nation, including the absence of a clear vision, cultural authenticity or psychological balance, muddled concepts, a schizophrenic educational system, confusion with respect to aims and goals, and the collapse of systems and institutions, will realize that the causes which underlie these maladies are: a defect in the Ummah’s intellectual structure, epistemological inflexibility within this structure, and an inability to achieve revitalization.

It bears noting here that our diagnosis of the crisis being faced by the Ummah as a crisis of thought does not preclude the existence of other crises as well. However, we view all other crises as outgrowths, manifestations or reflections of this one central crisis in one respect or another. The intellectual crisis is thus, as we see it, the ‘principle crisis’ and the root malady.

It may rightly be claimed that the manner in which we deal with this crisis will determine the fate of our Ummah’s ability to achieve rebirth and progress, overcome backwardness, and launch its new civilizational cycle. Once

this cycle commences, however, it will not be limited simply to rescuing and rebuilding the Muslim nation itself and enabling it to resume a genuine Islamic way of life; rather, it will go beyond this role to rescue all of humanity and enable the Islamic nation to recover its role as civilizational witness, which lies at the heart of its mission.

However, it would be inconceivable to think, much less claim, that the current crisis actually began early in the history of the Ummah, toward the end of or immediately following the rightly guided caliphate, after which no one discovered or acted upon it until the present time. Even so, we may affirm that we are a link in a long chain of cultural and intellectual reform movements which have graced the Ummah since the time when the present intellectual and cultural crisis began to surface.

## CHAPTER TWO



# The Crisis Mentality and Crisis Proliferation

## THE CRISIS MENTALITY

An intellectual crisis is a serious malady, an illness which in some cases grows so severe that it reaches the point where it is no longer treatable. When this happens, the crisis begins to transmute the solutions themselves into new crises which it then adds to its odious litany of symptoms. It is like a virile microbe that interacts with the medicine in such a way that it turns it into nourishment for itself and utilizes it to grow even more potent and deadly.

In earlier periods of history, solutions were put forward to some aspects of the crisis, after which they themselves were transformed into crises. Consequently, there is a need for an in-depth study of these solutions and of the various aspects of the crisis, as well as of the Ummah's social, political, cultural and economic situation.

The Qur'an reproaches those who, after being offered a solution, needlessly complicate it and turn it into a new crisis even more severely than it reproaches those who, after being offered a solution, reject it outright. As an example of the first group, it cites the followers of Moses. God had commanded these people to slaughter a cow to help them resolve a mysterious murder which had been committed and which had nearly led to the outbreak of civil war among them:

And lo! Moses said to his people, "Behold, God bids you to sacrifice a cow."

They said, "Do you mock us?"

He answered, "I seek refuge with God against being so ignorant."

They said, "Pray on our behalf to your Sustainer that He make clear to us what she is to be like."

[Moses] replied, “Behold, He says it is to be a cow neither old nor immature, but of an age in-between. Do, then, what you have been bidden!”

They said, “Pray on our behalf to your Sustainer that He make clear to us what her color should be.”

[Moses] answered, “Behold, He says it is to be a yellow cow, bright of hue, pleasing to the beholder.”

They said, “Pray on our behalf to your Sustainer that He make clear to us what she is to be like, for to us all cows resemble one another; and then, if God so wills, we shall truly be guided aright!”

[Moses] answered, “Behold, He says it is to be a cow not broken-in to plough the earth or to water the crops, free of fault, without markings of any other color.”

They said, “At last you have brought the truth!” – and thereupon they sacrificed her, although they had almost left it undone.

For, O children of Israel, because you had slain a human being and then cast the blame for this crime on one another – although God will bring to light what you would conceal – We said, “Apply this [principle] to some of those cases of unresolved murder.” In this way God saves lives from death and shows you His will, so that you might learn to use your reason.<sup>1</sup>

So simple was the solution which Moses offered his people, they thought that their prophet was mocking them. Hence, their distorted thinking caused them to turn a straightforward solution into a tangled mess. They asked a profusion of questions relating to the cow and had forgotten the crime itself and the unrest it had created. When the price of the cow went up, they nearly kept it instead of slaughtering it out of miserliness. Finally, however, they slaughtered it, but in a spirit of rebellion: “and thereupon they sacrificed her, although they had almost left it undone.”<sup>2</sup> This is a perfect example of the way in which a simple solution can be turned into successive crises.

When Muslims closed their minds and rendered them unfit for independent reasoning, relieving themselves of their responsibilities and preferring the path of tradition and imitation, they likewise began to imitate the ways of other nations. They mimicked them in every detail just as the Prophet had predicted that they would.<sup>3</sup> Many are the solutions they have rendered needlessly complex, turning them into crises. This is the manner of the children of Israel who raised many questions when commanded by God simply to sacri-

fice a cow. Many cures have been turned into diseases and medicines stripped of their healing powers. In order to clarify the above, we will cite a number of examples which illustrate the ways in which a particular Islamic issue becomes the subject of such excessive concern that it blinds those concerned with applying the legal rulings established for it.

#### CRISIS BASED ON THE MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT THE SUNNAH IS BEING FOLLOWED

The compilation and recording of the Sunnah and the establishment of the hadith sciences relating to rational interpretation of hadiths and the reliability of narratives is, without doubt, something in which the Ummah can take pride. Tremendous efforts were made by successive groups of early scholars to gather the texts of the Sunnah, to distinguish between authentic and weak narrations, and to lay down standards for classifying the narrators in terms of their reliability or unreliability. In doing so, they caused the Sunnah to become a living, immortal legacy by means of which those who read it or learn from it can live side by side with the Messenger in their hearts, minds and spirits just as the Companions and other contemporaries did. In this manner, the Prophet continues to be an example, model, and ideal for humanity in death just as he was in life. The Sunnah allows humanity to look towards his actions and words for inspiration, find solutions to their problems, discover effective cures for their ills, and acquire the ability to emulate him by connecting the values of the Qur'an with their day-to-day experience in a sound, methodical way. For the Qur'an is a comprehensive, conclusive, creative source for thought, civilization and knowledge, while the Sunnah provides a way to connect the rulings and values found in the Qur'an to a clearly defined reality with features that can be evaluated, and on the basis of which analogies may be drawn.

However, the ages of decadence were dominated by a debate over formalities and literalisms relating to these efforts. As a consequence, the intents underlying the texts around which the debate raged were lost sight of and there was increasing partiality to this or that school of thought at the expense of concern for the interests of the community. At the same time, tendencies toward imitation were reinforced, while attempts to engage in independent

reasoning which were necessary for ongoing contribution and developing the Ummah met with vehement opposition. Each sect or school of thought clung to parts of the Sunnah based on the fact that they agreed with its teachings, while overlooking other aspects of it. Meanwhile, the Qur'an was neglected almost entirely.

As for understanding the Sunnah as an integral method for producing a model generation of Muslims who emulate the Prophet and ascertain how to erect a sound and prosperous intellectual, cultural and civilizational edifice, such concerns received far less attention. The efforts which were made to understand the life of the Prophet and the Sunnah with its aims and messages in terms of the guidance they have to offer fell short of the efforts exerted to determine, for example, whether a given text passed down as part of the Sunnah was strong or weak with respect to its chain of transmission. Scholars' excessive focus on questions of authoritativeness and the formalities of documentation thus undermined their ability to deal with questions of overall understanding and to perceive the aims and intents of the texts. There were many who mistakenly believed there to be a conflict between the Sunnah and the Qur'an, between different parts of the Sunnah, and between the Sunnah and many human interests. This mistaken belief led back into discussions of authoritativeness on the levels of both generalities and specifics, as well as questions concerning narratives, how to reach a verdict on specific prophetic traditions, and related issues. Yet, in all of this, they were, in essence, in search of a solution which could only be arrived at by means of the epistemological methodology contained in the Qur'an itself.

If those who were focusing on understanding texts and those concerned with arriving at the most reliable and authoritative versions thereof had coordinated their efforts, there would have been no disagreement concerning the Sunnah. In such a situation, a group of thinkers who denied the validity of something that had been added to the Sunnah could have presented, in its place, authentic texts of established reliability to those capable of understanding and analyzing such texts and deriving relevant rulings from them. In other words, they could have dealt with life's questions in light of the Sunnah's guidance, light and methodology. And in this way, it would have been possible to prevent the Sunnah – which, together with the one who brought it, came as a mercy to all of the worlds – from being turned by some into bonds and shackles which people would rebel against and seek to break loose from,

if even by denying its authoritativeness in whole or in part as, for example, in the case of solitary hadiths and the like.<sup>4</sup>

#### CRISIS BASED ON THE MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT ONE IS DEFENDING ISLAMIC DOCTRINE

The contrary manner in which scholastic theology was dealt with constituted part of the intellectual crisis and serves as another example of the ways in which a solution can be transmuted into a crisis. Scholastic theology as a discipline first came into being in order to serve as a solution, and as part of an intellectual and doctrinal reform process. Specifically, it was developed in order to defend Islamic doctrine and establish its foundations, and to enable discourse to make use of the tools of defense and persuasion in the intellectual and missionary arenas. However, the crisis mentality managed to divert scholastic theology from its original intent and aim, thereby making it into part of the crisis rather than part of the solution.

Scholastic theology was developed by early Muslim scholars as a means of defending and protecting the Ummah's doctrines after they had come under attack by contradictory doctrines. This defense was to take place via the theses and ideas of individuals armed with Greek thought and logic as well as the sciences of early philosophers and thinkers. The translation movement also played a well-known role in this area. It was necessary to be familiar with such thinkers and to master their styles in order to refute opponents' accusations against Islamic doctrines. Some Muslim scholars were dispatched to non-Muslim lands in order to debate with rulers and scholars, as in the case of Abū Bakr al-Baḳillānī, who was sent abroad several times on this type of mission.

However, the same crisis mentality intervened to divert this academic discipline from its primary function – namely, to be part of the Ummah's civilizational mission and a tool of Islam's liberating developmental and civilizational call. Instead it became a cause of infighting among Muslims and fuel for a counter-discourse which stood opposed to the aims and intents of the Islamic message. As such, scholastic theology became a source of strife within Islamic ranks leading to intellectual disunity and narrow-minded attachment to a particular school of thought. Thus the tools which had been created for the purpose of defending Islamic doctrine and thought were used to bring

divisions among Muslims, distracting them from their intended role and rendering Islamic doctrine incapable of fulfilling its proper function in their lives.

With encouragement from the political authorities, debates would be held among scholars representing various schools of thought, in the context of which they would be incited to enmity against each other. Juristic debates would be held for the same purposes. In the context of such debates, both scholastic theologians and jurists would touch upon subjects which, according to the principles of authentic Islamic methodology and Islam's clear intents and goals, they had no place debating. As a consequence, people engaged in discussions whose sole purpose was debate, argumentation and empty contests. This generated a spirit of contentiousness, strife, fanaticism and profound divisions.

One of the outcomes of this loss of direction in the realm of scholastic theology and its method was that the attention of society's most influential members was diverted to issues which themselves served to perpetuate the Ummah's intellectual crisis and disunity, dissipate its energy, and neutralize the effectiveness of its discourse. Such issues included, for example, the question of whether the Qur'an was created or eternally pre-existent, which produced a significant amount of fallout on the intellectual, cultural and political levels, the question concerning the sources on the basis of which human action can be evaluated and corrected, Revelation vs. reason, and others.

#### CRISIS BASED ON THE ILLUSION OF NURTURING ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

It was in the mid-2nd Century AH that the juristic sciences came into being and efforts began to compile and record their works. These works were not intended to form an additional law alongside the law of God but, rather, to be a means of dealing with the problems and questions of that era based on the understandings, opinions and rulings of the imams of that day. The idea that those who succeeded them would leave the law of God aside in order to imitate them in what they had said or the conclusions they had reached would not have occurred to them. Their primary goal in compiling and recording their opinions was to prepare the way for their followers and those who suc-

ceeded them to walk the same paths they had by clinging to the Book of God and the Sunnah, applying the Qur'anic rulings to all of life's issues, and dealing with life's evolving events and newly arising cases and questions in accordance with the intents, purposes, and universal principles of Islamic law. Only in this way would it be possible to preserve the connection between reality as experienced on a day-to-day level in all times and places, and the genuine principles and intents of Islamic law.

However, once again, the crisis mentality turned the statements of jurists into a law beside the law of God, and human jurisprudence became, in effect, the Shari'ah. The law of God was thus equated with this huge store of statements, legal decisions, explanations, commentaries, marginal notes [*hawāshī*], footnotes, personal opinions, and matters both hypothetical and concrete. This was the case whether they dealt with public or private affairs, property and capital assets or personal statutes. In this way, this huge store of human production was turned into a law which was viewed as binding in all times and places, and whose formulators must be emulated despite the varied, ever-changing nature of events.

The mindset of crisis production and imitation – whose causes and manifestations have accumulated and made their way deeper and deeper into the Ummah's mentality – has turned Islamic jurisprudence and its evolving dynamic from a movement based on the understanding and analysis of reality as manifested in newly arising events and cases for the purpose of offering solutions to life's problems, into a shackle which hinders the Muslim mind, limits its movement, and causes it to remain firmly fixed within set frameworks. As a result the Ummah has forgotten the intents and aims of Islam, the universal principles and wise purposes of Islamic law and the bases for its rulings, all of which could serve to build up the Muslim community in the face of the spirit of individualism and self-centeredness generated by partial solutions, legal subterfuges and escape hatches. As a consequence, the Islamic answers to life's questions have become little more than formalities in which it is sufficient to have the proper outward appearance in juristic, legal terms even if they have lost their essence, their truth and their spirit, and even if they achieve none of their original intents or purposes.

These cumulative dimensions have undoubtedly contributed to the weakness of Islamic discourse and its relative ineffectiveness in society. As such, they have reinforced the Ummah's intellectual crisis, including both

those aspects of the crisis which result from errors in perspective, and those that arise because the method of thought has deviated from its intended path and disregarded Islamic law's intents and purposes in favor of formalities and outward appearances. Hence the process of turning various types of knowledge which had originally been solutions into crises, has itself led to a new crisis, namely, the crisis of 'the split between theory and application.' This in turn has become a hallmark of the Ummah's current state now that it has become unmoored from its intellectual and doctrinal foundations and lost its vitality and unity of direction and movement.

#### CRISIS PRODUCTION THROUGH AN IMAGINED RECONNECTION BETWEEN THEORY AND APPLICATION

The crisis in Islamic thought and discourse was a cause of concern to a number of great scholars who had an accurate understanding of the true nature of this split and who perceived the harm it was capable of doing. These scholars realized that if the crisis continued, it would empty Islam of its content. Hence, they saw the need to engage in ongoing efforts to reestablish the connection between theory and application, to offer the practical guidance found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and to remind Muslims of the ways in which the Companions and their followers conducted themselves. The purpose for such efforts, as they saw it, would be to produce a clear understanding of issues relating to spiritual education and writing on this theme, and to urge Muslims to investigate the effects and intents of actions and statements rather than being content with mere forms and appearances.

At that time, such efforts yielded academic material belonging to the realm of ethics. In addition, they raised a behavior-related issue which was referred to by some as 'the science of reality' (*'ilm al-ḥaqīqah*) and by others as Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*), and which would be another aspect of 'the science of Islamic law' (*'ilm al-sharī'ah*). This was a sincere attempt on the part of these scholars to reconnect reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) with Islamic law (*al-sharī'ah*), that is, to do away with the theory-application split referred to above. In doing so, they hoped to revive the intimate link between these two aspects of existence and to transcend the formalistic legal and juristic framework by looking into the behavioral effects associated with these rulings and linking everything

with its intent. For indeed, “matters can only be understood in light of their intents,” just as means can only be understood in light of the ends to which they lead. For, “means are subject to the same rulings which apply to their intents.” Hence, whatever fails to achieve what it was intended to is of no value even if it happens to remain correct in its juristic appearance, thereby fulfilling a legal obligation or duty.

However, as in the case of the aforementioned sciences, which had emerged initially as a treatment for an existing crisis and in order to protect the Ummah from potential future crises looming on the horizon, this science was likewise subjected to the influences of the intellectual crisis. This again served to turn it from part of the solution into part of the crisis itself. Consequently, Sufism became a door through which numerous deviant practices and beliefs were allowed to infiltrate the Ummah, while many aspects of it became a call for isolation and a shift of attention to individual issues at the expense of collective issues of concern to the Ummah as a whole. Hence, Sufism served to foster immersion in a new type of formality and passivity, thereby adding new dimensions to the Ummah’s already existing crisis. Specifically, it introduced a new type of preoccupation into the Muslim psyche and added untold problems to Islamic life, the least serious of which was a distraction from the concerns of this life and a preference for a state of isolation from society, its problems and its issues on the pretext that it is undesirable to immerse oneself in the world of people and their ignoble demands.

Thus it was that the energies of a large sector of the Ummah were consumed and their effectiveness limited. In addition, once this trend had grown stagnant due to its transformation from a part of the solution to a part of the problem, its adherents were prone to accuse those engaged in any activity or action of immersing themselves in the affairs of this world and abandoning the concerns of the life to come. Many later Sufi leaders closed their eyes to the fundamental principles which had been stressed by Sufism’s earliest proponents, including the principle that this earthly life is the realm in which one sows the seeds of the life to come, that is the place in which one seeks to do good in preparation for the next life where one will be called to account for one’s actions and be rewarded or chastised accordingly, and the domain in which human beings use their reason and action, bear the divine trust, deliver the Message, and be God’s vicegerents on earth.



## CHAPTER THREE



# Resolving the Crisis Through the Reform of Islamic Thought and the Islamization of Knowledge

## DISCOURSE FOR REFORMING ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The lack of sufficient concern for the issue of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge has its roots in a battle being waged by ideologies which monopolize thought, its discourse and its call. However, in keeping with the divine law of opposing forces and the cosmic principle of truth's crushing falsehood, the discourse which aims to reform Islamic thought and to bring about the Islamization of knowledge has persevered in the face of numerous intellectual and cultural trends which have rejected it and others which have disregarded its existence altogether. In doing so, this discourse has sought out the assistance of that active sector within the Ummah which has understood its message and responded to its call.

Until recently, discourse which concerned itself with the reform of Islamic thought was being met with strong disapproval, a disapproval which escalated at times to the level of derision and outright condemnation.<sup>1</sup> At other times, it was met with complete disregard in the hope that it would simply be consigned to oblivion. This was either due to ignorance of its message, an inability to comprehend its contents, aims and objectives or disregard for its influence.

Many of those who have failed to comprehend the discourse calling for the reform of Islamic thought view the discussion of intellectual reform as the concern of affluent people and those who have neglected the important types of struggle, such as political struggle, armed struggle, and the like. However, the successive crises which have afflicted the Ummah's thought and culture, the repeated setbacks to its civilizational advance and the continuous failures

of its development plans have opened Muslims' minds to questions which in some cases border on protests against, or even utter rejection of, the current reality. In fact, such realities have prepared the Ummah for a comprehensive review of all of its hypotheses and types of discourse, so that every sound-minded Muslim can perceive the Ummah's ongoing struggle. The sacrifices of millions of martyrs and proponents of Islamic reform have yielded only a small fraction of what the Ummah has been striving to achieve. Hence, they have failed to right the Ummah's civilizational course or to prevent the worsening of the crisis on the intellectual level.

Whereas the discourse of Islamic intellectual reform and change was met with disapproval till only recently, the discourse which addresses the need for the Islamization of knowledge is still met with adamant rejection. No sooner has a lecture on the topic been delivered or an article published than scores of protests go up against incorporating knowledge into Islamization. In the view of those who voice such protests, knowledge is a single, unchanging entity no matter what its source happens to be. They claim it is part of a shared human legacy which is not only universal in nature, but capable of change and development. As such, it may be viewed as the property of humanity as a whole, with their various sects and religions. Viewed in light of this mistaken perspective, the sciences are in reality nothing more than human efforts in the empirical realm, the experiences of individuals and societies in relation to life's varied aspects based on specific, unchanging academic methods. Such methods, in this view, are not influenced in the least by the religion or school of thought embraced by the person who employs them. Those who view science in this way have generally responded to the notion of the Islamization of knowledge with a skeptical question about why Islam – an abstract religion which defines the individual's relationship with his Lord and refines human behavior – should be forced into contact with these sciences.

What prevents such individuals from perceiving the significance of the Islamization of knowledge is their inability to distinguish between science on one hand, and its premises, goals, values and wisdom on the other. This inability arises from the illusory belief in the universality of knowledge, a belief which has been instilled and passed down by virtue of the cultural dispossession of the Ummah.

However, those who advocate this perspective – both those who spread confusion and those who simply imitate – have withered. The IIT's pro-

grams on the issue of Islamization of knowledge, as well as the universities and institutes which cooperate with the IIIT have assisted in pacifying their objections. Opposition to the Islamization of knowledge was weakened even further when some Westerners themselves began drawing attention to the importance of values in regulating the course of the sciences. Such individuals want to reconnect science with values based on the tremendous loss which humankind has suffered as a result of the split between religion and science, or between science and wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that the separation between science and faith, or between knowledge and values, finds its justification among Westerners in ecclesiastical tyranny over scientific researchers in the past, such a separation has remained distasteful and unacceptable in Islamic thought throughout the phases of its historical development. However, given the steady hold which has been maintained on power in Muslim countries by megalomaniacs and a strong disapproval of consultation, the split which took place between political leadership and scientists has prevented the sciences from developing in a sound manner, as has the isolation of scientists from taking part in society's political, academic and intellectual institutions.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, such developments have afflicted Islamic discourse with an insularity and lack of clarity from which it continues to suffer.

As mentioned, the tyranny exercised by the church and its hierarchy in the West led to reactions which caused religion to be dropped from consideration, while knowledge came to be viewed as nothing but a set of abstract facts and presuppositions, such as those embodied in Darwinism, Marxism, Existentialism, etc. As a consequence, discussions of human nature on the levels of thought, culture, education, behavior and history came to be based on the view of human beings as the end of the line of animal evolution, the materialistic impulse, and instinctual gratification.

## THE DOMINANCE OF WESTERN DISCOURSE (SEE FIGURE 3.1)

As a result of the split between science and faith, Western countries witnessed the emergence of theories pertaining to the humanities, the social sciences, the arts and literature which are based on a materialistic view of human beings

and their psychological makeup. Hence they evaluated human nature, conduct and tendencies in light of materialistic criteria and standards alone.

The situation grew more serious when, in the latter part of the 19th Century, the West tightened its grip on the world and began to marginalize the cultures of colonized peoples. It considered its own culture to be the center and measure of all thought and knowledge and, as a consequence, the foundation for all discourse. Given the fragility of these cultures, which had been distanced from their roots, as well as the victory achieved by the invading culture, there began a cultural invasion. As a result the intellectual and cultural bulwarks of other nations began to collapse before the Western onslaught.

The Ummah has not given in entirely to the invading culture. Opposition groups within the Ummah have sought refuge in their cultural and civilizational history, thereby protecting themselves from complete dissolution. However, such defensive measures have not been sufficient to enable them to put up effective resistance. Hence, given the tenuous understanding which exists of the legacy in which it seeks refuge, as well as its inability to deal with the incoming culture or to refute its challenging discourse, the Ummah has been unable to bring about renewal and build itself up on the civilizational level.

Nor has such resistance prevented some groups within the Ummah from falling prey to what we have termed cultural dispossession, including an infatuation with the foreign power, absorption of its culture and unthinking acquiescence to its intellectual and epistemological discourse in an attempt to imitate it in everything. In other words, such groups have been dazzled by the dominant culture to the point of transmuting themselves into mouthpieces which simply reiterate and endorse its content and message. This approach has been based on the belief that by conducting themselves in this manner, such groups might enable the Ummah to break out of its backwardness, keep pace with modern civilization and compensate for its inferiority complex. However, those who have pursued this path have harvested nothing but lost identity, distorted vision, and disintegration of the Islamic character.

## THE NEED TO RENEW THE DISCOURSE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT (SEE FIGURE 3.2)

There can be no doubt that the current Muslim persona has lost a good deal of its methodology and good sense. This may be seen in the decline of the Ummah's civilizational witness, that is to say, the fact that it has ceased to fulfill its mission as a witness and leader to the peoples of the world. As a result, the Ummah has placed itself outside of its historical context, current reality, and the desired future.

However, the civilizational absence or crisis which has prevented the expansion of Islamic discourse's sphere of influence and deprived it of its realism is not due to any deficiency in the values which God revealed in completeness and which He pledged to preserve over the ages. Rather, it is due to the inability to deal correctly with the system of Islamic values which exists. That is to say, the Ummah is unable to put Islamic values to use in a process of intellectual production which links them to their aims and applies them to actual human situations by means of a discourse which is fluent and open to the universe. Such a discourse finds resonance in the world of ideas, brings the Qur'anic vision to bear on reality, and possesses the capacity to contribute in an ongoing, flexible manner not restricted to time and place. As a result, it is able to map out human life and provide an authoritative point of reference and spiritual sustenance for the solution of humanity's problems.

In order for contemporary Islamic discourse to persevere in the face of the despotism of imported Western thought, we believe that it has no choice but to make the task of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge its most fundamental priority. The purpose behind such an approach is to achieve contemporary Islamic authenticity, thereby enabling the Ummah to present the civilizational witness which God intended it to. It would draw inspiration from its own roots even as it digests and assimilates modernity and its ways. This civilizational witness, moreover, needs to be presented in the form of a contemporary enterprise which is unified, integral and liberated and which rests upon sound thinking. It must be free of crises and have a clear method free of error and distortions along with a constructive, healthy culture, and a civilization which bears witness to the truth.

The reform of Islamic thought requires that we – without delay – examine ourselves and identify our areas of deficiency and vulnerability. We must

determine the nature of the crisis we face and the mechanisms which have served to generate it, and derive inspiration from the values we possess. In this manner, we will launch a process of contemporary intellectual production which will enable us to restore the civilizational witness which once was the hallmark of the Muslim nation and lay down the standards of justice and truth which are necessary in order to achieve this. The Islamization of knowledge is necessary for us to resume our intellectual contributions and release human potentials toward building up the intellectual and epistemological framework which generates civilization. It is likewise a necessary part of the process of reshaping the Muslim mind on the levels of culture, thought and behavior and rectifying the course of knowledge in such a way that it is once again regulated by Islamic premises and achieves its comprehensive, balanced aims.

It is inconceivable that reform and rectification of this nature would take place in one aspect of human life in isolation from all others. Consequently, we have chosen to station ourselves on this intellectual frontier, directing our energies toward the most important and difficult of causes, namely, the reform of mental processes, the building up of intellectual strength, and the selection and use of cultural resources in light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. These processes constitute the womb which nurtures and gives birth to civilizations which are capable of resuming Islamic life and constructing a viable human civilization. However, the choice of this particular frontier is not an alternative to any of the various movements which aim for civilizational reform, awakening and renewal. Rather, it is an ongoing condition for the rectification of the courses being followed by any of such movements, for the renewal of our thought, for the honoring of our creed, and for fulfilment of the obligations which our religion lays upon us.

## CHAPTER FOUR



# Major Features of the Reform of Islamic Thought and the Islamization of Knowledge

### FORMULATION OF THE ISLAMIC ENTERPRISE

Given the Westernization enterprise's failure to bring about the hoped-for renaissance and the noticeable faltering of the movement-based Islamic enterprise in the process of seeking to achieve its aims, there is a clear and urgent need for review and reflection in a renewed attempt to ascertain where the difficulty lies. Reflection upon the overall Islamic vision leads to the conclusion that this vision itself is where the difficulty is most likely to be located and that, as a consequence, it is the place where reform needs to begin.

This being the case, it is essential that we formulate an integrated Islamic project to deal with the crisis, one which focuses its energies on reforming Islamic thought and reinforces efforts to crystallize the Islamization of knowledge. In this way, it is hoped that such a project will be a link in the chain of successive reform endeavors whose aim is to fill in the gaps which have contributed to the growing seriousness and complexity of the crisis. Similarly, it is hoped that its discourse will be capable of persuading its audience that the intellectual crisis is of such seriousness and magnitude that it calls for a group of Muslims to take on the task. Specifically, an academic institution needs to be set up for the sole purpose of working to reform Islamic thought, implement the Islamization of knowledge, and elucidate and study all aspects and dimensions thereof.

We are dedicated to presenting this project to the Ummah as it is a sacred trust which must be fulfilled. It is the task of preparing and presenting the intellectual and methodological foundations needed for the Ummah's forward movement. We have no choice but to do our utmost to follow up on

what has been done thus far, to amend, revise and correct, and to construct an alternative intellectual framework. As a consequence of this we can then refashion the Muslim mind, shaping its structure in accordance with a sound Islamic conceptualization of the cosmos, life and human beings. This reliable monotheistic conceptualization is derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, reflection on the laws of the universe, a perception of the unity of truth and creation, the rules which govern good stewardship of the earth and its resources, and the conditions required for fulfillment of our role as God's vicegerents on earth. Moreover, it is by means of such a conceptualization that we can nourish the Ummah's movement with the intellectual sustenance which it lacks at present.

At the same time, we need to undertake a thorough, analytical investigation of the movement of Islamic thought from the moment at which the word, "Recite!" was revealed to the Prophet till the present day. Such an investigation will enable us to become familiar with Islamic thought and its components and the various factors which have been raised for discussion. At the same time, it will enable us to observe its positive and negative aspects and the ways in which it was formed and shaped, then to criticize it in a solid manner. We hope to link our movement with this history of thought on one hand and on the other, help the Ummah to transcend the effects of partial, partisan, sectarian, or Orientalist readings of such thought. After all, such readings are insufficient or biased. Their aim is to reveal something which they already assume to be there, or to cite as evidence or documentary proof something which they themselves have put forward as true. Such readings rob them of their claim to objectivity and academic integrity and thereby cancel out most of their potential benefits.

For the Muslim community to emerge from its crisis, it must support the discourse and action of this specialized movement, which has taken the Ummah's intellectual crisis as the focus of its activities and as the starting point for its aims. As Muslims who look forward to a better future, we cannot overlook this collective task, the task of providing the Ummah's movement with the intellectual fuel it needs, and of working to build the movement of thought in the Islamic and world arenas.

## A RESUMPTION OF EARLIER EFFORTS

The starting point for the intellectual crisis in Islamic history might be identified as the question of the caliphate, or leadership of the Ummah, given the confusion in people's understanding of the caliphate's role and nature. This was transformed into a heated debate between reason and revelation. In fact it brought about a split between intellectual and political leaderships which was followed by a series of deviations and divisions. Alternatively, we might see its starting point in the confusion of roles between the worlds of the seen and the unseen. This caused a confusion between fate (as a pillar of faith) and man's will and responsibility for his actions. Yet, wherever we locate the starting point for the crisis and its impact on the Ummah, the fact remains that history has recorded both efforts to confront these confusions, and the Ummah's responses.

Indeed, the present discussion can provide us with a better understanding of the underlying reasons for the efforts which were made to compile and record the Sunnah and establish criteria to protect it from forgery, manipulation and exploitation. It also sheds light on the attempts made by the pious ancestors to lay down rules for understanding and interpretation on both the literal and metaphorical levels in order to define the systematic roles to be played by both authoritative texts and human reason; the compilation and recording of the fundamentals of jurisprudence; rational interpretations of ambiguous, allegorical or seemingly contradictory passages from the Qur'an and the hadith with the aim of refuting alleged contradictions between revelation and reason or among authoritative texts themselves; as well as discussions of human will, human action and the means of rectifying it, and human freedom and choice.

- Imam al-Shāfi'ī, Imam Aḥmad, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī and others of their generation confronted the difficulty posed by method.
- Al-Ash'arī sought to compile, survey and analyze the sayings of Muslim thinkers and trace each of them back to its source. He also sought to direct the Ummah's energies in the realm of scholastic theology outward toward the non-Muslim world and to present a synopsis of Islamic fundamentals of doctrine which everyone could agree upon.
- Al-Juwaynī attempted to deal with the issue of Islamic political leadership

in a manner which would cause it to cease being a cause of crisis and become a solution instead.

- Al-Ghazālī dealt with the split between theory and application in his book, *Ihyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*. He confronted the Greek challenge and presented the Islamic alternative in his book, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, and discussed many aspects of the crisis of the Muslim mind by offering solutions and alternatives. He even attempted to present a complete theory of Islamic knowledge.
- Ibn Rushd endeavored to dispel the illusion of a contradiction between Islamic law and wisdom and to formulate a new jurisprudence which, unlike the existing conflict-based jurisprudence, would be capable of creating mutual understanding and harmony.
- Ibn Ḥazm played a prominent role in dealing with a significant number of intellectual and methodological issues.
- In his book entitled *al-Radd ilā al-Amr al-Awwal*, Abū Shāmah called for a return to the methodology which had been prevalent in the early days of Islam in dealing with all issues over which there was disagreement.
- Ibn Taymiyyah attempted to deal with the intellectual crisis and to offer a methodological, epistemological, cultural alternative. He treated the issues of thought, method, logic, jurisprudence and politics and founded a widespread intellectual and cultural reform movement. Whoever examines the legacy left by Ibn Taymiyyah and his disciples will find distinguished treatments of virtually all aspects of these matters.<sup>1</sup>
- Imam al-Shāṭibī made his primary concern the reform of the principles of jurisprudence, which represents the law of Islamic thought. Al-Shāṭibī labored to deliver this field from its focus on the doctrinal questions of scholastic theology which had weighed it down, by breathing new life into it through the introduction of the intents of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*) on a wide scale and in a powerful, effective way. By reforming the study of the fundamentals of jurisprudence, al-Shāṭibī's intention was to reform and rectify Islamic thought itself.
- When Ibn Khaldūn saw how Islamic civilization had halted and even regressed, he initiated the movement to found the social sciences from an Islamic perspective. This aimed at introducing the intellectual content and cultural framework to the social sciences which Islamic society desperately needed if it was going to resume its civilizational evolution on a

solid academic foundation. Had Ibn Khaldūn's intellectual and cultural venture been carried out during his day, the course of history would have been altered. However, Ibn Khaldūn's efforts were not followed up and the Islamic world went into a long hibernation. Instead Ibn Khaldūn's thought was picked up by Westerners, and it significantly contributed to their renaissance.

Subsequently numerous other reform attempts were made. Such attempts differed in their approaches to issues and in their places of origin. However, they all agreed on the Ummah's need for reform and renewal. They include, for example, the work of Shah Walī Allāh al-Dahlawī, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Imam al-Shawkānī, al-Ālūsī, al-Ṭabāṭibāʿī, al-Sanūsī, and al-Mahdī, followed by al-Afghānī and his school, al-Kawākibī, Ibn ʿĀshūr and Ibn Bādīs. They were followed more recently by the leaders of the modern Islamic movement and their well-known role in Egypt, India and elsewhere, such as Imam Hasan al-Banna, al-Mawdudī, Sayyid Qutb, Malik Bin Nabi, Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhani, and others.

Our cause, then, is not a contemporary innovation; rather, it has firm roots in the history of the Ummah with beginnings that date back to the first harbingers of the intellectual crisis. Like any other human phenomenon, thought-related problems begin to emerge with the thought itself. After all, thought does not emerge out of a vacuum, nor does it move toward a vacuum. Rather, it is an interaction between a starting point or a goal, and human reason, between reality, language, time, place and human beings, and between movement, history, and all of life.

Our cause is, essentially, that of civilizational renewal, the revival which the Prophet promised this Ummah. However, it was a promise which was meant to rouse us to action for the sake of renewal, not a promise implying an inevitability the anticipation of which would lead to passivity and dependency. It is the cause which was taken up by ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, al-Shāfiʿī, al-Ghazālī, al-Ashʿarī, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Rushd, al-ʿIzz ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, Abū Shāmah, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Shāṭibī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, al-Shawkānī, al-Dahlawī, al-Afghānī, al-Nāʿinī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Rashid Rida, Iqbal, al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, al-Mawdudī, al-Nadwi, Ibn Bādīs, Malik Bin Nabi, Shariʿati, Mutahhiri, al-Sadr, al-Nabhani, and all other leaders of reformist Islamic thought, including both earlier

thinkers and later ones.

Each of these reformers and heralds was able to treat whatever was apparent or hidden, major or minor, of the intellectual aspect of the Ummah's difficulties in accordance with his own understanding of the Ummah's problems and the pressures and circumstances associated with his own upbringing and struggle. With the passage of time, the various reformist notions which had emerged led to the development of the two primary renewal and rebuilding enterprises: the modern, movement-based Islamic enterprise which, more than anything else, represents the Islamic political response, and the secular Westernization enterprise representing the drive to imitate and emulate the West.

A given trend of thought may be sound in every way when it first emerges. However, errors and distortions may enter into it at the point when it is heard and received, or in interaction with any element of the reality in which it emerges. After all, the possibility of mental error is simply a manifestation of our humanity. The various reasons for such error are well-known and even intuitive, while the natural, sensory, cultural and human influences on human thought are undeniable. This being the case, early philosophers attempted to establish logic as a means of protecting the mind against errors in its thinking and devised methods to ensure the soundness and integrity of the various phases of inquiry and reflection. Despite these measures, however, human logic itself was not free of error, nor was human method immune to deviation. In fact, attempts continue to this day to correct logic and rectify method in the hope of protecting the human mind from error or, at the least, to minimize the rate at which it occurs. After all, human experience, capabilities and knowledge are relative and limited by nature, as a result of which we stand in need of constant renewal and fresh interpretations.

**THE BASIS AND ORIGIN OF THE ENTERPRISE IS THE QUR'AN, WHILE  
THE SUNNAH IS ITS SOURCE OF INTERPRETIVE GUIDANCE  
(SEE FIGURE 4.1)**

The Qur'an draws attention to numerous thought-related errors, lapses of logic, and failings to which human methods are subject. The Prophet likewise drew attention to such realities. Indeed, he took a significant number of

what might be viewed as systematic precautionary measures whose aim was to protect the Ummah from falling into the clutches of intellectual crisis or committing those errors which would lead to such a fall. Thus, for example, when some individuals found it difficult to understand the concept of fate or predestination (*al-qadar*) as man's responsibility for his actions and his freedom of action and choice, the Prophet vehemently denounced and warned against the method and approach on the basis of which the question of *qadar* had been dealt with. Indeed, he reproached those who dealt with this issue for confusing, on one hand, the realm of the unseen (knowledge of which the Creator has reserved for Himself) with the visible, sensate world whose various unseen aspects are brought to light with the passing of the ages and with man's expanding epistemological capabilities.<sup>2</sup> This way of approaching the issue causes faith in the realm of the unseen to lose its effectiveness and positive impact, and causes man to lose sight of the value of his actions and his sense of responsibility. As a result, people are rendered powerless and unable to choose among the authoritative points of reference related to the worlds of the seen and the unseen respectively, or to identify an authoritative framework which will allow them to criticize, review, adjust and correct their actions.

This fact may be seen clearly in a number of hadiths which deal with the issue of fate or predestination. One such hadith, narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayrah reads,

The Messenger of God once came out and found us arguing over the matter of *qadar*. When he heard what we were saying, he got so angry his cheeks flushed red as a pomegranate. He said, "Is this what you have been commanded to do? Is it for this that I was sent among you? Those of your ancestors who argued over this matter have perished. As for me, I adjure you not to dispute over it."<sup>3</sup>

The Prophet responded in a similar way when he learned that some individuals understood complete reliance upon God (*al-tawakkul*) to mean disregard for earthly causes. When he encountered this mistaken belief, he corrected it, pointing out that proper regard for earthly causes is part of the concept of reliance on God. Hence, to someone who was disregarding earthly causes he said, "Be conscious of them, and trust in God."<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, when some Muslims were about to restrict the concept of wor-

ship to the performance of obligatory and voluntary acts of devotion while excluding mundane activities, the Prophet corrected this understanding and clarified the error it entailed. In doing so, he restored to faith its all-inclusive meaning, saying, "Faith consists of seventy-some or sixty-some branches. The best of these branches is reflected in [utterance of] the words, 'There is no deity but God,' while the least of them is reflected in removing something harmful from the road or path. Modesty is also a branch of faith."<sup>5</sup> Hence the Prophet delineated a holistic framework for worship which protects against both excess and neglect, saying, "Although I am the most God-fearing amongst you and the most conscious of Him, I fast and break my fast, I perform the ritual prayers [at times] and take my rest [at others], and I marry women. And whoever spurns my example, has nothing to do with me."<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, in order to help people see the importance of the time-space dimension, discern intents and purposes, and distinguish between the relativity and specificity of some rulings and the absoluteness and comprehensiveness of others, he stated, "I had prohibited you to visit graveyards. However, Muhammad was allowed to visit his mother's grave, so visit them, as they can serve to remind you of the life to come."<sup>7</sup> Also relevant to this is his statement to 'Ā'ishah, "If it weren't for the fact that your people only recently emerged from an age of ignorance [a variant reading has 'unbelief (*kuf*)'], I would spend the wealth in the Ka'bah for the sake of God's cause, I would raze it and rebuild it, and join it with the northern wall."<sup>8</sup>

In order to reinforce the concept of an authoritative framework within which to operate and the methodology on which one is to deal with it, the Prophet reproached 'Umar for reading the Torah, saying, "[What need have you of] another book besides the Book of God when I am in your midst? If my brother Moses were still alive, he would have no choice but to follow me."<sup>9</sup>

When the Prophet was commanded to have the Qur'an written,<sup>10</sup> he employed scribes to record what he said and to put every word in its proper place. At the same time, he prohibited the recording of the Sunnah lest any part of it be confused with the Qur'an, and to prevent people from becoming distracted from the Qur'an by focusing on commentaries and explanations. It is within the context of nurturing cultural sensibilities on the part of Muslims that we can best understand the Hadith, such as the hadiths that speak of the cat, the pigeon, Mount Uhud, and the she-camel, as well as many others.

Similarly, it is in the context of increasing people's awareness of the importance of broadening the range of those actions which are permitted to Muslims, thereby enabling human beings to act productively and engage in independent reasoning, that we can understand the Prophet's prohibition of excessive inquisitiveness. The reason for this is that undue questioning has the potential of leading to conflict and disagreement and narrowing the range of what is permitted [rather than] presenting opinions and broadening the sphere in which independent reasoning is required. It was with these concerns in mind that the Prophet said, "The children of Israel only perished due to their excessive questioning and their disputes over their prophets."<sup>11</sup> The Prophet's command to engage in independent reasoning under his supervision and the training which he provided for this endeavor can be understood in this context, as can hadiths warning of sedition and discord and their damaging impact on the fates of other nations.

It was the Sunnah which provided the foundation for the intellectual framework within which the Companions understood issues. Hence, when the concept of predestination was repeatedly misunderstood during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, he swiftly dealt with the matter and clarified it as much as possible. Commenting on the Companions' digression from a proper understanding of this concept, he stated, "So-and-so (that is, Ibn Abī al-Aṣḅagh) has forfeited what he was given charge of, and has taken charge of what he was spared" (in order to show the dividing line among the various areas of thought).

The position taken by the Companions on the issue of apostasy and the manner in which it was dealt with by Abū Bakr was indicative of a profound awareness and understanding of human nature and it showed an awareness of the nature of systems and the relationships which exist among their many and varied aspects. When people's understanding of one aspect of a reality is distorted, this constitutes a threat to all other aspects as well. Hence, the confusion which arose among the new Muslims between the era of prophethood and the era of the caliphate, and the distinction which they drew between monetary and bodily religious obligations (*farā'id al-māl* and *farā'id al-badan* respectively) was evidence of their having departed from the wider Muslim community and a destruction of the Ummah's anticipated role as civilization-al witness.<sup>12</sup> This being the case, Caliph Abū Bakr consciously rejected this way of thinking. Consequently, he gave no importance to the inadequate jus-

tifications given by the apostates supporting their positions and attitudes.

The Companions took a similar intellectual position with respect to the Muslim's authoritative framework. Thus, they held that they had to preserve the Qur'an just as it was revealed to the Prophet and without any alteration by way of either addition or removal. Accordingly they began, without delay, to memorize it, compile it and commit it to writing. As for the Sunnah (which is an interpretation and explanation of the Qur'an and the teachings of Islam) they did not urge that it be written down. It was initially narrated word-for-word but then passed down in terms of its meaning and how it had been understood. The Companions were strict with respect to the accounts which they deemed acceptable and warned against overemphasis upon the Sunnah lest their attention be distracted from the Qur'an. This would undermine their capacity for reflection on and understanding of Qur'anic verses, and cause people to rely on narratives rather than on the Qur'an itself. The Companions were clear with respect to this approach and adhered to it faithfully. However when Muslims departed from this approach in subsequent generations, the result was that without giving the matter careful thought, people contented themselves with the Sunnah while leaving the Qur'an aside. Thereafter they contented themselves with Islamic jurisprudence<sup>13</sup> while leaving both the Qur'an and the Sunnah aside. As time passed, they then contented themselves with commentaries on the jurisprudence of the earliest scholars, then with footnotes on the commentaries and shaykhs' remarks on them.

The Prophet did not depart from this earthly realm until he had fulfilled his mission and carried out the trust he had been given, completing the religion and bringing the grace for which it was a conduit. Similarly, it was during his lifetime that the Muslim mind was set on the right course, the 'pure path' was set out clearly for believers, and the sound method was made visible. Logic was set aright such that no argument could be raised against God and human beings were made aware of their responsibilities, powers, potentials, and freedom of choice: "Whoever chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good; and whoever goes astray, goes astray but to his own detriment,"<sup>14</sup> and, "If you persevere in doing good, you will but be doing good to yourselves; and if you do evil, it will be [done] to yourselves."<sup>15</sup>

The Prophet laid down principles for renewal and reform in order for the

discerning and upright members of the Ummah to be able to meet the Ummah's needs lest with the passing of time, hearts grow hard, understanding wane, and thought become confused, or the ties that bind believers be broken. He established such principles in order for the Ummah to preserve its ongoing civilizational witness and to maintain the moderation for which it has always been known among the nations in its religion and way of life. In this way, he prepared the way for Islam to prevail over all [false] religions and its law to be manifested as universal and comprehensive, capable of meeting the Ummah's needs in all times and places.

It is within this context that we may properly understand the caliphate, jihad, ijtiḥad, the unity of the Ummah, the principle of commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong, as well as rulings pertaining to the monitoring of prices, religious endowments and the like, since each of these pillars and principles clearly serves the goal of renewal and provides the means of preventing crises of the mind and the stagnation of thought.

It is for this reason that viewing the call to deal with the intellectual crisis as a purely modern phenomenon, disregarding its importance or existence altogether, or viewing those who communicate this call as a product of their generation alone, is itself a manifestation of the crisis and glaring proof of its existence.

#### THE MAJOR FEATURES OF THE PROJECT TO REVITALIZE THE THOUGHT OF THE MOVEMENT, AND THE MOVEMENT OF THOUGHT (SEE FIGURE 4.2)

It might be said that in essence, the book entitled, *The Islamization of Knowledge* was a statement of principles and an action plan. However, whereas the principles set forth in the book are clear and fixed, the plan of action is interpretive, and therefore, tentative, in nature. When work on the plan began in 1984 AC/1404 AH, it was still only theoretical. However, since that time it has yielded numerous efforts in a variety of areas. The purpose behind such efforts has been to formulate a refined Islamic discourse whose content is academic/scientific, whose method is clear, whose style is lucid and flowing, and which is capable of both making individual Muslims aware of the intellectual crisis which they face and of presenting the ways in which they can

overcome this crisis. Some efforts, for example, have been aimed at indexing the verses of the Qur'an, while others have focused on the Sunnah; others have been devoted to making the wider Islamic legacy more readily accessible, while still others have focused on Western thought, and so forth.

Regardless of the scope of these efforts, however, they remain in need of study, review and evaluation if we are to ascertain the soundness of the plan, its faithfulness to its principles, and its level of integration. Most of the methods and means proposed in the plan have been put into practice thus far: from seminars, to discussion and research circles, publications and individual and group research projects. All of these likewise need to be evaluated and studied, and their results monitored.

When the IIIT first embarked on the task of dealing with the Ummah's intellectual crisis, it was aware that it would not be able to formulate its program and carry out its plan in a centralized manner, isolated from interactions with Islamic communities. Consequently, given the gravity of the crisis in which the Ummah finds itself and the enormity of the effort required in order to analyze its causes and examine its solutions, the IIIT has opened offices and branches in a number of Muslim and non-Muslim countries in order for them to serve as its sensors and survey outposts. The IIIT can communicate and spread its message from these offices and they also serve as a means by which it can fulfill its mission and formulate its program. Some of these offices have achieved encouraging results, while others have failed to accomplish what we had hoped. We must continue to evaluate the work of these offices in order to guarantee sound progress toward rescuing the Ummah from the present crisis and to carefully and thoroughly plan for the best possible performance on their part.

Hence, there is an intellectual and epistemological content for the work plan, but limited means of carrying it out. Both of these aspects remain in need of evaluation, review, correction and renewal. By virtue of my role in following up the formulation and implementation of the Institute's plan together with the late Isma'il al-Faruqi, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman and others, I can summarize our cause – in terms of its principles, aims, means, conditions and practical steps – as follows:

### *General Principles*

The general principles of our project are outlined in Part I of the Islamization of Knowledge Series entitled, *Islāmīyat al-Maʿrifah: al-Mabādiʾ al-ʿĀmmah, Kḥiṭṭat al-ʿAmal, al-Injāzāt*. This is a valuable resource for anyone who wishes to reform Islamic thought and pursue the Islamization of knowledge. However, there is no harm in reiterating some of these principles to encourage those who desire further clarification and explanation to refer to the earlier work.<sup>16</sup> These principles are:

- 1) Affirmation of the unity of God, since this is the first principle of Islam and the most important of all its governing values.
- 2) The unity of the created realm: The unity of God requires, by logical necessity, the unity of His creation.
- 3) The unity of Truth: There is no inconsistency or disparity between the truths of revelation and the truths of the cosmos.
- 4) The unity of life: This oneness is based upon human beings' role as God's vicegerents on earth, their bearing of this God-given trust, and their patient endurance of the afflictions which this entails.
- 5) The unity of humanity: People are a single creation, and no one is superior to anyone else based on anything but his or her consciousness of God.
- 6) The complementarity of revelation and reason: There is no conflict or contradiction between the givens of the written Revelation and God's cosmic manifestation.
- 7) Comprehensiveness of both means and method: Islam is a religion which is inclusive of all aspects of life.

Within the framework of general principles, emphasis must be placed on certain governing values, namely, the oneness of God in every sense, including the oneness of divinity, and the oneness of the divine attributes; the prosperity of the created universe; and the purification of man as God's vicegerents on earth. It is to these intents that appeal is made and on the basis of which all things are related. For without observing these higher intents of Islamic law, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to perceive the conceptual link which binds the elements of the metaphysical-natural-human dialectic. Moreover, without a perception of this link it will be impossible to construct

a sound epistemological system by means of which we are able to derive the method for defining the relationship between the worlds of the seen and the unseen, and between the Absolute and the relative.

*The Goal (see figures 4.3 & 4.4)*

The fundamental goal which extends into all other goals is the creation of an enlightened Muslim mind capable of fulfilling its role by practising independent reasoning, renewal, and human development and prosperity, as stated in *The Islamization of Knowledge*. In this way, Muslims will be qualified to function as God's vicegerents on earth, to exercise their rights as good stewards of the natural world, and to bear the trust given by their Creator. There are two paths by means of which this goal may be attained:

*First:* By reconstructing Muslims' intellectual scheme based on the Qur'an and its epistemological methodology, on the Sunnah as that which contains a methodology for applying the values of the Qur'an to particular situations, and on the cosmos as the other source of knowledge alongside Revelation.

*Second:* By basing the comprehensive Islamic epistemological and cultural paradigm on what was mentioned under 'First' above.

These two paths require action on the basis of five fundamental focal points, each of which has the potential of generating a set of secondary focal points.

*The First Focal Point: Thought*

The word 'thought' (*fikr*) appears nowhere in the Qur'an as a noun or as a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*). However, it appears twenty times as a verb in the past or present tense. We read, for example, "he reflects and meditates,"<sup>17</sup> "and perhaps they might reflect..."<sup>18</sup>, and "Will you not, then, take thought?"<sup>19</sup> In Arabic, as in other languages, a verb is something which points to an event and to a person. Therefore saying 'he hit' (*da-ra-ba*), the verb 'hit' indicates the event of hitting, as well as a person who did the hitting. Similarly saying 'he thought' (*fak-ka-ra*), alludes to an event of thinking and a person who brings

about this event, the thinker. Thus, when the word ‘thought’ is used in the Qur’an, it is as though God is drawing our attention to the fact that this mental activity is an action which is, by necessity, linked to a person, since it would not be possible for thought to be abstracted from the thinker. Rather, wherever there is thought, there is likewise a thinker. Moreover, thought or thinking must not be something which is of no avail, or upon which no movement or action in this universe is based.

Thought is a characteristic which sets humans apart from all other creatures; hence, the term ‘thought’ is only used to describe the cognitive operations engaged in by humans. In the case of animals, even the phenomena which resemble the human thought process are not referred to as ‘thought’, but rather, as instinctive direction. Even ancient logicians defined humans as ‘talking animals,’ that is, rational beings or thinkers. As for the remaining animals, they have instinctive direction or something similar thereto, which corresponds to thought, the mind, and rational powers.

Muslim scholars have exhibited an interest in explaining and defining thought and demonstrating its true nature and meaning, although contemporary thinkers have neglected it to a large extent. By looking at the nature of thought and which phenomena might be considered manifestations of it, I have found that many Muslim scholars of the 3rd Century AH, during which time Islamic sciences began to crystallize, and the 4th Century AH, during which time these sciences began to be recorded, discussed the subject of thought in great detail. In fact, in some references<sup>20</sup> discussions of thought, its specifications and conditions spanned over a hundred pages or more. However, and as one would expect, Muslim sources differ from one another, while different books have their own ways of dealing with this theme or that. Consequently, sometimes the term ‘thought’ and its definition are found in books on Islamic mysticism, linguistics, philosophy, scholastic theology, and the fundamentals of jurisprudence. In the writings of scholars and in relevant encyclopedias, one will find long treatments of thought, its synonyms, its conditions and its variations.

From my study of these sources I ascertain that ‘thought’ is the name for the process by which an individual’s cognitive and cogitative powers – be they the heart, the spirit or the mind – investigate and reflect in order to derive meanings from known realities, or in order to arrive at judgments or proportions among things.

This meaning of the term ‘thought’ is clarified further by the statement by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, “Know that thought involves bringing forth two pieces of knowledge in the heart in order that from them one might derive a third piece of knowledge.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, thought, in al-Ghazālī’s view, is to prepare two premises so that one might arrive at a conclusion. For example turning the command “Perform the ritual prayers” into a matter for thought requires the premise, “The phrase, ‘Perform the ritual prayers,’ is a command as is the verb, ‘Perform,’ and every command from the Creator is an obligation.” The evidence for the first premise is linguistic, namely, the use of a verb in the imperative mood, while the evidence for the second premise is juristic in nature. A command is something which we are obliged to carry out, hence, it follows that ritual prayer is obligatory, and this is the conclusion, or the third piece of knowledge.

Similarly, if someone does not know whether a given prayer is obligatory or simply an emulation of the Prophet’s example, he might recall the fact that the mid-morning prayer (*ṣalāt al-Duḥā*) was performed by the Prophet on some days, and not on others. The evidence for this premise is historical in nature, based on an investigation of the Prophet’s actions. Things which he did at times and refrained from at other times are viewed as examples for us to follow, not obligations. Hence, the mid-morning prayer is an emulation of the Prophet’s example, this is the third piece of knowledge.

Thus, two or more pieces of knowledge are always adduced in order for us to go from the premises known to what is referred to as the conclusion. This activity is thought. The Qur’an links thought with action, thereby drawing our attention to the fact that indolent, idle thought is an undesirable thing. Thought for its own sake does not lead to any benefit either in this world or in the next, rather, we must think in order to arrive at something. As for thought for its own sake, or thought in the sense of unqualified reflection or wandering in pursuit of fantasies or something not based on factual evidence, it is a kind of imagination, not thought. The ancients had a great deal to say about the distinction between thought and imagination, and between reflection and recollection. However, this is not the place to deal with such issues in detail.

There are two tasks remaining on the discussion of thought. The first is to define the features of Islamic thought and its methods, while the second is to deal with the issues and difficulties of Islamic thought. In undertaking both

tasks, we rely on the Qur'anic epistemological methodology which combines a reading of Revelation with a reading of existence.

*The Second Focal Point: Method<sup>22</sup>*

The universal nature of the crisis requires a universal solution; similarly, it requires that the Islamic solution put forward must be on the level of a universally applicable discourse. Its fundamental point of entry is the epistemological methodology based on the Qur'an, since the Qur'an alone is capable of reshaping the contemporary mind and developing its perceptive faculties in a sound manner.

As for the term 'methodology' (Arabic, *manhajiyah*), we intend by it to mean the controls or criteria for human thought which are derived from an authoritative framework qualified to identify the means for producing, generating and selecting ideas. Such a methodology brings the human mind out of the state of auto-generation of concepts based on selective reflections, notions and inclinations, and forces it to discover an authoritative framework to which reference can be made in the course of following a particular method. Such a framework consists of a summation of laws and principles which have been observed and compiled, then transformed into theories and rules so that the system which provides order for theories becomes an authoritative framework which regulates their movement, ensuring that there be no conflict, contradiction or inconsistency among them. In this way, the circles of ideas, however far they happen to spread, will always return to their common center as though they were bound by an invisible thread.

Hence, methodology is what lends order to concepts and theories, adapting laws in such a way that they are cohesive and mutually consistent. This being the case, methodology has a place in the formulation of a researcher's questions and hypotheses; it is likewise connected to epistemology, which approaches every issue by studying, critiquing and analyzing it, then piecing it together again. Methodology, then, might be said to be the science of identifying the path and the steps needed in the direction of a particular epistemological end. The relevant concepts may be seen as the building blocks upon which the methodology is constructed, while the authoritative framework is the 'organizer' which makes it possible to arrange concepts in relation to another, and which works to shape them and put them to work in a way which achieves their epistemological objectives.

For others there may be numerous possible methods and a variety of methodologies in keeping with the variety of theories which they espouse in relation to knowledge, its classification and the various areas of knowledge. However, the Islamization of knowledge, given the fact that it is based on a combined reading of Revelation and the created universe, works to read both these dimensions of reality based on a single methodology whose authoritative framework is founded upon monotheism, or the unity of truth. Unlike secular epistemologies, the Islamization of knowledge seeks to bring together explanations of written Revelation and the wisdom it conveys, and the purposefulness of the universe and the laws which govern its cause-and-effect relationships. It is here that one may clearly discern the difference between ‘method’ in the sense of rules of thought and research standards in this or that area, be it partial or universal in focus, and ‘methodology and method’ as seen from the perspective of the Islamization of knowledge.

As for epistemology and methodology when viewed side by side within the framework of the Islamization of knowledge, there is, as the rhetoricians would say, a link and a divide between them, or as the logicians would put it, both generality and specificity. On the one hand, epistemology stands in need of methodology and depends upon it while on the other, methodology takes its practical form from epistemology, as a result of which they are interdependent and, indeed, inseparable. Epistemology rests on broad-ranging mental activity which encompasses the processes of criticism, analysis and deconstruction. It makes use of all elements, givens, relations and potentials available within the contemporary epistemological framework in order to bring to light whatever social and cultural difficulties exist and to engage in reconstruction in accordance with the laws of the methodology being employed and its associated criteria. However, in order for the Qur’anic epistemological methodology to perform its role in the Islamization of Knowledge, and in order for it to complete the process of combining the reading of Divine Revelation and the reading of the universe – which we consider to be a necessary condition for overcoming the current intellectual and epistemological crisis on both the local and international levels – it must highlight the relationship between God (the realm of the metaphysical), man and nature, thereby delivering knowledge and its associated methods from disregard and denial of, or even neutrality toward, the realm of the unseen. In other words, it must overcome the split between the Divine and the human

and all other positivistic philosophies with their one-sided readings of existence.

This is a task which can only be properly undertaken by those who possess knowledge of the Qur'an, a sufficient familiarity with the sciences, as well as other areas of knowledge. Only then are they able to explore the methodological overlap between the Qur'an, humanity and the cosmos. Any initiative whose epistemological methodology fails to recognize the effect of the unseen on the universe cannot be accepted as an effective logic capable of protecting the mind from error. Nor can any method which does recognize this be derived from any pure and sound source but the Qur'an.

Hence, the Islamization of knowledge is a clearly defined epistemological methodology that constitutes an alternative to materialism and positivism, both of which disregard the Divine and the realm of the unseen. At the same time, it poses an alternative to the type of theology and sacerdotalism which rob man and nature of their proper link to each other.

Given our current awareness of the Islamization of knowledge, we may affirm that the rules governing epistemological production – within the framework and perspective of the Islamization of knowledge – must be based on the following foundations:

*One:* Reconstructing an epistemological vision based on the components and distinguishing features of a sound Islamic conceptualization. The purpose for such a reconstruction is to clarify what may be viewed as the Islamic epistemological system which is able to provide answers to universal human questions and produce needed epistemological models without overlooking any aspect of such questions. In addition, a reconstructed Islamic epistemological vision will enable us to build up an autonomous capacity for the type of epistemological criticism which makes it possible to absorb and transcend both our legacy and the production of our contemporaries in a disciplined, methodical manner. In this way, we can begin to engage in orderly epistemological generation and the type of epistemological interpretation which is not based on persuasion and rhetoric but, rather, on precise epistemological methodology.

*Two:* Reexamining, reshaping, and rebuilding the rules of Islamic methodology in light of the Qur'anic epistemological methodology. Serious damage has been done to this methodology as a result of individual, atomistic readings which look at the Qur'an as separate, disjointed parts rather than as

an integral unit, and which view the cosmos and man in isolation from the Qur'an.

*Three:* Constructing a method for dealing with the Qur'an through the lenses provided by this vision, based on the view of the Qur'an as a source for method, law, knowledge, and the components of the Islamic civilizational and developmental witness. This may require that we rebuild and reformulate the required Qur'anic sciences while bypassing a good deal of the material we have inherited in this area. Arabs have tended to understand the Qur'an in light of the outward features which distinguished the Arab character of the past, which was limited socially and intellectually by comparison with the features that mark the civilizational makeup of today's world. During the time when the rhetorical and linguistic sciences were officially recorded, there was a trend toward atomization and observation of individual words or sentences in their capacity as the micro-units of expression. Hence, the understanding generated by these sciences was understandably viewed as acceptable and sufficient for that period of time. In fact, its rules are still useful and important when placed in their historical content. However, the current phase of history is dominated by the need for a more systematic perception of things and the search for the relationships which govern them in analytical, critical ways which make use of a variety of academic frameworks and link them with multifaceted civilization issues. Hence, there needs to be a reconsideration of the sciences and a search for ways of understanding, serving and reading the text which can be combined with the reading of the universe and a recognition of the interconnection between the created universe and the written Revelation. In this manner, the Qur'anic text can be freed from many types of interpretation, both literal and allegorical, which are based on projections influenced by folkloric myths, in favor of interpretations based on the powerful connection between the text and the causes and occasions of its Revelation.

*Four:* Constructing a method of dealing with the Sunnah based on this methodological vision, given that the Sunnah is likewise viewed as a means of clarifying method, law, knowledge, and the components of the civilizational and developmental witness which the Ummah is called upon to offer. The era of Prophethood and the generation during which the Companions lived depended upon direct contact with, observation and emulation of the Prophet. As the Prophet himself said, "Take your ceremonies and rituals of

worship from me,”<sup>23</sup> and, “Pray as you have seen me pray.”<sup>24</sup> Emulation depends, of course, on the practical actions taken by the Prophet in response to life’s realities. In his conduct, the Prophet fleshed out the Qur’an in real life, as a result of which no problems arose in connection with the Qur’an’s practical application. Rather, the Prophet’s manner of applying the Qur’an and of making its meaning clear, fully closed the gap between the components of the Qur’anic approach to life and the Arab-Islamic reality, together with the mindsets and intellectual and epistemological capabilities of those who experienced this reality, and the social and intellectual conditions and epistemological limits which applied to them. It is for this reason that the Companions who narrated the words and deeds of the Prophet took the greatest of care not to miss even the slightest particular of relevance to the Prophet’s life, since this was the only alternative to awareness of the Prophet’s overarching method of dealing with life’s varied questions. This is why the Sunnah includes such a phenomenally large number of the Prophet’s sayings and actions, and why we have received all of these details enabling us to follow his daily movements, morning and evening, in peacetime and war, in his teaching, judicial decrees, leadership and legal decisions, and humanitarian practices. It is these which reveal his approach to dealing with reality, that is, his Sunnah. In addition, the Sunnah serves to disclose the distinguishing characteristics of the reality with which the Prophet was dealing and in which he lived and moved. For it was a reality which differed significantly, in both its makeup and mentality, from the one in which we ourselves live. Even so, there was a constant emphasis upon the fact that the sole source and origin of legal rulings was the Qur’an and that the sole binding source of clarification of the Qur’an’s meaning was the Sunnah.

The Prophet in his Sunnah thus embodied the link between the Qur’anic method and reality. Consequently, it is difficult to understand many issues [connected with interpretation of the Qur’an and the Sunnah] in isolation from an understanding of the reality in which the Prophet lived. When, for example, he prohibited sculpting and visual representations, declaring that those who engage in such activities will be the most grievously chastised on the Day of Resurrection, this prohibition should not be understood as a prophetic position since it is in conflict with the attitude taken by the prophet Solomon, who used to recruit the jinns to produce whatever statues he wished to have. Nor should it be understood in the framework of the ques-

tions and arguments raised by our contemporaries on this subject. After all, we have no desire, or even inclination, to worship such three-dimensional objects. Hence, why should they be forbidden to us? Nor should the solution be sought in isolated legal decisions which permit one kind of statue and forbid another. Rather, a more systematic position may be arrived at, one to which the Prophet referred in numerous situations, as when he stated, "If your people [O ʿĀʾishah] had not just recently emerged from a time of unbelief, I would do such-and-such and such-and-such..."<sup>25</sup> Hence, the controversy is settled without being allowed to lead to a discussion of the authority of the Sunnah itself, because in the framework of this epistemological method, the Sunnah is not simply scattered particulars unconnected by any methodological link, but, rather, a set of systematic rules which provide a model that facilitates emulation of the Prophet.

Given this model, it may be said that the Prophet was striving to do away completely with the manufacture and promotion of idols among people for whom idol worship was still a recent memory. For this reason, he could not afford to be lenient in connection with anything which had even the slightest potential of undermining the abstractness of monotheism. Under such circumstances, his uncompromising position was a necessity. We now need to arrive at a method capable of regulating and lending order to such issues, and to view them from an epistemological perspective which places hadiths in the realm of methodology and systematic understanding. For the alternative is to deal with them in the realm of conflicting particulars which are frequently turned by those who disagree with each other into specific statements or legal decisions which communicate opposing messages, as though they were the pronouncements of imams representing different schools of jurisprudence.

During the phase in which the Qur'an was being revealed, the Arabs became familiar with the concept of emulating [the Prophet] based on the details and particulars of his words, deeds and decisions. They took the Prophet as a practical model to be emulated in keeping with the actual conditions of their lives. Through this understanding of the concept of emulation, there emerged the notions of *al-ma'thūr* and *al-manqūl*, that is, what has been passed down from one generation to the next in our textual tradition. Then, in an attempt to alleviate the [potentially regressive] effects of these notions, some thinkers resorted to esoteric, symbolic interpretations as a means of avoiding the necessity of adhering to the literal meaning of transmitted say-

ings. However, the effect of such measures was simply to confuse matters even further. What they should have done was to discern the prophetic, Qur'anic method as a means of lending order to all subordinate details and particulars, clarifying the intents and purposes [of the texts in question] and propagating a universal, intention-based understanding of them.

The contemporary mindset is in constant search of an objective framework which lends order to affairs. In doing so, it seeks to arrive at a full-dimensioned methodology on the basis of which analysis, criticism and interpretation become an objective framework for the intellectual movement in its dealings with cosmic and local issues. With such a methodology, it is possible to penetrate to the intents of the Qur'an in such a way that the Sunnah may be understood without falling back on esoteric interpretations, a static frame of reference which cancels out the law of historical evolution, or inadequate attempts at reform which attempt to introduce modifications or past applications which simply reproduce such applications in the present without any essential change, as though they were an expression of the past decked out in new attire and adorned with newfangled terms and titles.

*Five:* Reexamining our Islamic legacy by means of a critical, analytical and epistemological reading which frees us from the three loops which govern the ways in which we relate to our legacy at the present time: (1) total rejection, (2) total acceptance, and (3) selective, arbitrary eclecticism. None of these three loops is capable of achieving continuity with those aspects of this legacy which need to be preserved, nor can it achieve the needed epistemological break with those aspects with which such a break needs to be made.

*Six:* Constructing a method for dealing with the contemporary human heritage in a way which frees the Muslim mind from its current approaches. For such approaches grow out of attempts to approximate and endorse the thought of the Other as a distinctive, separate centrality, followed by comparisons with this same system of thought which have led either to its complete rejection, its unconditional, unquestioning acceptance, or haphazard picking and choosing devoid of any sort of method or methodology.

These six steps, focal points or tasks are what we have referred to variously as the Islamization of knowledge, the monotheistic epistemological method, the Islamization of the social sciences and the humanities, steering the natural sciences in an Islamic direction, and/or the Islamic grounding of the sciences. For the first time, Muslims are faced with a worldwide positivism which is

working to employ knowledge, the sciences and their discoveries and achievements in a manner which severs the relationship between the Creator, the created universe and man, thereby disregarding the world of the unseen and driving a wedge between science and values. Such an endeavor poses conceptualizations of the universe which appear to be diametrically opposed to our Islamic perspective. Such conceptualizations may or may not be as they appear. However, the issue is not for us to reject these conceptualizations, branding them as unbelief; nor is it to choose from among our religious sayings that which happens to be consistent with such conceptualizations so that we can say: This already exists in our tradition. For our basic attitude toward the natural sciences has not been theological or sacerdotal in nature. Nor are we required to emulate others, whose experience in confronting science and its achievements differs from ours. If the Qur'an were theological and sacerdotal in nature, it would only allow for the reading of a single dimension of reality, that is, the metaphysical dimension. However, we have been commanded to approach reality in a different way. We are not waging war on science, since we realize that the Revelation found in the Qur'anic universe, as it were, is likewise the revelation found in the natural universe. Hence, if distortions appear and are attributed to science, our job is to not to abandon science but, rather, to purge it of such distortions. Similarly, if [unsound] interpretations of the revealed text appear, we have no choice but to refute the forgeries of falsifiers and extremist distortions which the ignorant have read into the text. This is the foundation for bringing knowledge and the sciences together and linking them to the Qur'anic epistemological methodology. The abstract positivistic thought which confronted religion in the past was not armed with the contemporary applied sciences, the results of which have led to the establishment of schools of thought which go beyond traditional positivism. Thus, what is required of us is to reclaim science by purging it of loyalties to this or that school of thought and by putting it to use anew based on combined readings of the written Revelation and the created universe.

### *The Third Focal Point: Science and Knowledge*

Among Muslims, the concept of science has always been associated with reading. Before the Qur'an, the Arabs were an unlettered people who had no book, and it was through the Qur'an that they made their first advances

toward science and knowledge. Similarly, the Qur'an was the means by which they gained access to the 'reading' which was revealed with the first words of the Qur'an: "Read in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created – created man out of a germ-cell. Read – for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One, Who has taught the use of the pen – taught man what he did not know!"<sup>26</sup> These verses from the Qur'an contain a number of essential points. First, they contain a command to read, while affirming the link between science and the pen. They make clear that the source of science is God, that the command to read is addressed to human beings whom God created from a germ-cell, and that it is part of human beings' nature not to know until God teaches them. Moreover, the reading which human beings are commended to engage in is a reading in the name of God. This reading proceeds in God's presence until it arrives at a science which can be recorded with the pen and thereby transferred to lines on paper and disseminated among people. The term 'reading' must likewise be recognized as broad enough to include both that which is written in a book and that which is manifested in the created universe; the words of the Qur'an are read, and so are the horizons of the cosmos. These two readings are inseparable, and out of this inseparability there arise sciences and various realms of knowledge, experimentation and experience which serve as the basis for development, prosperity and the civilization of faith. This is the kind of inclusive reading which leads to beneficial science and indispensable knowledge. Hence, if the reading is altered, it loses its epistemological value and its scientific effects. It was clear in the days of the Companions and in the first generation of Islam that the fundamental purpose of reading is to build up a scientific, epistemological mindset and to provide both the authoritative framework required by such a mindset and the scientific model which can, by means of independent reasoning and creativity, generate what people need by way of sciences and fields of learning. Moreover, such sciences are based on texts which, although they contain a limited number of words, are nevertheless capable of encompassing an untold number and variety of events, situations and problems and, indeed, the entire universe.

Those who lived in the early days of Islam also understood that 'science' is that which has been uttered by God and the Prophet. The Islamic sciences are tied to the [revealed] texts, which are absolute and sacred. However, the human beings who deal with such texts are finite creatures. Consequently,

their understanding cannot be described as absolute or sacred. The text is a linguistic vehicle for the words of God, in order that these words might become divine discourse addressed to people in need of insight, understanding, explanation and rules capable of regulating such understanding and explanations. It was within this framework that there emerged what are known as the Islamic sciences. The first of these to emerge were the sciences of intents (*‘ulūm al-maqāṣid*): Qur’anic hermeneutics, hadith, doctrine (or scholastic theology), the sources [of Islamic law], and jurisprudence. These were followed by sciences that dealt with the means by which knowledge is acquired and conveyed (*‘ulūm al-wasā’i*), including linguistics, logic and the like. In the beginning, such sciences were fragmented and were circulated orally and memorized. Efforts at compilation and recording were limited at first to the Sunnah, which was compiled in 99 AH on orders from the Caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, although some recording of the Sunnah had taken place prior to this on a small scale.

As for when recording began on a wide scale, al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī dates it to the year 143 AH.<sup>27</sup> Hadith scholars restricted the concept of knowledge (*‘ilm*) to hadith narratives, Qur’anic interpretation and other such sciences which later came to be known as the Islamic textual sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-shar‘īyah* or *al-naqlīyah*). These scholars included within this concept all passages from the Qur’an and the Sunnah which urge us to pursue knowledge (*‘ilm*) and learning (*ta‘allum*) or expound on its virtues and associated rules of etiquette, while excluding everything else.

Scholastic theology and the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence began to spread and were infiltrated by statements derived from logic (translated from other languages). Hence the concept of *‘ilm* began to take on an additional dimension in the thinking of these scholars. They did not censure those who applied the term *‘ilm* to the various branches of knowledge having to do with a single topic which raises questions, ramifies into branches and has an associated purpose and benefit, including, for example, the disciplines of hadith and Qur’anic exegesis. At the same time, they began to draw a link between the concept of *‘ilm* and the degree of one’s perception or understanding on one hand, and knowledge (*ma‘rifah*), the means by which it is acquired, and the methods by which it is generated on the other. Once this link had been forged, they sometimes referred to the latter (*ma‘rifah*) as *‘ilm*, and at other times did not. Scholastic theologians disagreed sharply over how

to define the concept of *‘ilm*. In fact, Imam al-Rāzī and others rejected the notion of defining the concept to begin with, saying, “It is intuitive, and cannot be defined.” Al-Shawkānī compiled a large selection of definitions of *‘ilm* taken from the writings of later scholars of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. By noting the names of the scholars associated with these definitions and the times during which they lived, one can learn a great deal about the development in their understanding and the observations they made in their use of the term. Most later scholars eventually agreed to define the term *‘ilm* as, “a definitive, fixed perception which conforms to reality based on evidence.”

As for the term *ma‘rifah*, some have held that it is equivalent to *‘ilm*, while others have held that they are different. The reason for this is that *ma‘rifah* may be preceded by ignorance, *‘ilm* cannot. It is for this reason that we may refer to God as ‘Knowing’ with the term *‘ālim*, but not with the term *‘ārif*. In addition, *‘ilm* has to do with attribution, or placing one thing in relation to another, as a result of which the verb *‘alima* can take two direct objects.<sup>28</sup> However this is not true of the verb *‘arafa*, which can only take one direct object, as in the statement *‘araftu zaydan*, “I knew (or recognized) Zayd.”

In spite of this, however, the words *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah* may sometimes be used interchangeably. Hence, in logic either of them can be used to refer to a comprehensive understanding of conceptualization and rational assent. And it is in this last sense that the words *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah* are used in the definitions of the recorded sciences.

Al-Jurjānī attempted a brief overview of the most important classifications and divisions of *‘ilm* by his predecessors. According to al-Jurjānī, *‘ilm* is divided into two categories, eternal (*qadīm*) and time-bound (*ḥadīth*). Eternal *‘ilm* is that which has existed for all eternity in the Divine Essence, and which cannot be likened to the time-bound sciences of man. As for time-bound *‘ilm*, it is divided into three sub-categories, intuitive or self-evident, necessary, and deductive.

According to Imam al-Ghazālī, the sciences (*al-‘ulūm*, plural of *‘ilm*) belong to one of two categories: legal, and non-legal. The legal sciences are those whose content has been derived from the prophets and which cannot be arrived at through human reason, experience or hearing. As for the non-legal sciences, they are divided into the categories of praiseworthy, blame-worthy, and permissible.

Ibn Taymiyyah categorizes the sciences into three groups: (1) rational sci-

ences, that is those which deal with topics of concern to philosophers such as the sciences of logic, the natural [sciences] and theology. Consequently, such philosophers include both believers [in God] and those who associate partners with Him; (2) confessional sciences, that is those that deal with questions of scholastic theology such as proofs for the existence of the Creator, proofs of prophethood, and proofs of the divine laws, etc.; and (3) Islamic legal sciences, that is those that deal with questions of concern to scholars of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Ibn Taymiyyah's disciple Ibn al-Qayyim introduced still other divisions, saying that *'ilm* is the act of transferring an image of the entity known from the objective realm to a person's psyche, and that if the image impressed into the person's psyche conforms to the reality in itself, it may be said to be sound *'ilm*. It often happens that images which are presented to and instilled in the psyche have no true existence; even so, they are believed by the person who has established them in his or her mind to be true *'ilm* when, in fact, they are nothing but suppositions with no reality. Most of what people take to be true sciences are actually of this type. As for those aspects of such sciences which do correspond to objective reality, they may be divided into two types: (1) the type of *'ilm* which brings one's soul to completion, as in the case of the knowledge of God, His names, attributes, actions, books, commands and prohibitions, and (2) the type of *'ilm* which does not contribute to the soul's perfection or completeness. This type includes every type of knowledge which does not bring benefit to the knower nor harm if one is ignorant of it. The Prophet used to pray for God to deliver him from knowledge which brings no benefit. However, most valid, truthful human sciences – such as astronomy, knowledge of the number of celestial bodies and their extent in space and time, knowledge of the number of mountains in the world, their arrangements, their locations, etc. – entail knowledge of things which it would do no harm to be ignorant of. The dignity or worth which attaches to a given type of knowledge is derived from the dignity or worth of the entity known and the urgency of the need which exists for it. No type of knowledge has unconditional worth or dignity but the knowledge of God and what follows from it.

As for those who were known as the 'philosophers of Islam' such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and others who engaged in similar investigations, most of their classifications of *'ilm*, despite differences in certain details, may

be summed up in the affirmation that the sciences belong to two fundamental categories, each of which itself branches into several types. The two fundamental categories of sciences are the theoretical sciences and the practical sciences, each of which comprises three subcategories. The theoretical sciences are divided into mathematics, natural science and theology, while the practical sciences are divided into ethics, home economics and civil administration.

Ibn Khaldūn divided the sciences into two categories. The first category is that of the philosophical and wisdom-related sciences. These are sciences which may be formulated by human beings. Led by their natural mental capacities and perceptive faculties, human beings are able to determine the topics and issues relevant to these sciences, the various aspects of the proofs which can be adduced in their support, and how to instruct others in them. Hence, through inquiry and research, human beings can develop the ability to distinguish error from truth within this realm in their capacity as rational creatures. The second category of sciences identified by Ibn Khaldūn comprises those which deal with Islamic law as established through Revelation and authoritative texts passed down through the Islamic tradition. All such sciences rest upon traditions passed down on the authority of the Prophet. As such, they leave no room for the exercise of human reason except insofar as reason plays a role in tracing subsidiary questions and issues to their roots or origins. The reason for this is that successive, time-bound particulars are not automatically included under universal authoritative textual traditions; rather, such traditions need to be applied to such particulars through the drawing of analogies. Ibn Khaldūn goes on to affirm that all of these Islamic legal sciences find their source in the legislative passages of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, that is, what has been legislated for us by God and the Prophet, and whatever is related thereto by way of sciences which help put such legislation into effect, etc.

Ibn Khaldūn was succeeded by others who essentially held the same view of *ʿilm*, its essence and its related issues. They did not disagree with Ibn Khaldūn on the matter of research, which they saw as being little more than research into the subject of *ʿilm*, its classifications and its premises, in light of which one may discern its position and priority. All of this, moreover, serves as evidence of the fact that *ʿilm* is attributable to a single, isolated reading, namely, the reading of the text alone.

As for the reading of the cosmos and existence, it emerged in some branches of knowledge which gained recognition in light of the principle that, “Whatever is necessary in order for one to fulfill one’s unconditional obligations, and is within the individual’s capacity, is itself obligatory.” Such branches include, for example, astronomy, medicine, mathematics and some geometry and engineering. In addition, certain scholars gained prominence based on specific initiatives and unusual perspectives related to varied fields such as optics, medicine and the like, but which were not transformed into an epistemological system based on a systematic model. In his famed book, *Mawqif al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm wa al-‘Ālim min Rabb al-‘Ālamīn wa ‘Ibādihi al-Mursalīn* (The Attitude of Reason, Science and the Scientist Toward the Sustainer of All the Worlds and His Messengers), Mustafa Sabri uses the term *‘ilm* to refer to that degree of *ma‘rifah* which is not subject to doubt, whether the source of certainty is sensory experience or faith in Divine Revelation. The sources of *ma‘rifah* are Divine Revelation and the created cosmos, while the means by which we access these sources are reason and sensory perception. Hence, whether man arrives at this certainty by means of revelation and the use of reason, or through direct observation and experience by means of sensory perception, all of this for man is a source of the tranquility borne of certainty. However, [if we are speaking of] complete certainty in and of itself, and within the psyche [of the knower], then it makes it difficult to apply the word *‘ilm* as it has been defined by most Muslim scholars to anyone but God. For the *‘ilm* of God is absolutely certain, whereas the *ma‘rifah* possessed by man and their perception of certainties, as well as other things, is influenced not by the certainty of the entity perceived but, rather, by their level of understanding. For if a human being fails to perceive something with complete certainty, this may [still] be referred to as *‘ilm*; whereas if he or she perceives something based on reasonably certain evidence, it is referred to as a supposition (*ẓann*). If, by contrast, he or she perceives something as being true and there is evidence against it, this is ignorance (*jahl*), and if someone affirms with complete certainty that which we have referred to as ignorance, it is compound ignorance.

The concept of *‘ilm* has been significantly influenced in the modern age by the dominant Western civilization and its concepts. Moreover, it is observed that despite the relativism which characterizes Western culture, and despite the fact that this culture derives from Western sources and is marked by

Western aims and concerns, it has, nevertheless, by virtue of its global hegemony, imposed itself on the world.

Influenced by the West's application of the term *‘ilm* to the natural sciences and what they require by way of experimentation, observation and testing, many have attempted to limit the term exclusively to direct, physical observations, empirically proven phenomena and their methods. It is in keeping with this attempt that UNESCO once defined the term *‘ilm* as "every known fact which is subject to sensory perception and experimentation." It has been noted by some that the term *‘ilm* in its broader sense may likewise be applied to any branch of knowledge which is characterized by a method and rules and which operates on the basis of a system. However, whoever desires precision must apply the term to empirical science alone.

Arabic authors continue to employ the term *‘ilm* with a variety of meanings, thereby reflecting the same inconsistency that Western thinkers do in their use of the term. Consequently, we find from time to time that this concept is raised anew for discussion, which in turn stimulates renewed controversy over its use. However, the situation today is not one of rivalry or conflict. Rather, it is a situation which requires that we be honest with ourselves in order to clarify our vision and the way ahead. No single, isolated reading will be sufficient to extricate humanity from its predicament.

The Islamization of knowledge is able to affirm that this old-new conflict over the concept of *‘ilm* and over which fields or entities may be referred to with this term, as well as the declared superiority of the empirical sciences and the battle for such superiority, are matters which should be excluded from Muslims' entire experience. For the Muslim experience is based on a combined reading of two sources of knowledge, the written Revelation and the created universe.

Moreover, the knowledge which is derived from these two sources is a knowledge which has been bestowed upon us by the All-Knowing, the All-Aware. It is God who established the unchanging laws on which the universe operates. As for materialistic conceptions of the universe, they disregard the Creator and the purposefulness of creation. As a result of this they view natural phenomena as independently existing events which develop and evolve of their own accord in such a way that they yield new forms without any intervention from a higher Power.

Bringing together the two readings – the reading of the written Reve-

lation and the reading of the universe – confers honor upon all forms of knowledge, since it views them as having been bestowed upon man by their Creator. As such, man can draw upon these forms of knowledge for aid and assistance, while benefiting from them in carrying out the task which God has entrusted to him. Consequently, the Islamization of knowledge acknowledges no conflict between knowledge taken from the written Revelation and that taken from the universe. Nor does it turn these forms of knowledge into competing dualities, each of which attempts to demonstrate its superiority over the other. On the contrary, ‘Islamization’ here means disengaging human scientific achievement from positivistic philosophical premises and re-employing these sciences within a systematic epistemological framework based on Divine Revelation.

The Islamization of knowledge thus means the Islamization of the applied sciences and scientific rules based on an appreciation of the similarity and correspondence between the patterns which reveal themselves in these sciences and their laws, and those that reveal themselves in the cosmos and its laws, then using them to achieve the divine intents. In addition, it concerns itself with the Islamization of the social sciences, which includes the Islamization of the philosophical premises of scientific theories by ridding them of the positivistic dimension which pays no heed to the Creator and denies the world of the unseen. Hence, the Islamization of knowledge strives to reformulate these branches of knowledge and to place them in a cosmic perspective by linking them to the divine purpose for the entire creation. It follows, then, that in this phase, the Islamization of knowledge has no need to affirm the scientific nature of Revelation and the non-scientific nature of other sources of knowledge; nor does it need to do the reverse, by affirming the scientific nature of knowledge that derives from sensory perception and experience and denying the scientific nature of what arises from other sources.

The Islamization of knowledge does not preoccupy itself with stirring up controversy in particular areas of academic research. It attempts to encompass all areas of knowledge in a systematic epistemological formulation by means of which it can deal with the various forms of knowledge, laws and research methods based on the dual reading of the universe and Revelation. Hence, it does not seek simply to put a religious label on human knowledge in order to give it a phony legitimacy or to bolster its own power or prestige in one way or another.

The Islamization of knowledge movement considers the present time to be an advanced phase in which Muslims must transcend the mindset of approximations which prevailed in the last century, as well as the mindset of comparisons which still prevails in some locations. Hence, it is now seeking to undertake a radical review of human knowledge as a whole, be it traditional or contemporary. Such a review will render Islamic thought, with its Qur'anic epistemological methodology, capable of offering the methodological criteria needed to regulate all of human thought by providing it with clear limits, yet without being preoccupied with issues of compromise, moderation or conflict. Humanity is in need of an epistemological methodology which emerges directly from both Revelation and the created universe, and which is capable of providing man with the knowledge he needs in order to carry out the task of being God's vicegerents on earth, to bear the trust he has been given, and to offer the civilizational witness which God has commanded him to.

*The Fourth Focal Point: Culture and Civilization*

The Arabic word translated as 'culture' (*thaqāfah*) is derived from the verb *thaqafa*, which conveys the sense of being skillful, clever, understanding and mastering something's content, and undertaking or achieving something. It can also convey the sense of being perspicacious, intelligent, and confident in one's knowledge of what one needs, and refining, modifying, straightening or correcting something which is warped or crooked.

Based on the aforementioned meanings, Nasr Muhammad Arif<sup>29</sup> has summarized the essence and dimensions of the concept of 'culture' as it is used in its original Arabic context:

*One:* The concept of 'culture' in Arabic is not imported from some external source, but arises from the human essence. The word 'culture' refers to the purification, refinement and correction of inborn human nature when it has been warped in some way. It is the process of inducing it to express the meanings which are inherent within it and release its potentials and energies in order to bring forth the types of knowledge which human beings need.

*Two:* The concept of 'culture' in Arabic includes the notion of searching in order to arrive at truth, goodness and justice, and in order to apply those values which will improve human existence by refining and straightening in it whatever is crooked. It is, therefore, a concept which opens the human

mind to all forms of beneficial knowledge and science, yet without introducing those types of knowledge, science or values which corrupt human existence and are inconsistent with the requirements of refinement, education, adjustment and correction.

*Three:* It focuses not on knowledge and sciences in an unrestricted sense but, rather, on the knowledge which human beings need in accordance with their environmental and societal conditions. As Ibn Manẓūr notes, “He’s a lad who is quick to understand and clever (*thaqif*), that is, perspicacious and intelligent, by which I mean to say that he knows clearly what he needs.” By linking the concept of culture (*thaqāfah*) to the social context in which a person lives, this statement frees it from criteria or standards which classify cultures on the basis of how they compare with a specific culture which is held up as the norm for all. Such measures of culture are based on a patronizing, self-satisfied attitude and the belief in the right to impose one’s standards on others when dealing with other cultures. As enshrined in its original use in Arabic, the term ‘cultured’ (*muthaqqaf*) refers to anyone who has a clear knowledge of what he needs in his own particular age, time, society and environment. Consequently, the cultured person is one who is powerfully connected to his or her own society and its problems regardless of the quantity of knowledge and information he or she happens to have accumulated. After all, as Malik Bin Nabi remarks, such knowledge and information might embody ideas which are dead, or even deadly.

Hence, what is meant by ‘culture’ is the realization of the nature of society’s issues and problems and what is capable of improving and reforming it. This being the case, the function of the ‘cultured’ individual is to manage life and move society in the direction of empowerment, benefit and the improvement of people’s conditions. Such a person’s role is that of a reformer, or, as [Antonio] Gramsci put it, that of the organic intellectual who is intimately connected to his own social model and its issues. If, on the other hand, we employ the term ‘culture’ to refer to knowledge, customs, values, etc., this may lead to the appearance of groups of intellectuals who may be adherents of another civilizational model which destroys the society in which they live for the sake of applying what they believe to be the Absolute Truth. This is done without understanding the circumstances of their society and what would truly reform it. Alternatively they may be intellectuals who are little more than receptacles for huge accumulations of conflicting knowledge and data.

*Four:* Culture is a continuously evolving process which never comes to an end. As such, it does not mean that a given society has developed the knowledge, sciences and values which place it at the top of the cultural ladder, or that a given society or individual has reached the ultimate goal. Rather, the concepts of refinement and correction mean self-renewal, that is, repeated refinement, self-examination, self-evaluation, and the correction of one's errors.

*Five:* The concept of culture does not entail value judgments which determine the quality of a given culture, that is, whether it is to be termed backward and barbaric, brutal and reactionary, advanced, modern and enlightened, etc. The reason for this is that the starting point for the concepts of refinement, improvement, enhancement, etc. is that all cultures, when judged in light of the values of their own societies and circumstances, are of equal human value.

*Six:* The concept of culture is not restricted or specialized. It is a general concept pertaining to individuals, groups and societies which includes all types of human practices and their varying degrees. It yields meaning on a variety of analytical levels so long as it recognizes the processes of refinement and correction in a sense which applies equally to all cultures everywhere.

Nasr has observed that Ibn Khaldūn's use of the term *ḥadārah* (civilization), was consistent with the roots of the European concept. Arab researchers then stopped at the meanings which Ibn Khaldūn had associated with the term, despite the fact that Ibn Khaldūn had not been discussing civilization as a universal, all-inclusive concept which provides an overall framework for human movement and development and which imbues them with specific value-related features. Rather, Ibn Khaldūn's use of the term is consistent with the intellectual edifice which he constructs in *al-Muqaddimah* and his discussion of the evolution of the state and its various phases. It will also be observed here that Ibn Khaldūn was not speaking of the state in its contemporary sense (government). Rather, he was using the term 'state' to refer to what might be termed social contracts, social systems, the process by which power is passed down and transferred, or the succession of ruling families. Consequently, his use of the term 'civilization' was limited solely to the meaning derived from residing in a metropolis rather than in the desert.

The point of ambiguity here arises not from Ibn Khaldūn's use of the

term. Rather, it arises from the fact that Arab researchers had extracted meanings derived from the concept of ‘civilization’, on the basis of which they formed a mental picture which was associated in their minds with particular nuances. They then referred to Ibn Khaldūn or to classic Arabic dictionaries with sole emphasis on the sense of residence in urban areas to the exclusion of all other uses of the word. Their appeal to Ibn Khaldūn was, thus, not for the purpose of searching out the true meaning of the concept by allowing Arabic to speak for itself and listening to all the various significations of its concepts. Rather, it signaled a desire to find an Arabic counterpart to meanings which had become firmly entrenched in their minds, and to justify their own preconceived understanding of the concept.

It will be observed that *Lisān al-‘Arab*, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, *Asās al-Balāghah* and other Arabic lexicons list seven meanings for the term *ḥaḍārah*. The first, most general and most frequently used meaning points to the use of *ḥaḍārah* in the sense of *shahida*, that is, presence as opposed to absence, and the term *ḥaḍārah*, in the sense of *shahādah*, or ‘witness.’

This is virtually always the first use mentioned in Arabic dictionaries, as though it were the origin of the concept’s use, or a companion to the term *ḥaḍar*. In spite of this, however all of those who went back to the linguistic origin of the term searched for *ḥaḍārah* in the sense of residence in the metropolis, or the opposite of nomadic existence. Even if such researchers encounter the first meaning and make use of it, they are quickly sidetracked in the direction of other meanings of ‘civilization.’ We find one of them, for example, defining *ḥaḍārah* as follows: “The term *ḥaḍārah* is derived from the verb *ḥaḍārah/yaḥḍuru*, meaning to come, or be present. We may say, for example, that so-and-so has come, or presented himself (*ḥaḍārah*) in order to work with others so as to enjoy their companionship and to provide companionship for others. In doing so, he helps to fulfill the conditions necessary for him to experience dignity. Hence, the term *mutaḥaddir*, or ‘civilized’, applies to every society which respects human dignity and embodies this dignity in the transactions among its members. Civilization, *ḥaḍārah*, is likewise a heritage shared by all peoples, ancient and modern. As such, it is a human heritage which is in a process of uninterrupted development, like a sea into which many tributaries are constantly emptying, these tributaries being the many and various national cultures.”

Based on the root *ḥaḍārah* in the sense of witnessing, that is, being present as

opposed to being absent, we may search for the Qur'anic meanings of this concept. We find that the word *ḥaḍāra* in the Qur'an bears the same meaning as *shahida*, to witness, see, attend or be present at. For example, the phrases: "when death approaches (*ḥaḍāra*) any of you...",<sup>30</sup> "and when [other] near of kin and orphans and needy persons are present at (*ḥaḍāra*) the distribution [of inheritance]...",<sup>31</sup> and, "whoever witnesses (*shahida*) this month...",<sup>32</sup> all of which convey the sense of *shahādah*, or presence.

The concept of *shahādah* in the Qur'an has four complementary meanings which unite to convey the meaning of *ḥaḍārah* in Islamic understanding. These meanings cannot be separated from one another; otherwise, their true content is lost. Each of these four meanings makes up part of the structure of the concept of *ḥaḍārah*; however, none of them by itself expresses the concept of *ḥaḍārah* in full. Instead they must all be present simultaneously in a single constellation or system in order to give the concept its complete meaning. These meanings are:<sup>33</sup>

- 1) *Shahādah* in the sense of the affirmation of the divine unity and the acknowledgement of human beings as God's servants, as well as the acknowledgement of God as the Divine and Sovereign. This is the pivot upon which the Islamic creed turns, and the basis for the determination of whether or not human beings are adhering to God's way.
- 2) *Shahādah* in the sense of speaking the truth and treading the path of justice, demonstration and explication, knowledgeable reporting of events, or observation and scrutiny. This meaning may be viewed as one of the portals which leads into the realm of *'ilm*, and one of the means by which *ma'rifah* may be obtained.
- 3) *Shahādah* in the sense of sacrifice, redemption, and offering oneself for the sake of God in order to preserve the Islamic creed and in defense of human beings' liberation from subservience to and the worship of other creatures in order to become servants and worshippers of God alone.
- 4) *Shahādah* as a function or duty of the Ummah: "And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you."<sup>34</sup>

The meaning of the term *shahādah* applies both to this world and the next, since,

...the duty of *shahādah*, of being present and bearing witness, can only be fulfilled by the Ummah of the middle way, whose autonomous Islamic character refuses to be dissolved into any other entity or to lose the distinguishing features of its personality. Only by retaining its authentic character can the Ummah be a model to be emulated and followed by other nations. The first generation of Muslims realized that bearing witness to other nations requires that this Ummah be a liberated, and liberating, world power which is founded on justice and which applies justice in its dealings with its own citizens as well as others. Such an Ummah is one which protects the right of others to choose and their desire to establish a new society based on emancipation from the worship of creatures in order to worship God alone. Similarly, such a society frees people from the injustice of [man-made] religions in order for them to pursue the justice of Islam, and from the constriction of this earthly life in order to experience the expansiveness of both this life and the life to come.<sup>35</sup>

In keeping with these four meanings, then, ‘civilization’, or *ḥaḍārah* is presence and bearing witness in all senses which give rise to a human model imbued with the values of monotheism and affirmation of God’s sovereignty. This model grows out of a metaphysical dimension coupled with the unity of the One who created the universe, established its laws and patterns, and controls its course. Seen within this framework, human beings’ role and mission is to live as vicegerents of God by populating, developing and improving His earth. They must purify people’s lives of all that is unworthy, empower them to exercise their full rights and prerogatives, benefit from its bounties and deal prudently with the natural resources which have been placed at their disposal. Man must build a relationship of peace with them based on the fact that they, too, are God’s creation which declare His praise, or sources of sustenance which must be preserved and maintained. Similarly, it is imperative that the Ummah establish relations with other human beings throughout the world based on brotherhood, harmony, the love of what is good, and the call for happiness both in this life and the next.

If this is the meaning of the concept of civilization as found in Islamic sources or, rather, in the Qur’an, and if this definition applies to the experience of Islam, then what view should be taken of the human experiences outside the Islamic framework? Does the same definition apply to them as well, despite the fact that they have not believed in Islam? Or are we to view

them as beyond the pale of civilization, as the European perspective views human experiences which differ from its own? In other words, is the aforementioned definition so particularistic that it cannot be applied to the human experiences of others? Moreover, can such a perspective be justified in light of our belief that Islam is the religion for all people and that it encompasses all cosmic phenomena without exception (“Nothing have we neglected in Our decree?”)?<sup>36</sup>

As we have mentioned, the essence of the concept of civilization in Islam is presence and witnessing. This being the case, ‘civilization’ in the aforementioned sense is the civilization of Islam, or Islam’s presence in the universe. However, this does not mean that it is a ‘model of presence’ for all other experiences, religions and schools of thought. Rather, each of these experiences, religions, or ways of thinking has a presence of its own, however close to, or distant from, the Islamic presence it happens to be. Consequently, the concept of civilization in its general sense is simply the nature and type of presence which characterizes any human experience which has been able to formulate a human model for life in all its aspects and dimensions and which seeks to present this model to others in order for them to emulate it and proceed in accordance with its system of thought and values. In doing so, the civilization is acting on the belief that it is the human model which is most worthy of being adopted.

It follows from the foregoing that ‘presence’ (*ḥudūr*) represents an advanced stage in the experience of any society, since many human societies are limited to nothing but existence rather than going beyond this to ‘presence.’<sup>37</sup> Consequently, it is not possible to apply the term ‘civilization’ to them, no matter how extensive their intellectual and material production. Here the question arises: What is the difference between ‘presence’ and ‘existence’? How can one ascertain and evaluate the type of presence in this society or that? It might also be asked: Is ‘presence’ always a positive arrangement which is suited to human life? Is the concept of civilization in this sense always a positive characteristic or an advanced stage in human life?

The establishment of any society calls for a network of values, standards, beliefs, ideas and modes of behavior, just as it also requires a set of inventions, tools, institutions, physical structures, arts, means of production and of making a living. These two aspects of a society indicate that it has achieved a type of prosperity and development. In other words, it has been able to populate

and develop the earth and to construct a human model upon it. However, this does not necessarily mean that it has created a civilization, since the mere establishment of prosperity in society means no more than mere existence, as in the cases of the models produced by China, the Mayas, the Incas, the Zulus, etc. The reason for this is that in addition to populousness, development and prosperity, 'presence' requires that a society offer humanity a model to emulate, that is, a pattern of relationships with other human beings, the universe, or the resources therein which God has placed at its disposal. It must present a model which it seeks to spread and to have others emulate, regardless of the content of this model.

Far from projecting any positive value on the concept of civilization, the models just described might actually be negative or destructive, or at the very least, be unsuitable for human life. However, this need not prevent us from applying the term 'civilization' to them provided that they are characterized by the following:

- 1) A doctrinal system which determines the nature of the society's relationship to the metaphysical world and the concept of the divine, be it positive or negative.
- 2) An intellectual and behavioral structure which shapes the pattern of prevailing values, morals and customs.
- 3) Material arrangements which include inventions, machines, institutions, regulations, buildings, arts, and all other material aspects of life.
- 4) A definition of society's relationship with the universe, including its resources and the world of things, as it were, and rules for dealing with these resources and their associated values.
- 5) A means of defining the pattern of relating to other human societies, and the principles and rules guiding this relation, in addition to the approach to persuading them to accept this model and its purpose.

We may then proceed to define and evaluate human experiences and experiments, provided that they have gone beyond mere 'existence' to achieve 'presence'. For example contemporary Western civilization takes a specific attitude toward the metaphysical world and the divine. Similarly, it has an intellectual structure, values, and specified modes of behavior, a material structure with particular distinguishing characteristics, a pattern of relating to

the natural environment and other creatures, as well as a particular pattern of, and aims behind, relating to other non-European societies. Hence, if we want to describe Western civilization and to ascertain its true nature, we have no choice but to study its attitudes toward these various dimensions of existence. Consequently, we will be able to determine what model it is offering to humanity and make a decision as to whether it is fit to emulate or not. The same approach could be applied to any other human experiment as well.

From this it will become clear to us that it is not logically possible for there to be a single civilization with multiple tributaries unless this civilization is so clearly the best human model that all peoples on earth abandon their own inherited traditions and models and adopt it entirely. Similarly, competition or clashes among civilizations is a natural occurrence which is inevitable given the nature of human existence and its givens. After all, difference is a divine law of the universe. As God declares, “And among His wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colors....”<sup>38</sup> Nor may any given civilization assume automatically that it possesses a superior model for human beings. For the term ‘civilization’ does not imply a positive value in and of itself or a positive characteristic which can be attributed to objects and ideas. Rather, it is a neutral term whose content differs from one model of presence to another depending on the model’s particular components.

Given this point of departure, it is necessary to examine all human knowledge, sciences, methods, concepts and values. It is not logical to claim that the unity of human origins requires unity in human knowledge, sciences, methods and values, since this turns the sciences, concepts and methods of the predominant civilization into universal sciences, concepts and methods. The unity of human origins does not necessitate the unity of human sciences and knowledge, since human beings are not born with such sciences or knowledge. Rather, they acquire them through revelation and their interactions with the environment and society in the realm of time and space, as well as through the accumulation and inheritance of expertise: “And God has brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing – but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds...”<sup>39</sup> Hearing, sight and the mind are the entry points for human knowledge, and it is through these entry points that we should reexamine and evaluate the concepts and methods in circulation among us in light of the model by means of which we hope to

achieve ‘presence’, and which is being proposed to humanity as a guide and source of inspiration.

This understanding of the concept of civilization gives every human experience its own uniqueness, distinctiveness and special flavor. No human experience may be viewed as superior to any other except on the basis of the model which it offers, the superior model being that which is in harmony with inborn human nature and which, for this reason, finds ready acceptance. It follows that the dominance of a particular human model over all others will not be possible so long as belief in this concept of civilization prevails. Moreover, it is of the utmost importance that there be a reconsideration of the validity and practicality of the sciences, methods and concepts which prevail in our contemporary world. Only in this way can we become properly acquainted with, and evaluate, contemporary civilizations and, based on this evaluation, determine what position Islamic civilization should take toward them.

*The Fifth Focal Point: The Islamic and Human Heritage*

Based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah, Muslims constructed sciences related to their understanding of these texts and what they derived therefrom. Hence, the entire tradition relating to Islamic jurisprudence and its fundamentals, scholastic theology, and Muslim civilization as a whole represent their understanding, interpretation and study of texts. This understanding and interpretation should be factors which serve to advance and edify Muslims in the process of epistemological evolution and continuity. However, some, by imbuing these components of the Islamic legacy with qualities similar to those of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, have turned them at times into factors which hinder and impede. Many students and professors who have dealt with this legacy have been of the belief that it is sufficient to reproduce what they need of it in modern terminology which students will find easy to understand. Indeed, beginning almost as early as the time when the Qur’an and the Sunnah were committed to writing, the bulk of this tradition began to be reproduced in the form of explanations, reports, and footnotes. Then came the era of professors’ reminders and synopses – our own era, that is. This phenomenon, however, is a dangerous one which sanctioned the mentality of imitation in the past, and continues to sanction it now.

It is for this reason that there is such a need to restudy and reinterpret our

Islamic legacy and to read it in a critical, analytical, knowledge-oriented manner, in order to free us from the three loops mentioned earlier and which, by and large, govern the ways in which we relate to our legacy at the present time: unconditional rejection, unconditional acceptance, and selective, arbitrary eclecticism. These three loops are incapable of achieving the knowledge-related evolution and continuity which are needed. All of the approaches which were employed of old and which are still being employed turn the Islamic legacy into a hindrance and impediment at the present time, as well as something which robs us of the future. However, through an appeal to the two sources of guidance, the Divine Revelation and the created universe, the re-reading of this tradition based on a sound epistemological methodology can help to free us from the grip of the three aforementioned loops. It will also actuate the authority of the Islamic epistemological system and methodology through an appeal to the two sources of guidance (the divine Revelation and the created universe). An appeal to these points of reference is essential when making judgments on issues relating to the Islamic legacy which may not be important for their own sake but, rather, due to the role they play in clarifying the methodology which determines how the Muslim mind relates to human phenomena and the rest of the created universe in different times. It also shows what such a methodology can reveal to us concerning contemporary phenomena. The reason for this is that the Islamic legacy is not mere thought abstracted from time and place; rather, like all human thought, it is restricted and qualified by virtue of the times and places in which it came into being and the human beings for whose sake it came into being. Since the Islamic legacy takes as its starting point an absolute, inspired text which transcends the limits of place and time, it follows that the proportion of truth which it contains will be greater than that found in thought which is divorced from Revelation. However, this does not grant it the same infallibility with which God has distinguished the Qur'an. Consequently, the Islamic legacy must be put in its proper place. It must be viewed as relative rather than as absolute, since it remains no more than ideas and treatments and explanations of a changing reality. We must seek to achieve specific aims through our understanding and rediscovery of our legacy. Specifically, we must seek to achieve continuity and accumulation, ascertain the method and epistemological models which govern our legacy, and benefit from the ideas and understandings therein which are valid and

useful for our own time and place.

The aforementioned approach likewise applies to the modern human heritage, and particularly the Western heritage. There is a need for a method of dealing with this legacy by means of which the Muslim mind can go beyond its currently prevailing approaches, which are holdovers from the attempts at approximation, comparison, then confrontation which led ultimately to either unconditional rejection or unconditional acceptance. It bears noting here that when the outcome was unconditional acceptance, it would either come about in a spirit of utter abnegation or be accompanied by a haphazard, pick-and-choose approach which was unguided by a disciplined methodology or by an epistemological reading which sought wisdom or sought to pass down authoritative texts in a conscious, purposeful manner. Such an acceptance did not reflect an awareness of the effect of civilizational and cultural differences on human knowledge.

In connection with each of these focal points, efforts need to be made to prepare one or more studies which would constitute a discourse addressed to all members of the Ummah. Such a discourse, would enable us to register an easily measurable achievement, and this in the following three ways: (1) by employing such a discourse to arouse the interest of the Ummah's intelligentsia, (2) by educating and preparing competent staff workers capable of registering genuine accomplishments, and (3) presenting cultural and epistemological material which the Ummah can deal with by means of all available educational and media tools, be they written or audio-visual.

Perhaps the most important ways of achieving the aforementioned are by:

- 1) Surveying, classifying, evaluating and critiquing the studies, research and textbooks which deal with these five focal points.
- 2) Selecting the best and most useful of such studies and textbooks.
- 3) Presenting written summaries of the materials selected.
- 4) Publishing outstanding studies of relevance.
- 5) Holding seminars and discussion groups.
- 6) Convening international seminars and publishing the results of the research presented.
- 7) Presenting lectures on these studies as a means of acquainting more people with them.
- 8) Inviting discussion of such studies through all available channels.

- 9) Observing the progress of the Ummah's interaction with such materials, then conducting ongoing review and evaluation.
- 10) Monitoring reactions and making plans suitable to each case.
- 11) Working to introduce such materials and studies into study methods and educational curricula.
- 12) Engaging in ongoing criticism and discussion of materials presented from an Islamic perspective in order to build up Muslims' critical sense, while excluding materials which are superficial in nature, even if they happen to be described as 'Islamic.'

We must realize, of course, that our job is not to carry out all these tasks ourselves, since this would undoubtedly be beyond our capacity. Rather, we must bring the issue of the Islamization of knowledge to the attention of the Ummah and the educated members thereof, and to make it their issue. As for our role, it may be summed up as follows:

- 1) To crystallize and clarify our cause, detailing its various aspects.
- 2) To present detailed models which will prevent the cause we are seeking to serve from foundering on the rocks of rejection and protect it from neglect due to its ambiguity; from failure due to superficiality; and from ineffectiveness resulting from the cause's having been presented in an overly vague or generalized fashion.
- 3) To monitor, investigate, analyze, interpret, guide, criticize, evaluate and correct.
- 4) To build up staff and support bases in universities and other cultural institutions by intensifying efforts and fostering connections in these contexts.
- 5) To engage in consciousness-raising with respect to various aspects of the plan and means of carrying it out; then present the plan to those with the capacity to execute it, offer them assistance, and observe and correct their work in order for it to fulfill the plan's purposes.

In this way, we take on the role of catalysts in relation to the cause. We assist rather than imposing burdens. We help rather than providing funds. We direct rather than expending our own efforts on details, thereby exhausting our resources. We criticize and evaluate, direct and bring together, and produce fundamental entities in relation to these focal points which ordinary

individuals would not be able to produce. Moreover, it may be helpful to do the following:

- 1) Prepare studied, detailed work papers on each of the aforementioned focal points in order to hold a series of relevant seminars and study courses in every Islamic country in which the IIIT has an office, representative, or cooperating agencies, organizations or individuals. Such seminars could be followed by international seminars for the purpose of achieving a kind of production capable of stimulating greater awareness within the Ummah of the crisis which it faces.
- 2) Publish suitable results in a timely fashion in order to create the needed accumulations in all possible channels.
- 3) Intensify communication with leading academic, intellectual and cultural figures and officials in universities and other educational institutions, and direct their attention to these focal points.
- 4) Establish close ties with university department heads and professors teaching in graduate programs, present ideas, academic initiatives, plans and projects, and invite such individuals to adopt them.
- 5) Contact graduate students and offer suggestions as to possible academic projects of relevance to these focal points.
- 6) Create distinguished social science libraries capable of attracting academic resources in every country.
- 7) Create a significant number of Masters and Ph.D. degree programs relevant to the aforementioned focal points and promote such plans in the appropriate departments.
- 8) Select the research projects necessary to crystallize these focal points, prepare relevant academic plans and work papers, and award suitable grants to those who choose to write on these subjects.

These are the focal points and approaches which we believe are necessary for the renewal of contemporary Islamic discourse in a manner which allows such discourse to contribute to the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.

## CHAPTER FIVE



# Discourse and its Audience

### FEATURES OF THE DISCOURSE AND TYPES OF AUDIENCE (SEE FIGURE 5.1)

The features of Islamic epistemological discourse vary according to the type of audience to which the discourse is addressed. Hence, given that there are many audiences, there must necessarily be many forms of discourse. Although the discourse concerned deals with a single theme, the type of discourse will vary according to the audience addressed and what they are prepared to do and the tasks for which they are responsible in the process of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.

It would be difficult in such a brief study to do a comprehensive inventory of all types of audiences – which include all adult, fully accountable members of all human societies – or to identify the features and content of the discourse for each of these audiences. However, we will attempt to spell out these contents and features for a sample which we believe to represent the majority of the audiences of concern. Following is a survey and classification of most categories of audiences within the Islamic world:

- 1) Officials,
- 2) Secularists,
- 3) Members of Islamic movements,
- 4) Graduates of religious universities and schools,
- 5) Those who approach matters from a superficial perspective,
- 6) Proponents of compromise and eclecticism,
- 7) The general populace,
- 8) University students,
- 9) Academics (researchers and university professors).

## 1) OFFICIALS (SEE FIGURE 5.2)

Most officials in the Islamic world tend to be circumspect with regard to Islamic intellectual awareness and international cultural awareness. Such circumspection exists for numerous reasons which we need not explain at great length. However, one of these reasons may well be that the proposal of a cultural and epistemological alternative from an Islamic perspective runs counter to the policies which govern existing educational and cultural systems, which have grown accustomed to unilateralism and frown on competition to their own proposals.

This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to gain any foothold whatsoever within the ranks of officialdom. There are a number of academicians and knowledgeable individuals who would like to introduce that which is of use and benefit through the institutions which they head and the centers in which they work. Hence, some of them may be able to offer assistance in raising people's awareness of this issue and recruiting resources in its support. Thus there is no room for blanket judgments; rather, there must be observation and investigation in order to gain access to individuals with this type of positive attitude.

Our cause needs to be presented to such people in a manner which convinces them that the changes we are seeking to introduce will help in resolving many crises. In addition, these changes need to be linked to their own interests and concerns. If such a process is successful, these people may help us present our cause to others rather than standing in its way. It also bears noting that most regimes have begun to recognize many areas in which their educational systems are inadequate, and that some of them have begun searching in earnest for the appropriate means to reform these systems. Hence, we must develop expertise in these areas which can be offered to those who need it at the suitable time. The initial efforts made by the IIIT and the expertise which it offered to individuals and institutions seeking out its assistance in reforming and redirecting some aspects of the educational process, have had the effect of building mutual trust. Thus we need to increase our capabilities and expertise in order to ensure a role for ourselves in the reform of instruction and the educational process, and in the construction of a data base in this area – on both the theoretical and practical levels, and on the levels of individuals, ideas, institutions and programs – which can be of great benefit to the entire Ummah.

## 2) SECULARISTS (SEE FIGURE 5.3)

As for secularists, they must not be looked upon as blocs or parties whose members are all marked by the same mentality, or who all have identical visions of the universe and life. The Qur'an has taught us that each group to which this designation applies has a 'council of elders' as it were, or an elite, and that beyond this elite there is a general public. If we can get past the elite to the general public, we will be able to speak to them directly and communicate our message to them clearly. In this way, we can persuade them that we are elements of change whose aim is to rebuild the Ummah and restore its civilizational witness. From the general public, we may win over many individuals who belong to the silent majority, who have only supported the elite in the belief that it is capable of fulfilling the Ummah's aims and hopes. As for the elite itself, it will defend its positions and attitudes and exert every effort to resist and cast aspersions on our ideas. This, of course, is the nature of the tug-of-war which marks the world and its ways; however, the ultimate victory will belong to the God-fearing. Our cause has been mocked by many who belong to this category; however, some of them have begun to examine themselves and apologize for their ignorance of our cause and its aims and the haste with which they attacked it, basing their judgments on invalid comparisons with other causes or movements.

In addition, dealing with this group of people might be turned into a opportunity through efforts to create a counter-trend in secularist circles themselves. Such a counter-trend would have its own theses relating to the Islamization of knowledge which it could employ in the process of shaking the intellectual and epistemological convictions held by members of the elite. Its criticism of the epistemological foundations of Western civilization in a serious, scientific, coherent manner would serve – together with the process of encouraging this group to broaden the base of its criticism of Western theses overall – to win over some of its adherents in favor of 'Islamic knowledge.'<sup>1</sup>

Given the fact that secularists will be on the lookout for the slightest slip-up on our part and be quick to criticize any move we make and expose the faults and loopholes in our thought, we can make the best of their surveillance of us and our proposals and projects by seeking to correct some of our faults and to tie the loopholes in our arguments, then continue to build. This is still

another benefit of contact with this group.

On the other hand, and given the diverse nature of this group, there are bound to be varying responses on the part of its adherents. Some of them will see this intellectual proposal as a renewed attempt at reform which is intelligent and worthy of being discussed. Others will reject and attack it based on their belief that it is a step on the way toward excluding them from their positions of intellectual, cultural and epistemological influence and power. Still others, by contrast, will be accepting of it and understand the true nature of what is being proposed, thereby signaling their imminent transition from being secularists to being Islamists and adopting the latter's issues and views.

Given our success in attracting a number of thinkers who had previously been in the service of other currents of thought and action, we are delighted to have been able to engage and win over a group of well-informed and intelligent intellectuals who have played a pivotal role in enriching contemporary Islamic thought and helped augment the expertise of Muslim leaders. In doing so they succeeded in restoring confidence to Muslims across the world. They also proved that it was wrong to rush to criticise and accuse them of disloyalty and apostasy simply because they had adopted worldly and practical approaches and projects which they strongly believed would be of benefit to Muslim societies and communities.

The IIIT has endured reproach, criticism and at times, even out-and-out accusations from certain 'moribund worshipers of the past.' However, it has stayed its course. And those who attended the "Bias" seminar in Cairo and listened to the dialogues among its participants will realize that by God's grace, the Institute has taken a huge step toward constructing the "Islamic civilizational project" which can no longer be adopted by any particular group within the Ummah in isolation from all others. The Institute can thus demonstrate that the 'epistemological entry point' is the most successful means by which to marshal the resources of the entire Ummah and to place them on a level from which, working in concert and calling upon their varied expertise and starting points and the 'unified Qur'anic epistemological methodology', they can, God willing, implement the Ummah's civilizational enterprise. As for 'moribund worship of the past,' it is headed for extinction no matter how intensely it flashes and thunders in the meantime.

### 3) MEMBERS OF ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS (SEE FIGURE 5.4)

The Islamic movements are currently dominated by the trend which is referred to, and which refers to itself, as 'Salafite'. This trend attempts to lend a doctrinal, or at best, juristic focus to its dialogue about anything and everything. Hence, as a result of complex conditions and circumstances, including those of persecution, pursuit, displacement of people from their homes and homelands, unrest and uprisings, intellectual leadership positions in these movements have shifted to individuals who, as a result of these same circumstances and conditions, have been so confined to the arena of conflict that they were unable to gain the experience and expertise needed in order to engage in intellectual or political action, or to realize the importance of the intellectual dimension and of a civilizational approach to the issues they face.

In addition, the attenuated role now played by Egypt and the Levant in particular, together with the emerging influence of the Iraqi and Gulf Islamic school as an intellectual, doctrinal and juristic leader in the Islamic sphere following the well-known economic transformations that have occurred over the past century, have led to a diminution in the role of thought in the directions taken by these movements and in their cultural structure. Consequently, most of them view the intellectual issue, the intellectual crisis and what we have termed the epistemological entry point as a kind of intellectual luxury. Alternatively, they view them as an error in diagnosing the crisis being faced by the Ummah, as a threat to their organizational methods and movement-related systems, as a rationalist attempt or conspiracy to propose an alternative to what they themselves offer, or as a consciousness-raising enterprise which will alter the map of loyalty or undermine the public's confidence in their leadership and reveal its bankruptcy and vulnerability. Some of these trends believe that their strength lies in their ability to perpetuate their various audiences' trust in their leadership. This trust, however, has become an easy substitute for self-awareness, awareness of the prevailing situation, of others, and awareness of the mission itself.

In fact, it is not in the nature of an intellectual or cultural enterprise in its beginning stages to try to attract audiences or to form organizational bases. Moreover, the current represented by the Islamization of knowledge does not present itself as a substitute for any of the Islamic movements now active in countries. Rather, it views its function as that of filling the gap which exists

in the area of thought, knowledge and culture. For indeed, it is a gap which has long been neglected or, at the very least, has not been given the attention which it merits. The affirmation that we have simply stationed ourselves on the frontier of intellectual, epistemological, cultural and civilizational issues ought to provide sufficient reassurance, to those in need of such reassurance, that this trend is not a threat but, rather, a source of protection which purifies and vouches for the means being employed by the Ummah. As such, it offers genuine assistance, helping those who are laboring sincerely to rescue the Ummah rather than competing with them or seeking to crowd them out of the positions they occupy on their own frontiers.

Moreover, in accordance with its intellectual theses and principles, the Islamization of knowledge trend goes beyond the doctrinal focus which is bound to slip into the slough of *takfīr* (labeling others as nonbelievers), be they the society as a whole, individuals or particular schools of thought, and which tends in the direction of violence and conflict with all other groups and organizations. By contrast, the Islamization of knowledge trend stresses its intellectual approach as a unanimous base which unites rather than divides. It seeks to the greatest extent possible to avoid sliding down the slippery slope of *takfīr*, including judgments on groups or individuals. The intellectual approach naturally moves us to analyze positions and ascertain their backgrounds, intellectual features, and underlying motives, a process which requires careful reflection and a comprehensive, thought-based solution. Such reflection and solutions rest on a foundation of doctrinal principles which serve not as a basis for declaring others as nonbelievers but, rather, as an intellectual foundation which draws inspiration from the true essence of Islamic law, its spirit and intents. Hence, it does not oversimplify issues or sum them up neatly in the form of a legal decree against this person or a verdict against that. Rather, it is aware of each issue as a question; it serves such a question by seeking to deal with and answer it; and it studies it as a phenomenon.

The cause needs to be presented to these movements' youth and intellectuals in a coherent, suitable manner, then many of them may adopt it or benefit from many of its aspects. In such cases, they may include it in their projects and programs or present it anew as part of their own theses and ways of dealing with issues. For many of these movements have, in fact, adopted the intellectual proposals presented by advocates of reform and renewal, such as Shaykh Muhammad ʿAbd al-Wahhab, Imam al-Shawkani, Shah Wali

Allah al-Dahlawi, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad ‘Abduh, and others who either preceded or followed them. Moreover, the evolution which is taking place in some countries and in some of these movements is bound to place them in the position to adopt this cause, in full or in part. Hence, with regard to these movements, it is a matter of perseverance, proper presentation, a varied approach to presenting the cause, wisdom in building relationships, expressing gratitude toward those who have shown us kindness, and enduring patiently those who have offended or treated us badly. Indeed, the leaders of some of these movements have begun to grasp some of the ideas being presented by the IIIT school. Some paraphrase them in their own styles, then disseminate them among their followers without any reference to the Institute or its writers. We are delighted that these movements are using IIIT’s work; after all what matters is that sound intellectual sustenance reaches the Ummah, not how it reaches them, under whose name, or accompanied by which slogans. The youth of these movements may criticize the IIIT for not joining their group, which is presenting the same ideas (!), forgetting – or pretending to forget – the danger that partisan thinking poses to the concept of ‘Ummah’ in cases of intellectual backwardness.

The issue of establishing and clarifying the movement’s roots and origins, and the confirmation that it is a link in the long chain of attempts at intellectual and cultural reform is another fundamental issue which must not be neglected. It may have begun with the attempt to preserve the Qur’an by writing it, followed by the preservation of the Sunnah by compiling and recording it. These two steps were then followed towards the end of the 2nd Century AH by the preparation, compilation and recording of method, and subsequent attempts at intellectual and cultural revival and renewal by imams of the first Islamic centuries and the great imams who came after them. These include Ibn Surayj, al-Juwayni, Abū Yūsūf, [Abū] Muḥammad, al-Ghazālī, and the scholars who prepared the way for the era of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Ibn Khaldūn. These thinkers were followed by the leaders of modern reform whose movements were distinguished by the manner in which they dealt with the issue of *ijtihād* vs. *taqlīd*, or independent reasoning vs. imitation. Representatives of this latter movement include Shah Wali Allah al-Dahlawi, Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, al-Shawkani, al-Afghani, al-Na’ini, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Rashid Rida, and leaders of the modern Islamic reform movement such as al-

Mawdudi, Ibn Bādīs, Shari‘ati, al-Banna, Mutahhiri, Qutb, and others.

Linking this cause with the overall Islamic reform movement may serve to reassure some of the leaders of these movements, thereby enabling them to understand it more readily and to be more receptive to it. In keeping with the human need for continuity, God commanded the Prophet saying, “Say: ‘I am not the first of God’s apostles.’”<sup>2</sup>

A third matter to which attention needs to be drawn is that there are certain key words which, if they appear in a discourse, cause members of this group to respond to the message in a reserved manner, and to associate it with certain trends which are unacceptable to their overall membership. Similarly, there are certain words and names which have the opposite effect, such that their very presence in a discourse inspires confidence and peace of mind. An awareness of this phenomenon needs to be reflected in our literature and style of communication. It is likewise important to steer clear of partisan tendencies, points of disagreement and the polarization they engender in order to prevent our cause from becoming a source of conflict and cause it to become, instead, the authoritative intellectual point of reference for all of them when the time is right.

In addition to the points already mentioned, we must take care to establish friendly relations with thinkers and intellectuals, engage as much as possible in dialogue with educated youth and share their cultural concerns. Then we can build common ground and help to allay fears. In addition, this increases the possibility of transforming this trend into an opportunity rather than its continuing to be a hindrance. We hope to return later to this theme, since the most important factors which have thwarted attempts at renewal during the past two centuries lie in the conflicts that have arisen among differing reform movements and their preoccupation one with another.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4) GRADUATES OF RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS (SEE FIGURE 5.5)

This group, many of whose subgroups and members are keen on being the official spokespersons for Islam, has received a traditional, historical education in the areas of jurisprudence and its fundamentals, hadith, language, and the like. They have grown accustomed to the notion that due to their expert-

ise they have the right to determine the legitimacy of discussing Islam, particularly in the area of knowledge (both *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah*). Hence, they staunchly resist the proposal of anything which would dislodge them from this position or marginalize their role in this respect.

The issue of thought and the Islamization of knowledge is one which diagnoses the ills and problems which afflict the Ummah, and which prescribes as their treatment both independent reasoning and contemporary thought. Independent reasoning is something which some of them advocate; however, they do not practice it themselves, either because they lack courage, or because they lack the necessary tools. Imitation offers ease and equanimity, whereas independent reasoning brings responsibility, strain, and potential hardship and risk.

The Islamization of knowledge attempts to go beyond the ancient methods of presenting Islam adopted by scholastic theology. It also attempts to go beyond an approach which is strictly juristic and particularistic in its perspective. For dealing with issues from the perspective of scholastic theology without applying the principles relevant thereto is destructive, while dealing with them from a juristic perspective without applying the relevant conditions is divisive. By contrast, our approach is one which insists on taking into account human, temporal and spatial dimensions, as well as universals, intents, ultimate aims and governing values. In doing so, it puts each of these in its place and within its proper framework. Most factions belonging to this group see historical Islamic jurisprudence in its existing form as sufficient for the Ummah's needs. At the same time, they view the requirements of our mission as entailing additional burdens and costs which they cannot bear, or which they are not qualified to deal with. In fact, the tasks involved in what we are calling for would be a source of embarrassment to them, since they would expose their impotence or their failure if they did not move quickly to master the needed tools, which is not a trifling thing. Such groups have grown accustomed to placing responsibility on others' shoulders and dealing with Islamic issues and questions simply by handing out advice, exhortations, directions or legal decisions which others are expected to understand and act on. They communicate the message that it is others, not themselves, who are responsible for deviation, error, negligence and backwardness. As for the question of how people are to implement their directives or translate them into reality, what tools and methods this calls for, and how to educate coming

generations in such a way that they understand, digest and commit themselves to them, this is other people's responsibility.

This group are suspicious of ways of thinking that distribute responsibility and define roles, making all individuals and groups aware of their responsibilities and demanding that they faithfully carry them out. Consequently, such an approach simply galvanizes resistance on their part, entrenching them all the more firmly in the ranks of the opponents to the cause. However, it is possible to deal with this group in a manner which helps to turn this obstacle into an opportunity, and the members of this group into supporters for the cause rather than opponents. Most people who belong to this category are pure-hearted and sincere, and they rejoice to see Islam being served well so long as the way in which this is done does not clash with the aforementioned conceptions on their part.

The issues we face call for many technical studies in such people's areas of specialization, and it may be possible to recruit many talents which exist among them by means of research projects, individual and group studies, the process of making the Islamic literary heritage available, and invitations to take part in conferences and dialogues. Some might be called to offer counsel and advice based on their expertise in their fields, while we might also offer suitable suggestions to them. Eventually they will begin to realize that our cause gives them an important role along with all other groups with expertise to offer within the Ummah. This role can create in them greater awareness and rescue them from the marginal role to which they have been relegated since the fall of the Ottoman Empire – bearing in mind that it was this marginalization of their roles which made them vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by certain rulers. We need to make clear to them that they have a significant role to play and then many of them will become part of the cause's potential, and sources of assistance and support. At the same time, growing awareness of the cause and its aims among members of the Ummah will be a catalyst to win them over.

Some of these individuals might view the theses associated with the cause as a new source of authority with which they can impose their control over the remaining cultural arenas (the arenas of the social sciences and the humanities). However this trend must be brought to a halt, and, through academic production, the roles of all concerned must be defined and clarified. In this way, such confusion and ambiguity can be eliminated, the purity of the cause

can be preserved, and the role of each type of knowledge, as well as each type of expert, can be specified in a systematic way.

##### 5) THOSE WHO APPROACH MATTERS FROM A SUPERFICIAL PERSPECTIVE (SEE FIGURE 5.6)

The Qur'an presents itself to people as an exemplar of simplicity and ease, and at the same time, as miraculous. Its ease and simplicity are mentioned explicitly in the verse, "Indeed, We made this Qur'an easy to bear in mind: who, then, is willing to take it to heart?"<sup>4</sup> At the same time, God challenges people on the basis of the Qur'an and makes clear its miraculous nature in a number of verses which end with His declaration, "Say: 'If all mankind and all invisible beings would come together with a view to producing the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce its like even though they were to exert all their strength in aiding one another!'"<sup>5</sup>

Our cause is, first and foremost, a Qur'anic cause. It aims to make the Divine Revelation – the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which is both an explication of the Revelation and founded thereon – the starting point for thought and a source of culture, knowledge, development, and civilizational witness. Therefore, it must be a cause characterized by ease and simplicity which does not address the elite alone while bypassing the general populace, or deal solely with the select few while overlooking the masses, since its purpose is to reach the entire Ummah. There are numerous means of achieving this aim which we need to be aware of and to make use of. Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah contain innumerable examples which serve to define these means. The process of *taysīr*, or facilitation, is one which takes an issue that could have been presented in the most complex manner and makes it easy, accessible, and comprehensible. Due to the simplicity with which it has been presented and discussed and the examples which have been cited to clarify its meaning, an individual who knows nothing about it, no matter what his culture or educational background, will be able to conceptualize it and perceive all of its dimensions.

As for *tastīh*, the superficial approach to matters, it is an epistemological process which aims to define the manifestations of something, or its outward surface. The superficial presentation of a topic does not give a full picture of its

varied dimensions; rather, it portrays its exterior only. Some of the means employed in *tasfīh* resemble those employed in *taysīr*. Therefore it is necessary to point out the difference between the two processes. For example, facilitation may be accomplished through abridgment or summarization; however, if not done properly, such abridgment or summarization may then lead in its turn to *tasfīh*. *Tasfīh* may result from preoccupation with form over content, from the desire to win others over and to muster rapid support, from haste to see the fruits of one's efforts and to maximize such fruits, as well as from other factors.

As for those who are most liable to turn our cause into a superficial issue, they belong to two groups. The first of these groups are those who reject and oppose our cause. Such individuals attempt to present it in a superficial manner in order to mock the aspirations of its proponents and demonstrate its non-viability, thereby dissuading people from adopting and supporting it. Examples of such efforts include the article by Zaki Najib Mahmud in *Al-Ahram* newspaper entitled, "Laki Allah Yā 'Ulūm al-Insān!" ("You Have God, O Humanities!"), and an article which appeared in *al-Yamamah* magazine published in Riyadh and in which the cause is presented by a number of secularist professors, as well as writings on the topic by Sayyid Yasin, Mahmud Amin al-<sup>ḥ</sup>Alam, al-Tibi, Diya' al-Din Sardar, and others.

However, such efforts are bound to be thwarted by our persistent determination in presenting our cause to the Ummah in all its varied dimensions, by our linking of it to the solutions to many crises, and by citing examples and models which help to deepen the sense of need for it and demonstrate the necessity of establishing the origins of the Ummah's ideas by means of thorough scientific investigation. We have published studies which draw links between the crisis of thought and culture in the Islamic world and problems associated with development, unity, democracy, human rights, etc. Their attempts will likewise be frustrated by our criticism of what they present in a varied and objective fashion through the writings of diverse authors and by the use of varied means and methods, all of which help greatly to increase confidence in our cause and create awareness of its importance and depth.

As for the second group that 'superficializes' our cause, it includes people who have understood Islam in a superficial way and assume that, in order to 'Islamize' something, all that is required is for the person who presents it to be a Muslim and to place it within an outwardly Islamic framework. Someone

might be impressed by an article on the subject of epistemology or civilization by a secularist, whether Western or Eastern. This same person might also believe that in order to Islamize this article, all he needs to do is to remove the word 'secularist', 'Western', or whatever other appellation it happens to contain, and replace it with the word 'Islamic.' He thus reduces the process of Islamization to abstract words and transmutes it into nothing but a framework, a form, or a slogan. In doing so, he has failed to take account of the philosophical, methodological, intellectual and epistemological differences which exist between one way of treating an issue and another. In other words, he has paid no attention to the influence of one's rational, human perspective and its intellectual and cultural components on the manner in which intellectual and cultural issues are dealt with, and has failed to comprehend the nature of concepts and the ways in which they are comprehended and applied. As a consequence, such a person does harm to the cause even though he believes himself to be serving it.

This problem results from both a cancerous attachment to imitation and an intellectual vacuum. Driven by a variety of motives, those who suffer these two maladies rush to pick up on any thesis that happens to be put forward. Then they package it up neatly in this or that form, mold or phrase and present it on behalf of its original proponents as though it were the entire issue or cause. Careful examination yields numerous clear examples of this phenomenon.

It would be useful to observe and track this type of 'superficialization.' It would then be possible to contact those whom it is reasonable to believe are acting out of pure motives, then attempt to recruit some of them connected with the media, if possible, and correct their conceptions by explaining the most important requirements of the Islamization of knowledge. In this way, adherents of this way of thinking may be persuaded to modify their ideas in such a way that they set foot on the path that leads to working in service to the cause. As for those who engage in the process of *tasfīh* with destructive motives, in order to lay siege to the cause and isolate it, the ideas they present in this connection need to be exposed and discredited, since they are on the order of counterfeiters, who offer something fake in order to oust what is genuine.

6) PROPONENTS OF COMPROMISE AND ECLECTICISM  
(SEE FIGURE 5.7)

The orientation represented by the process of intellectual and epistemological compromise and eclecticism approaches the epistemological issue from a superficial perspective. However, attention needs to be drawn to three levels of this process:

a) *Level One*

Eclecticism within the Western authoritative framework does not stop to examine the basic foundations, principles and universals which should govern the process of compromise when it is an absolute necessity. There is a vast difference between eclecticism and compromise. On this level, the individual chooses from Islam, its legacy and its civilization that which supports preconceived ideas (an ideology) on his part, or joins such ideas to Islam by force.

The dangerous nature of this process appears in attempts at Westernization which are couched in language which claims to have read and understood the Islamic legacy with an awareness of its historical context, and to be applying modern Western methods to Islam and its sources. Such an approach may appear to be highly systematic and serious. In reality, however, it possesses nothing but the appearance and form of methodology, while lacking its essence and basic principles. In addition, it passes over a number of fundamental contradictions between the 'authoritative Islamic framework' and the 'authoritative Western framework.' Thus, such an approach makes no attempt to investigate what might be termed 'methodological fitness.' Instead, it imposes methods on Islamic studies which are not suited to them, while at the same time, it ignores methodological principles which have become mainstays of the Islamic intellectual tradition, such as the fundamentals of jurisprudence and the principles underlying the code of conduct that governs research and debate.

*b) Level Two*

This level is preceded by processes in which elements are put together in an eclectic fashion within an 'authoritative traditional framework.' Such processes fail to take cognizance of an understanding of reality and the most important of its evolving dimensions, and demonstrate no concern for the importance of distinctions. In addition, such a perspective is based on an attitude which views the entire Islamic legacy as sacred, assuming it to be characterized by infallibility or absolute superiority. Consequently, it maintains that rather than simply emulating the approaches adopted by scholars of old in dealing with the various circumstances and cases which they faced, it is possible to apply traditional Islamic models to today's world completely. The superficial nature of this process may be seen in its failure to provide solutions to real problems, contenting itself instead with a kind of intellectual cud-chewing of the Islamic legacy without the slightest awareness of either history and tradition, or the present and future.

*c) Level Three*

As for the third level, it involves piecing together the idea of the Islamization of knowledge out of a desire to offer solutions as quickly as possible, particularly given the fact that the Islamization of knowledge is still in its early stages and, as such, still in the process of establishing and clarifying its roots. In fact, not all of its aspects, whether in the realm of thought, knowledge or method, have been clearly established or defined yet. Consequently, what it has offered thus far is still in the form of a set of ideas, principles and plans, many of which have not been chosen in a precise manner within an academic or activist framework, although steps in this direction have begun. In keeping with this fact, it is necessary to continue with efforts to establish the cause's roots and principles in order to complete the foundations of the primary idea and to provide a precise explanation of its elements through ongoing, creative additions in this connection. Those involved in the cause likewise need to recruit the efforts of those who can write about the cause in a forceful, cogent manner. These individuals need to have expended notable efforts in the intellectual realm and have the ability to undertake such writing. In addition, they

need to have an awareness of the true nature of the 'intellectual map' of the Islamic world and of the fundamental idea upon which the cause is based, including its form, its spirit, its outward appearance and its essence.

It goes without saying that the materials currently available on issues of thought and the Islamization of knowledge cannot be considered sufficient or final. Some of those who have adopted the cause are content simply to explain or summarize the idea, or to create a kind of concoction consisting of an admixture of their ideas relating to the cause and their initial, tentative research efforts. This may be viewed as part of the hazardous process of 'superficialization.' As we have noted, members of this group have engaged in this process with good intentions, out of the desire to disseminate the idea rapidly and to publish a quantity of research relating to the cause. However, those who have adopted the cause of the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge seek to maintain a delicate balance between quantity and quality in research and intellectual production. This concern is confirmed by their efforts to produce distinguished, high-quality research, particularly given the existence of groups which attempt to piece things together in a haphazard fashion, be they advocates of Islamic tradition or of Westernization.

Therefore, it is imperative that there be ongoing efforts to find competent individuals capable of making intellectual and cultural contributions in these areas, crystallizing the cause's ideas and plans, and strengthening its foundations. Such individuals need to be aware of the methodological orientation of the Islamization of knowledge and the nature of its early production, that is, the fact of its being experimental, tentative, and subject to further clarification, the removal or addition of this or that, as well as a great deal of deliberate, painstaking review based on stringent methodological criteria inspired by the fundamentals and principles of Islamic law and its governing intents. At the same time, it gives proper consideration to reality and its most important givens, yet without succumbing unduly to their pressures.

Given this awareness of the importance of the quality of its intellectual production, as well as the experimental nature of this production in its early stages, the cause of thought and the Islamization of knowledge can, with intensified efforts, make notable strides in the cultural, epistemological, intellectual and civilizational realms. Moreover, by keeping abreast of all trends which attempt to superficialize the cause, whether from without or from

within, it will be able to construct its edifice on firm foundations characterized by genuine awareness, ongoing contributions suited to existing circumstances and needs, methodological commitment, and epistemological vision.

#### 7) THE GENERAL POPULACE (SEE FIGURE 5.8)

Educated members of the Ummah have grown accustomed to viewing uneducated individuals as incompetent and, therefore, not qualified to be addressed by means of discourse with an intellectual or cultural content or focus. In this view, ordinary members of the populace only understand particular types of discourse at which thinkers and the intelligentsia are not adept. As a consequence, these people have been bypassed by the modern intellectual and cultural discourse of various groups, some of whom seek to communicate with these people through little more than mere slogans. However, this type of approach has exacerbated the intellectual and cultural decline of the general populace in virtually all Muslim countries, where the prevailing condition is one of illiteracy combined with a smattering of knowledge. At the same time, Muslim societies have witnessed the spread of charlatanism, superstition and magic. These are some of the effects of the temptation to imitate, the abandonment of independent reasoning, and the freezing of minds. Moreover, if, after succumbing to the temptation to imitate and eliminate all independent reasoning, the Ummah's scholars and people of wisdom and discernment embrace the mentality of the general populace, then what will be embraced next by the general populace itself?

Among the general populace and the semi-educated there has spread a kind of contempt for thought and a tendency to mock and belittle culture. People view thought and culture as a kind of luxury which only the well-to-do and privileged are entitled to indulge in. As for the working class, it is not advisable or fitting for them to do so. If any of them desires to do so, he will find no discourse addressed to him or, if he does, it will not be comprehensible to him, since the orators have passed him by, having dropped him from consideration.

Such attitudes, however, reveal a serious disregard for the concept of man's vicegerency and its nature, as well as the essence of the Qur'anic discourse and its directives. The Qur'an is addressed to the heedless in order for

them to pay attention; to those in error in order for them to be guided; to those who deny the Truth in order for them to believe; to hypocrites in order for them to become sincere; to the lost in order for them to find the right path; and to believers, in order for them to grow in faith.

Hence, the ordinary person is simply one of those people addressed by the Qur'an, while his or her responsibility and the appropriateness of the Qur'anic discourse being addressed to him or her is not determined on the basis of cultural specifications, educational level or a university degree. Rather, the Qur'an is an inclusive message addressed to everyone responsible before God, which includes all adults in full possession of their mental faculties. Consequently, issues of culture, and in particular those relating to thought, do not exclude the ordinary individual, nor should they deprive him or her of the opportunity to drink from the spring of thought and culture.

Our mission is to place these epistemological issues in a framework which is comprehensible to all groups, and in the form of material which can be dealt with by all channels engaged in the communication of ideas. We believe that it is possible to present Muslims with the various aspects of the intellectual crisis and thought-related issues through a variety of approaches. Thought-related issues include, for example, misunderstandings of the concepts of predestination (*al-qadar*), compulsion (*al-jabr*), free choice and human action, human dignity and status, the relationship between causes and effects, and a number of other matters which Muslims have the responsibility to understand. The Qur'an, in which God challenges both man and *jinn* (invisible beings) to produce something comparable to it on the level of organization, style and eloquence, God has likewise made easy to understand and reflect on: "Of the bounties of thy Lord We bestow freely on all – These as well as those: The bounties of thy Lord are not closed (to anyone)."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Qur'an's miraculous nature is the way in which it combines ease of understanding and exquisite style.

This being the case, we have no right to make excuses for ourselves or justify our having made our discourse overly complex, ambiguous or obscure by arguing that it is addressed to the elite. For many a herald has understood his message better than those to whom he has delivered it, "[and] God knows best on whom to bestow His message."<sup>7</sup> Hence, if people find our discourse difficult to comprehend, we have only ourselves to blame, not their minds or inability to understand. Moreover, we have the obligation to do our utmost

to modify the styles in which our discourse is presented and to review it time and time again until we have resolved the crisis of specialization caused by addressing no one but the educated elite.

Those who reject and oppose the cause will attempt to turn ordinary people against it, depicting it as part of an attempt to distract them from their urgent daily concerns and issues. There are many ways to link their interests and issues with the reform and renewal of Islamic thought and thereby to construct the Islamic epistemological paradigm. There are no lack of relevant examples which we can cite in order to persuade them. We have sufficient means by which to adopt and clarify public interests and concerns, then to propose relevant solutions from an Islamic cultural and intellectual point of reference. All such aims are easily within reach if intentions are pure, if minds are used diligently, if effort is ongoing, and if we can present our cause within the framework of a flexible, expansive exegetical model. Moreover, ordinary individuals are not expected to engage in intellectual production themselves in connection with these matters. Rather, it suffices for them to have an overall familiarity with such matters so that they can sympathize with them and interact with relevant issues and questions based on genuine concern and interest. In doing so, such people will come to have greater effectiveness and a more positive, active outlook on the Ummah's issues and problems. After all, effective, living ideas must be accessible to human perception on all of its diverse levels.

#### 8) UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (SEE FIGURE 5.9)

Muslim students generally begin their university studies at a time when the Islamic vision in their possession amounts to no more than a scant bit of knowledge about Islam which they acquired at home, in their primary and secondary educations, or both. It will be clear, of course, that this amount of knowledge about Islam does not constitute an Islamic vision or Islamic thought, nor will it enable such students to experience a genuine sense of Islamic identity sufficient to protect them from unsound influences or change.

Muslim students thus commence their university careers during a phase in which their thought is virtually devoid of a truly Islamic vision. As a conse-

quence, their minds are open to any influence. At the time when they begin their studies they might have certain Islamic sentiments or emotions. However, they lack Islamic thoughts. And sentiments, if they are present, will not endure in the face of ideas, facts, and judgments characterized by the so-called 'objectivity' being offered to them by the human and social sciences which they study within a purely Western frame of reference and based on the Western vision with all of its various components.

Lacking even the most modest store of vital Islamic doctrine, which is the starting point for the ideas of most relevance to the problems they may face, such students do not possess means of defense with which to confront this level of conceptualization. On the intellectual level, university students in the Islamic world are confronted with Western doctrines and philosophies which are presented to them together with a flimsy, miserable defense of Islam. There is not a single academic institution in the Islamic world in which Islamic thought is taught and in which the Islamic vision is given a deep-rooted foundation with the same force and persuasiveness with which Western ideas and the Western vision are taught to students in the West, that is to say, in a coherent, comprehensive manner accompanied by seriousness and commitment on the part of all.

The cause represented by the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge views the Muslim student as the recipient and protector of ideas. At the same time, the student is inseparable from the professor, the method, and the academic framework of the instructional process. In fact, seen from the perspective of intellectual reform and the Islamization of knowledge, the student is the cornerstone, whereas our efforts with professors and in relation to the curriculum are nothing but means of building up and reshaping the student. The Muslim student who is able to comprehend, digest and adopt the idea [of the reform of Islamic thought] and to spread awareness of it among others, is the true campaigner for the cause; indeed, he or she is the one who communicates and represents the idea in both the near and distant future.

Consequently, we need to be aware of the potential and ability in areas of interest to us of both graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. In addition, we need to provide them with further training in their areas of specialization and interest by specialists involved in the IIIT's programs for the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.

9) ACADEMICS (RESEARCHERS AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS)  
 (SEE FIGURE 5.10)

In their current condition, universities, institutes and research centers in the Islamic world are a hindrance when they could be a help. Given their problems and issues, they are presently a conundrum which should have been a solution. Universities in the West, by contrast, are a major means of generating, preserving and correcting Western thought. In addition, they are tools in the construction and support of the Western cultural paradigm, laboratories for the study, analysis and resolution of social problems, factories of thought and culture, and channels by means of which to communicate such culture to the Ummah.

When universities first opened in the Islamic world, this was an act of imitation; as such, it served to confirm the already existing intellectual and cultural subordination to the West in both form and content. Moreover, despite the tremendous expansion which has taken place in this academic framework and the huge increase in the number of universities, as well as in the number of schools and institutes which supply them with students, the Islamic studies which take place in these institutions are in the worst possible condition. On the level of the Islamization of education and educational curricula, we find that the schools, colleges, and universities which were established on the Western model are adopting a theory of knowledge which excludes Divine Revelation from its authoritative frameworks and epistemological sources. In fact, they view Revelation and whatever knowledge emanates from it as superstition or, at best, as unscientific knowledge. This situation, moreover, has caused the vast majority of Muslim youth to turn away from the teachings of Islam.

As for institutions based on the teaching of the Islamic legal or textual sciences and their means and methods, they have restricted their resources to the legacies left by their ancestors. However, these legacies have not escaped attack by the descendents. Consequently, most of them have become the victims of neglect or suffered personal or official expropriation. This, in turn, has increased their inability to perform their intended role, while their graduates have been deprived of the advantages which might have encouraged those who came after them to pursue this type of education. Add to this the fact that the curricula which are taught in these universities and schools represent, for

the most part, a traditional culture on the order of that bequeathed by our ancestors and which only with great difficulty is capable of producing the independent-minded, capable, resourceful Muslim mentality which Islamic knowledge used to produce in the past and which it is still capable of producing if people will follow the straight path.

As for the rare, outstanding abilities possessed by graduates of either of these two types of institution, they only emerge by virtue of individual initiative and special effort. These frameworks with their two halves – one half Westernized and secular and the other traditional and bound to the texts of the Islamic legacy – have themselves become clear evidence of the Ummah's crisis of culture and knowledge, as well as a confirmation of the existing state of cultural absence. Graduate studies in particular have become a source of new crises for the Ummah, some of which are dangerous, such as the crisis caused by the split between various factions within the Ummah and the outbreak of new types of conflict between those educated in Western social sciences and those influenced by them, and those educated in the Islamic legal sciences. As a consequence, no single Muslim people is able any longer to stand 'as one man' in the face of any cause whatsoever given the fragmented state in which their elites find themselves. Hence, it may be that unemployment, both visible and masked, together with its resultant economic and social complications, may be one of the least serious of the crises presently faced by the Ummah.

The various academic frameworks have failed to perform any notable role in meeting the existing cultural need. Despite nearly two centuries of secular education on the Western model, Muslims have not been able to achieve progress or initiate a true revival. Thus far, they have not been able to establish an academic institution which enables Muslims to become rivals to their Western counterparts on the level of creativity, excellence, and the ability to deal competently and effectively with the issues and problems of their societies.

As for the problem of the low levels of academic performance and excellence within universities and institutes in the Islamic world, it is difficult to solve in the same ways in which nations usually solve similar problems. The reason for this is that as it exists in the Islamic world, this phenomenon is an inevitable result of the absence of an Islamic vision or model. There can be no genuine search for knowledge without a theory of knowledge which pro-

ceeds from the Ummah's creed or which, at the very least, is not in conflict with it. Such a theory, like an individual's spirit, cannot be transferred from a foreign body; nor can it be imitated or cultivated from seeds sown by others.

Education in the Islamic world in general, and within an academic framework in particular, lacks this vision. Educational leaders in Islamic countries do not possess the vision of the Western man. Aside from this they have voluntarily forfeited the Islamic vision due to ignorance, sloth, and the loss of a sense of aim and motivation. Lacking genuine knowledge and clear purpose, educational leadership in the Islamic world has succumbed instead to a spirit of materialism. The majority of teachers and professors who studied in the West, and particularly those who studied social sciences and the humanities, did not, for the most part, do their studies with an Islamic aim in mind. Rather, their motivations tend to have been material in nature. Such motivations are not sufficient to inspire a student to engage in serious struggle and independent reasoning in order to obtain the knowledge which the Ummah needs. Therefore, these graduates have not been able to offer what their Western counterparts have offered to their nations, they have not managed to digest and assimilate what they have learned, nor have they attempted to formulate the Islamization of knowledge as it grows out of the Islamic vision of knowledge, truth, humanity and existence.

Most graduates completed their university studies in the West simply in order to get a degree and return home, then make use of it to secure a social position and a suitable salary. As for the materials and curricula which are taught currently in universities of the Islamic world, they are undeveloped replicas of Western materials and concepts. They do not distinguish themselves in any way from their Western models, and if they do, they do so only by virtue of their having lost the vision which led to their success in the West ('success' as defined in Western terms), in addition to their loss of the Islamic vision itself. Consequently, they have been inadequate or even harmful teaching tools at times, particularly with respect to the humanities and social sciences, which generally tend to alienate Muslims from their roots and civilization. In doing so, the humanities and social sciences have robbed Muslim youth of their identity, yet without empowering the Ummah to penetrate the barrier of what some have termed 'underdevelopment' – a term which has been exploited as a justification for exporting Western educational institutions and their contents to the Islamic world. Yet the supreme catastrophe

which awaits this academic framework is, most certainly, most professors' lack of an Islamic vision, an Islamic perspective and an Islamic scientific sense.

This is the academic framework which may be viewed as the initial experimental field for our Islamic cause as it pertains to the reform of thought and the Islamization of knowledge. This overall framework – including student, professor and method – is by no means conducive to such experimentation. Even so, changing and reforming this framework in a thorough manner is one of the most important aims of our cause. Therefore, an understanding of the true nature of this academic context and how to deal with it is the first necessary step toward properly orienting our cause. Hence, it is this understanding which constitutes our immediate challenge.

The cultural programs formulated by the various parties, movements, societies and other groups that have come into being in the Islamic world have attempted to fill the vacuum in formal education. However, they have not made any progress on the level of the Ummah because each of them has focused on the type of culture which helps to strengthen and support only those who are being educated in its particular cause and its particular partisan or movement-oriented perspective. However, this type of knowledge cannot fill the vacuum or meet the need.

Hence, in order for the Ummah to free itself from the false connection which is made by so many between this framework in its traditional Western form, and progress, renewal and renaissance, it is important that there be growing awareness of the Ummah's crisis within the educational sector. The academic framework overall is in need of correction and reform. We must fulfill our obligation on three levels – professor, curriculum and student – investing all available resources on all three of these levels in the wisest, most effective manner possible. Specifically, we may do the following:

*First: On the Level of the Professor*

- 1) Put together staff teams who can find ways to devote themselves, and help others devote themselves full-time to scientific pursuits. Such teams should be able to carry out scientific projects which serve the causes of thought and knowledge, determine and clarify these causes' roots, and strengthen bonds within this sector. They should reinforce interaction

- and cooperation with the best elements therein, stimulate interest in our cause, and give them a part to play in bearing its burdens.
- 2) Form research teams to study topics relating to thought, culture and education, thereby helping to survey and evaluate the intellectual and cultural map of the Islamic world and achieving the awareness required to qualify them as followers of this cause.
  - 3) Issue invitations to wide-ranging seminars in order to discuss issues of relevance to the Ummah and its intellectual and epistemological crisis. The purpose will be to create interest in what is being proposed through discussions of high-quality papers presented at these gatherings, which will contribute toward establishing the foundations of the desired Islamic cultural paradigm and effective ways of dealing with the intellectual crisis.

These steps can be expected to assist professors in presenting ideas which are helpful in dealing with the intellectual crisis and constructing the Islamic cultural paradigm, whether this takes place in lecture halls and classrooms, or in graduate study programs. Master's Degree and Ph.D. students with a variety of specializations, including thought-related issues, the social sciences and the humanities, can be encouraged to choose topics which will help toward making progress in this new epistemological field.

### *Second: On the Level of Curriculum*

The curriculum is of undoubted importance within the academic framework. Most Western curricula pose a hindrance to intellectual reform and epistemological and cultural change, and to the efforts based thereon to prepare the Muslim world and Muslim educated classes to resolve the Ummah's crisis, reform Islamic thought, construct Islamic social sciences (sciences of the Ummah), Islamize knowledge, and carry out basic research projects, be they aimed at studying Western thought and contemporary epistemological production, or the Islamic heritage. If these aims can be accomplished, they will help us construct curricula and to determine what is needed on the part of both students and professors, whether it be awareness of tradition and the past so that educated Muslims can establish links with their traditional roots, or awareness of modern culture and civilization so that they can take a critical

stance toward it in preparation for attaining intellectual and psychological autonomy.

There is a need for awareness of thought-related reality in the Islamic world so that it is easier for us to catalogue the existing intellectual trends and critique and correct their most important and fundamental orientations. The construction of basic entry points into the various human sciences represents an important immediate step toward ensuring the availability of introductions to, and governing principles for, the human and social sciences. This process offers a concrete model which can be tested out in academic institutions and which is capable of absorbing and embodying the idea of cultural change and the Islamization of knowledge. This process should also be accompanied by ongoing, cumulative production related to a number of basic focal points which make up the foundation for conscious thinking about our cause. These focal points are: thought, curriculum, knowledge (both *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah*), culture and civilization, and tradition or legacy.

*Third: On the Level of the Student*

Graduate students may be viewed as the basic building blocks in the plan for intellectual reform and the Islamization of knowledge, as well as potential staff in these areas. Hence, we need to identify and select distinguished university graduates from a variety of specializations relating to the humanities and social sciences in order for them to become capable, highly specialized members of staff who are known for their academic excellence and Islamic knowledge. We also need to work on guiding such students' academic theses in order for them to deal with the focal points of relevance to the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. Such theses can help to clarify the concepts relating to these tasks and their contemporary scientific applications. This process must take place through a discourse which is serious, well integrated and purposeful and which is formulated in a variety of ways, including, for example:

- 1) Setting up student training courses which provide an introduction to our cause, its most important principles, its plan of action, and the need to be aware of it and to spread such awareness as widely as possible. It is also nec-

essary to prepare whatever is needed for the sake of offering specialized training courses for graduate students in a variety of branches of the humanities and social sciences. Such courses can be held either at the IIIT headquarters or in one of its branch offices depending on considerations of space and the ability to seek assistance from individuals with the expertise, abilities and competence needed to teach such courses from an Islamic perspective.

- 2) Offering grants to gifted students who otherwise could not afford to pursue their studies. Such aid could also include short-term grants for the collection of data pertaining to the most important topics of relevance to intellectual reform, the Islamization of knowledge and their related focal points.
- 3) Facilitating such students' periodic participation in the IIIT seminars. Such participation could take the form of presenting high-quality papers on the topic of the seminar, or involvement in its discussions. Such opportunities can give students high-quality training, broaden their horizons, and teach them how to participate effectively in discussion and dialogue in such a way as to clarify the ideas underlying our cause and its relevant focal points and to raise issues worthy of research and adoption.

Through such endeavors, we should be able to transform the academic realm into an effective means of serving our cause and translating its aims into reality.



## CHAPTER SIX



# Hindrances and Impediments

### PERIPHERAL AND SIDE ISSUES (SEE FIGURE 6.1 & 6.2)

Opponents of the cause will attempt to distract us with various side issues. At times they will accuse us of indulging in luxury, relaxation and mere theoretical speculation, and at other times, of emulating the Mu‘tazilites of old, by skirting the Sunnah and setting up human reason as our sole guide and arbiter. They will accuse us of dealing irresponsibly with the texts of the Islamic legacy and distracting the Ummah and those of its members who are engaged in serious struggle from their genuine issues and concerns. In all such situations, their aim is to draw us into discussions which they have invented in order to distract and divert us from our tasks, and to exhaust our limited energies and resources in having to defend ourselves.

This is a trench which we must not allow ourselves to be lured into. We must not give them the opportunity to persuade the Ummah that we are mistaken in our diagnosis of its crisis or that the treatment which we propose for the Ummah’s ills is of no avail. This would perpetuate the Ummah’s state of heedlessness and cause it to go on suffering. Rather, we must sidestep such battles and those who seek to initiate them. We must replace self-defense with increased affirmation and clarification of our cause, deal positively with the challenges we face and open up new channels for our ideas.

It may be possible to benefit from some of these attempts by our opponents as an opportunity to clarify our issues, offer our proposed solutions, present our points of view, explain the intellectual and cultural errors of others, and criticize their solutions and theses in such a way that people can compare what we have to offer with what they have to offer. We should not be distressed over their tendentious ways, or allow ourselves to be blinded

from perceiving the truth which might be contained in their criticisms of us or their observations about us. At the same time, we must not view the battles which our opponents seek to draw us into simply as testimonies to the rightness of our own actions, ideas, plans and projects. Rather, we ought to benefit from every question or criticism which is raised in order to lend seriousness to our own review and criticism of all aspects of our work and thought.

### OUR OWN ERRORS

Thus far, we are the only bearers of this message, and we oversee the only institution which has adopted this cause. This being the case, our own errors constitute the most serious impediments to the cause we seek to serve. The most salient of the errors into which we are prone to fall include the following:

- 1) Ceasing to be productive and abandoning our task before having created within the Ummah the necessary awareness of our cause. We must ensure that we put together a team which can carry the work forward through its necessary stages and provide the material needed for an academic course which can be taught successfully in universities, institutes and other places of learning. We also need to create parallel materials for other media channels given their importance as means of communicating the message, and to prepare universities, institutes, centers, and academic societies to be 'incubators' for the cause by adopting and embracing it and working for its success.
- 2) Ceasing to engage in ongoing evaluation, review and criticism of our progress on both the academic and practical levels in a way that ensures continuous self-correction.
- 3) Falling into one-sided thinking, that is, the belief that what we have to offer is the sole, sufficient cure for all the Ummah's ills and crises.
- 4) Partisanship, the formation of blocs and responsiveness to attempts at polarization, which is an error that could potentially abort the entire cause and isolate it from all other sectors of the Ummah.
- 5) Allowing the cause's adherents and proponents to adopt divergent theses

relating to its principles and aims. This is an error we need to beware of, since different theses in these areas could mean that the ideas relating to the cause are not sufficiently clear in the minds of those who support it. The existence of a variety of plans might result, to a certain extent, from the varied specializations of those overseeing the cause and its organs. However, a difference in principles and aims is something which should not occur regardless of the differences among the cultures of those working for the cause, and regardless of how much such people differ in their ways of dealing with its various aspects. Consequently, we must work to ensure constant dialogue amongst ourselves concerning these issues. Indeed, such dialogue can help to clarify ideas and build a unified vision relating to principles and aims. In addition, we must constantly remind ourselves that the principles of our cause require us to do the following:

- a.* Make Revelation and the cosmos our two primary sources of thought, culture, knowledge and civilization.
- b.* Scrutinize the Islamic legacy, the contemporary human heritage, and all social and human realms with a critical eye in order to distinguish the positive from the negative, the useful from the harmful, and that which is consistent with Islamic conceptions and the Qur'anic epistemological methodology from that which is not. In addition, we should combine the positive with the helpful in accordance with a sound methodology. It is hoped that the practice of clarifying what is obscure and correcting what is faulty will serve to shape the Ummah's mentality and temperament in a manner which, in accordance with Islamic principles and perspectives, achieves revival and prosperity.
- c.* Be mindful of the scale of priorities suited to the life of the Ummah. We must beware of isolating ourselves from the Ummah's concerns and immersing ourselves in abstract thought and its problems, debating over theoretical issues from which no action results and which bear no connection to concrete reality. Rather, we must continuously call for thought which is both scientific and social in nature, and accustom the Ummah to this.
- d.* Beware of holding up personal opinion, aspirations and preferences as the equivalent of thought and intellectual production. Personal inclinations, aspirations and preferences are subjective, perceptive mat-

ters, whereas thought is the logical, scientific or rational arrangement of premises by which we arrive at results or conclusions; as such, it has to do with research and investigation. A thinker may reach conclusions which conflict with his personal desires and inclinations; however, he has no right to modify his conclusions on this basis.

In concluding this enumeration of the most significant methodological and intellectual obstacles and impediments which face our cause, it should be emphasized that awareness of these obstacles may help to turn them into possibilities which, if they are understood and dealt with properly, can be invested by means of a dialogue whose fundamental principles and aims are defined by the Islamic vision.

These obstacles cannot, ultimately, thwart action or intellectual initiative. In fact, the identification of these obstacles marks the beginning of the correct methodological path to dealing with them, proposing solutions to them and transforming them into possibilities which may be put to positive use. The multiplicity of these issues – if they are viewed as obstacles which can be turned into possibilities – confirms another advantage inherent within them, namely, the multiplicity of the possibilities which exist for confronting this very multiplicity of obstacles. As such, they produce more than one alternative in the intellectual arena by means of which action can be taken. All of them may be viewed as experimental fields for testing our cause's orientation and determining its capacity for achievement in such a way that the cause becomes, rightfully, the foundation for the Ummah's awareness of its various component groups and their levels.

Given the foregoing, we need to think carefully about how to construct a scale of priorities for these alternatives and the various fields of action. The process of setting priorities should take place in accordance with action plans which are suitable from a temporal perspective, and which likewise take into account considerations of place and distinctions among Muslims' various aptitudes and strengths (as scientists, researchers, audiences, movements, intellectual trends, etc.).

The adherents to the cause need to demonstrate the highest degree of flexibility and creative initiative, whether by participating to the fullest possible extent in establishing the roots of the cause and clarifying its various aspects, or by urging others to join the ranks of those working in this field. It

is a field that requires integrated, concerted efforts which in turn serve to provide a sound definition of freedom and its limits. As for the initiative spoken of here, it is exercised either by posing issues or undertaking research projects, establishing a long-term plan to turn the cause of 'the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge' into an intellectual, cultural and civilizational current, and thinking about measurable standards for achievement lest we mistakenly imagine ourselves to have obtained results which have no real existence.

Efforts need to be made to write out a detailed conceptualization of the process of thinking about the issue of 'the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge' as a civilizational, cultural and intellectual realm, as well as the standards by which to gauge progress therein. Such a conceptualization should constitute, in essence, a major, long-term plan of action covering all aspects of this issue given its status as both a movement of thought, and the thought of a movement, whose branch institutions are integrated with the root institution in a manner which reflects both flexibility and capable initiative. It is an issue which we cannot afford to put off since waiting to act merely causes difficulties to worsen. A movement of thought can best be managed not by someone who is a mere observer, but, rather, by someone who is aware, an initiative-taker, and capable of confronting every new development which merits thought, review, action or change.



# CONCLUSION

## GAPS AND ALTERNATIVES

The notion of mutually exclusive alternatives and one-sided proposals has become widespread, with every group claiming that all other groups have missed the mark and that it alone will rescue the Ummah and rebuild what has been destroyed, and that it alone represents the Muslim community, or the group or faction which is 'right'. This type of attitude has created a state of disunity, conflict, and indeed, a struggle among the various groups. We thus find that, in their written and oral pronouncements and the theses put forward by their leaders, many reform movements have begun marshaling evidence to demonstrate that they alone are the alternative to all other movements.

The manifestations of disunity, infighting and conflict which we are witnessing in the Islamic arena among the factions of any given group, as well as between this group or that and all other groups within the Ummah, portend the most dire consequences for the Islamic movement and, indeed, for the entire Ummah. This type of one-sided thinking, whereby every team views itself as the alternative to every other and the official spokesperson for Islam and the Ummah, has embroiled all groups in conflict, causing them to squander their energies on disagreements and sacrifice the Ummah's higher aims due to their arguments and internal strife. This situation has been further exacerbated by directives which indicate that loyalty to this or that movement and its leadership is an expression of loyalty to Islam. Hence, the formation of blocs has gone from being a means, to being an end in itself, with movement-related organizations being the primary goal.

However, in an important practical development, evidence is now being marshaled in support of the notion of 'gaps' or 'frontiers', which stands in contrast to the idea of one-sided alternatives. This perspective views every sincere movement as one which stands on one of the Ummah's frontiers, or

which is capable of filling a particular gap or need in the Ummah's life. As such, each movement should make every effort to help every other movement to achieve its goals and guard its frontier properly.

The cause embodied in the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge fills a very important gap, and stands on a vital frontier. However, there remain other frontiers which likewise need to be guarded, or gaps which need to be filled. Hence, we must view our task as manifold, including, for example: clarifying the Ummah's intellectual, cultural and epistemological foundation; defining the correct starting points for the movement's proper advance; drawing up a scale of priorities; constructing foundations for dealing systematically with reality and its problems; determining the most important means of dealing with reality; and proposing a set of suitable alternatives in accordance with a particular order to address those problems which lie at the heart of the Ummah's malady and the factors which serve to perpetuate it. In pursuing all of these tasks we must remain committed to the principles, intents, aims and universals of Islamic law and endeavor to revive the means of renewal and independent reasoning in the Ummah.

The trend represented by the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge aims to fill the gap which some imagine to exist between doctrine and thought. The assumption that there is a contradiction between doctrine and thought holds sway in some quarters despite the Qur'an's clear endorsement of the various processes of thought and, indeed, its call to engage in them. Our attempt to bridge this presumed gap arises from the nature of our view of both doctrine and thought and the relationship between the two. We find, for example, that thoughts and ideas are the fundamental means by which we understand doctrine and the values which grow out of it, as well as the possibility of translating doctrine into concrete action. At the same time, we find that doctrine provides the guidelines within which thought moves, as it were. After all, sound thought cannot exist without a support, a foundation, and a starting point, that is, doctrine. Nor can doctrine dispense with thought as that which fleshes it out in reality, providing the conditions and components needed for its practical application and opposing whatever would prevent such application from taking place. In short, sound doctrine assists and supports thought, enhancing its effectiveness and putting its potentials to use in interaction with the Ummah's concerns and problems based on a sound, clear, disciplined, scientific methodology.

Many Islamists have been keen to turn everything related to the civilizational enterprise into part of doctrine, drawing a link between doctrine and the issues facing the Ummah in the belief that this will be more likely to move the Ummah to action. Moreover, given the important role which Islamic doctrine continues to play in the life of the Ummah, some groups have been obliged to deal with issues relating to *takfir* and similar rulings which have served to exacerbate the Ummah's crises.

Some have mistakenly imagined that the discussion of thought and the emphasis upon it will weaken interest in doctrine or pose an alternative to it. Others, imagining the two – that is, an interest in thought and a weakening of doctrine – to be synonymous, have launched a campaign against thought and Muslim thinkers in general, believing there to be a link between such thinkers and the Mu'tazilites. In doing so, such people demonstrate a lack of awareness, be it genuine or feigned, of the fact that the call to correct doctrine requires an intellectual framework which defines the origins of its meaning and transforms doctrinal issues into an effective movement in the Ummah's daily life and civilizational makeup. Moreover, one might reasonably ask: Is there any doctrine which does not begin with thought, then conceptualization, then either proof, reasoning or imitation which transforms it into something which the heart affirms with certainty and which binds the heart with a sense of commitment?

As forms of discourse addressed to the Ummah, the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge are not unmindful of the foundations and principles of doctrine. Rather, they view doctrine itself as being the foundation and origin upon which the entire world of thought rests; after all, Revelation is a source of knowledge, culture and civilization. From doctrine we then proceed in our ideation to all of existence, its functions, its relationships, the nature of its civilizations and their development, etc. Hence, doctrine is the fundamental upon which all of the Ummah agrees, and which produces its identity and orientations and develops all elements and levels of its awareness, be it self-awareness, awareness of the Other, or awareness of this situation or that.

Moreover, in addition to performing a number of other multi-leveled and multi-realmed functions, doctrine defines the limits within which we are to deal with the original [Islamic] sources as bases for knowledge, culture and Islamic thought. Consequently, it has an authentic place in forming the

Ummah's mental and emotional makeup and determining the course of its movement and activities toward the end of achieving the Ummah's civilizational development and growth. For the process of identifying and giving effect to these sources is a condition for completion of the process of ongoing civilizational renewal.

Yet, despite the importance and comprehensiveness of what we have to say, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are stationed on only one of the Ummah's frontiers. Therefore, we are not an alternative to, or replacement for, anyone else. Our discourse is addressed to the entire Ummah: to the Islamists in a call for them to emerge from their cultural absence and their passive reliance on the past; and to other groups within the Ummah in a call for them, likewise, to emerge from the state of cultural absence resulting from Westernization and the consumption of Western culture. In fact, our discourse might even go beyond the limits of the Ummah to become one of the growing number of voices crying out for the entire world to be rescued from this international crisis, the crisis resulting from the split between science and values; for our cause addresses a malady for which scholars and intellectuals the world over are in search of a cure.

This being the case, the discourse which grows out of the call for reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge does not concern itself solely with Islamists and their intellectual leadership. Rather, it goes beyond them to broad sectors of the Ummah with their varied intellectual and cultural orientations. In fact, it may go beyond all of these to address the roots of these orientations in Western civilization itself. When proponents of the Islamization of knowledge communicate with the first group (the Islamists), their aim is to build on their intellectual propositions in a way which enables them to offer guidance, correction, grounding in Islamic principles and new concepts and ideas. Similarly when they engage in dialogue with the second group (the secularists), they attempt to help them see that the theses which they have proposed – theses which are distant from the Ummah's Islamic creed, its true identity, and the origins of its reality – have robbed them of their effectiveness, their credibility and their ability to mobilize the Ummah's resources and energies, a fact which has led to their failure and alienated them from the Ummah.

In sum, we must realize that the call for reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge has highlighted an issue which, despite its critical

importance, has been sorely neglected. Ever since the beginning of the colonialist infiltration into the Islamic world, the Ummah's epistemological, cultural and educational model has been patterned after the Western model – subservient and subordinate to the West, a consumer of Western culture, trapped in the orbit of Western civilization. It is true, of course, that in many places in the world, Muslim countries have rid themselves of Western military and political colonialism. However, they have yet to free themselves of the intellectual and cultural colonialism which has contained and reshaped the Muslim mind and rendered it obedient and compliant to the West.

Hence, in order to free ourselves from this type of epistemological, cultural, intellectual, methodological and civilizational subordination, someone has to undertake to liberate the Ummah and lead it toward the reform of its thought and the construction of its own civilizational paradigm.

### THE REFORM OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT, THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE, AND POLITICAL PARTIES

One might wonder how to classify the call for the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge: as a movement, group or party. In fact, our cause strives to be none of these. As we present our intellectual and civilizational approach to dealing with the Ummah's issues and problems, we make no attempt to put ourselves across as an alternative, as we have made clear, nor do we aim to be a political movement, party, or current. Rather, we are aware of the nature of our comprehensive civilizational role in the reform process, and we realize that the Ummah has no need of further partisan divisions or aimlessness. For we are, in essence, an integrative movement which concerns itself with the issues of thought, knowledge, culture, civilization, method and the unity of the Ummah, all of which it views as the most important conditions for reaching the goal of civilizational witness. Similarly, it holds that every sincere movement or group has the obligation to fulfill its role in this connection.

As for the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge orientation itself, it must strive to be a cultural trend which reaches every party and from which others can benefit in every respect. It should not be

limited by partisanship or a group spirit. Rather, it should be marked by an awareness of the nature of its mission and function which will prevent it from succumbing to the temptation to align itself with any particular party or movement. For its allegiance belongs to the entire Ummah. Hence, our intention must be to transform our cause into a widespread cultural and intellectual movement, and for it to become a spirit which infuses the entire Ummah, uniting its members on the basis of sound Islamic thought and Qur'anic method so that revival takes hold, prosperity and development become a reality, and the Ummah resumes its role as a civilizational witness and as an exemplar of moderation.

Given this clear position, one which goes beyond the current frameworks of Islamic action in all of their variety, no one can rightfully accuse this cause of indulging in mere mental activity which has nothing to do with reality or interaction with daily life. Those who make such accusations are ignorant – or pretend to be ignorant – of the true nature of the thought process and its role and function in reform, development and civilization. For the Islamization of knowledge links two sides of a single coin, namely, movement-based thought, and thought-based movement. In doing so, it affirms that the Islamic intellectual enterprise is vital to the Ummah's civilizational enterprise, which has been treated unjustly and shunted aside without justification.

In making this affirmation, the cause reveals its awareness that the intellectual foundation precedes movement and sound, correct action, and that its absence means chaos and confusion. Those who promote the Islamization of knowledge are aware that the reason for some movements' inability to comprehend concrete reality and give it the kind of consideration that would enable them to interact with it without being subservient to it, is their failure to envision the process of Islamization and its intellectual, educational, cultural and epistemological requirements and demands.

The Islamization of knowledge current considers itself to be one aspect of Islamization overall, where the term 'Islamization' refers to a comprehensive, value-based civilizational framework for both individuals and society – for thought and action, for learning and practice, for knowledge and organization, for this world and the world to come – by means of which the Muslim individual seeks God's favor through truth, justice, development and reform.

The Islamization of knowledge is thus a fundamental aspect of Islamization in its more general sense. As such, it concerns itself with thought and

conception, thought's human, value-related content, how thought is structured and made up, and its relationships within the psyche, the mind and the conscience (that is, the process of changing oneself). Hence, Islamization means a sound Islamic methodology which requires that Revelation be directed in light of the human understanding of the intents, aims and universals of Islamic law, and of reality and its requirements. In addition, it represents, of necessity, sound scientific and civilizational capabilities and achievements which have been examined and weighed in the balance of Islam and its comprehensive values, directives and aims.

Islamization of knowledge is not merely values and aims alone; nor is it individual reflections, history or legacy. Rather, it is a means of forming a disciplined, systematic mindset with respect to science, culture, thought and knowledge pertaining to the social, human, natural and applied realms. In all of these areas, it invests potentials, the givens of Revelation, and the possibilities embodied in the mind, thought, and Muslim method in order to meet the Ummah's needs and confront the challenges which face it. In this process, it supplies the Ummah with the energy, intellectual provision, vision, and civilizational concepts needed for the successive construction of its facilities and systems.

By virtue of its role and function, as well as its aims and intents, the cause embodied in the Islamization of knowledge cannot be contained within the limits of a single organization, party or movement whose influence is restricted to a specific place or audience. Rather, its audience must include the entire Ummah, with all of its component groups and factions. It is a current which strives to provide content for the Ummah's mind and character in order to qualify it to engage in the process of change and comprehensive civilizational reform with solid, firm steps. It realizes that its words, like the means and tools it employs, must be kind in content, intent and effect. Its roots are firmly planted and its branches reach to the heavens, while in its thought and its movement it is bound to the creed of monotheism, seeking the favor of God.

I desire no more than to set things to rights in so far as it lies within my power.

But my success depends on God alone. In Him have I placed my trust, and to Him do I always turn.<sup>1</sup>

*All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds.*



# APPENDIX

Figure 1.1

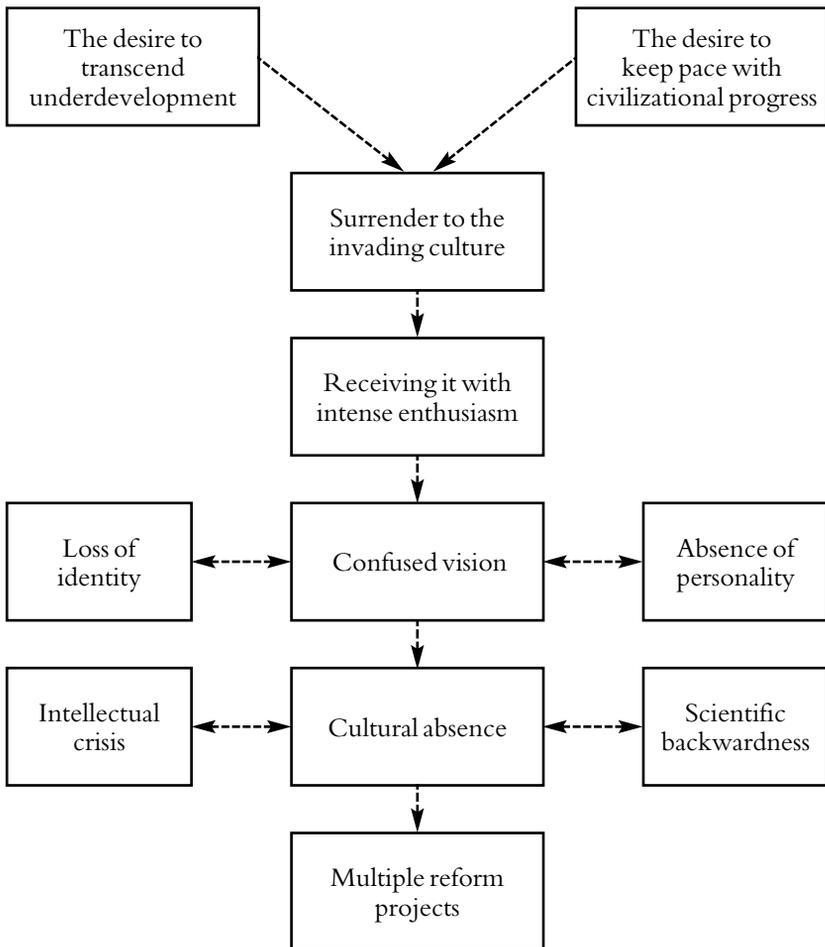


Figure 1.2

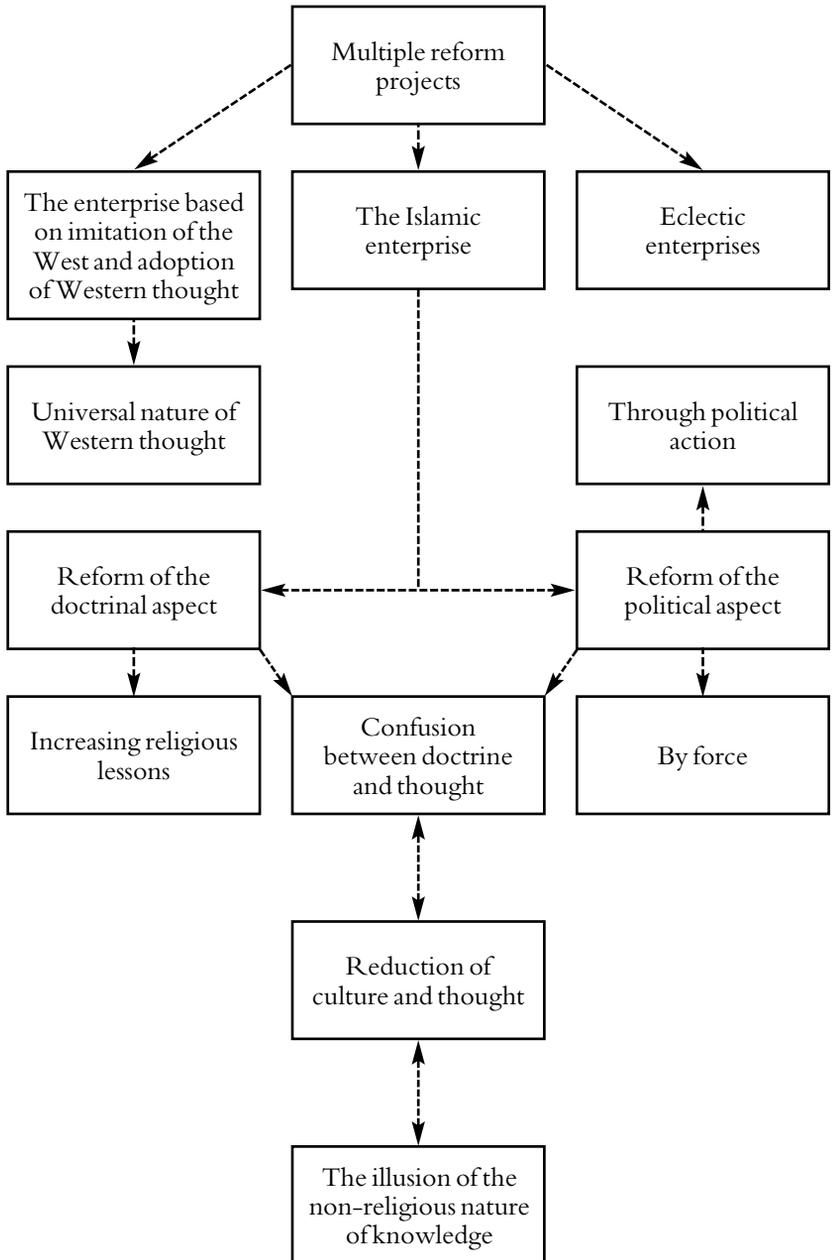


Figure 1.3

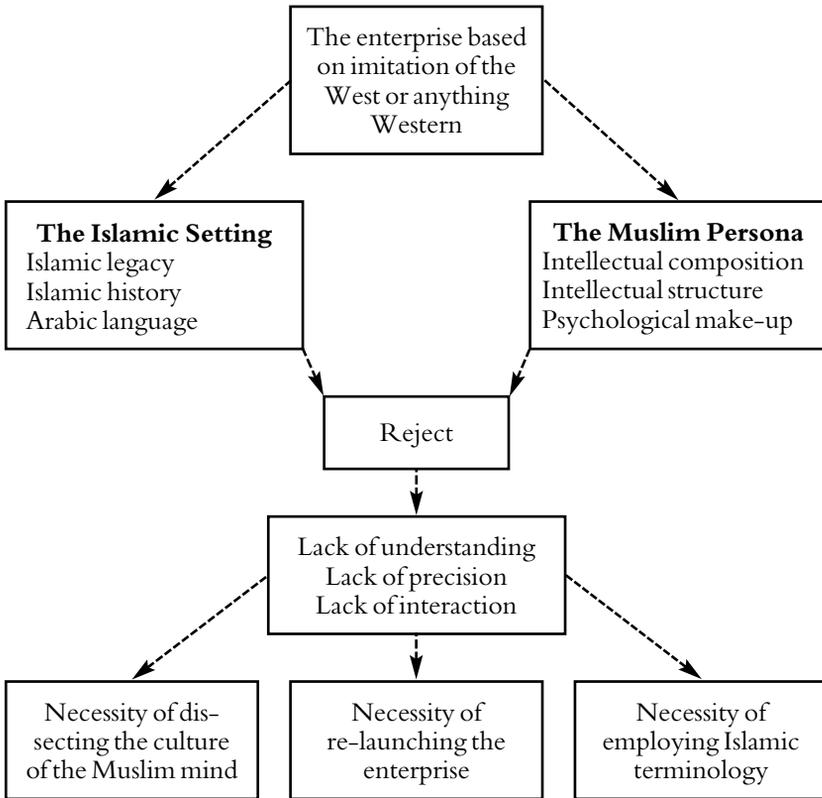


Figure 1.4

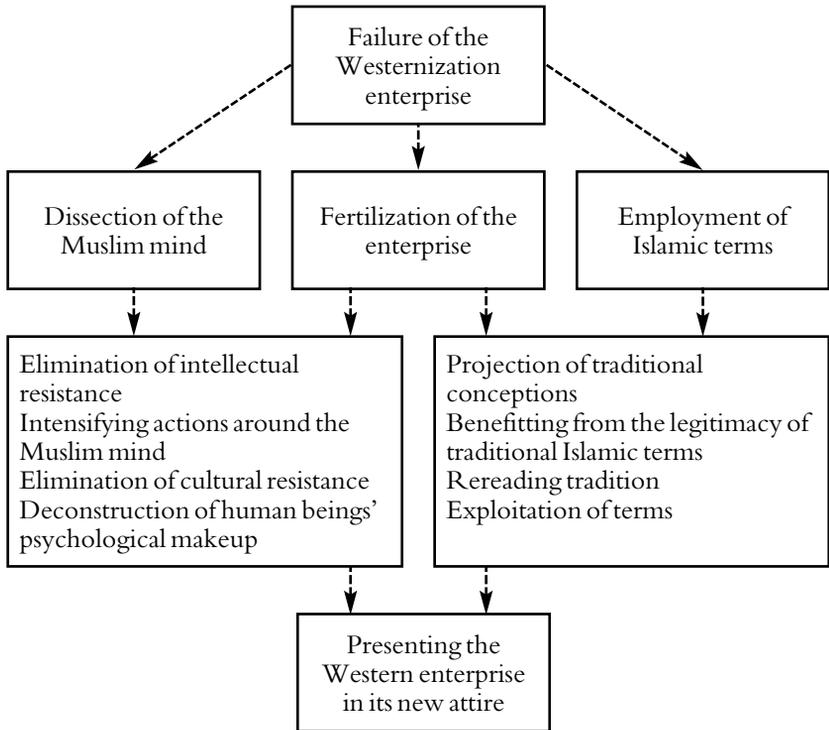


Figure 3.1

DIAGRAM 1

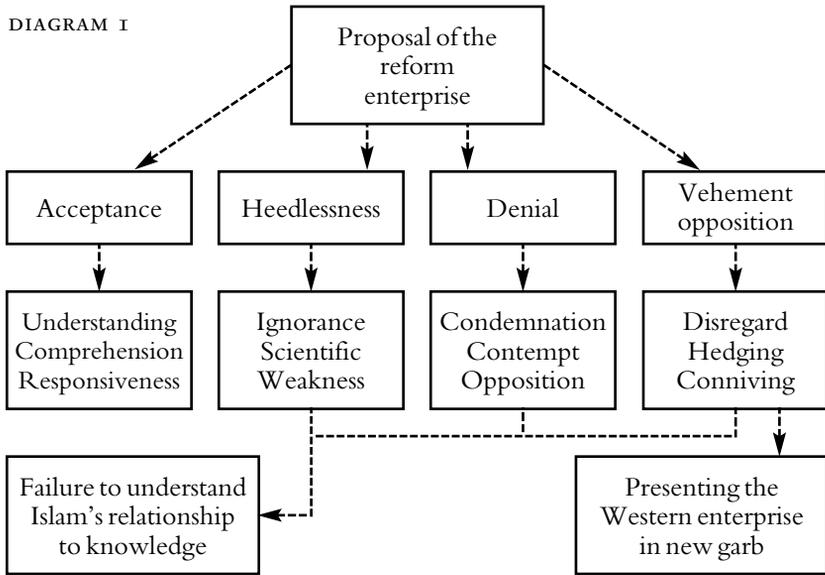


DIAGRAM 2

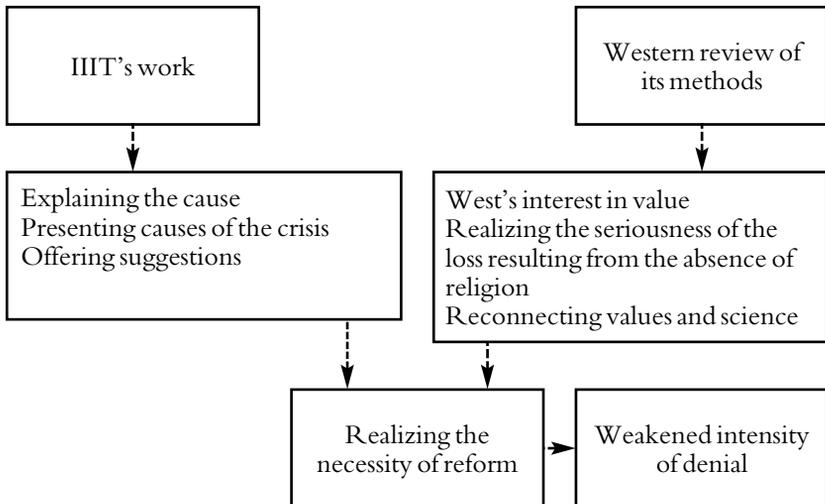


Figure 3.2

## ENTERPRISE FOR THE RENEWAL OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

*The Content:*

Reforming modes of thought.  
Constructing the cultural paradigm

*The Goal:*

Achieving contemporary Islamic authenticity.  
Enabling the Ummah to be a civilizational witness.

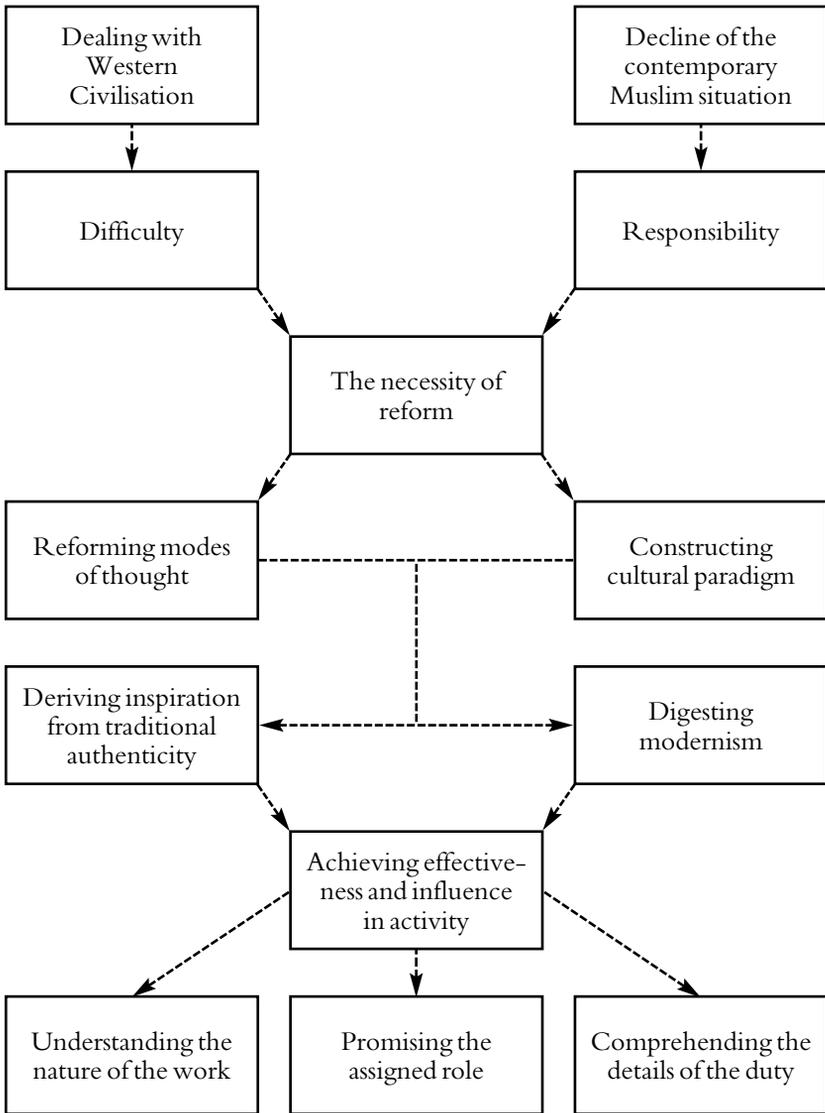
*The Means:*

Deriving inspiration from traditional authenticity.  
Digesting modernism.

*The Form:*

Islamic enterprise, contemporary, united, complete, autonomous.  
Sound thought without crisis.  
Clear method without error or deviation.  
Constructive culture without defects.  
A 'witnessing' civilization without ineffectiveness or hindrances.

Figure 4.1



*Figure 4.2*

## THE ISLAMIC ENTERPRISE

*Crystallizing the Cause:*

Crystallization / clarification / detailing varied aspects.

*Protecting the Cause:*

Offering detailed models to avoid vagueness, superficiality, and inconsistency in presentation and generalization.

*Developing the Cause:*

Observation / follow-up / analysis / interpretation / direction / criticism / evaluation / correction.

*Introducing the Cause:*

Raising consciousness of the plan, its various aspects and its means / building up a staff team and foundations / assisting those able to participate / guiding and correcting their work.

Figure 4.3

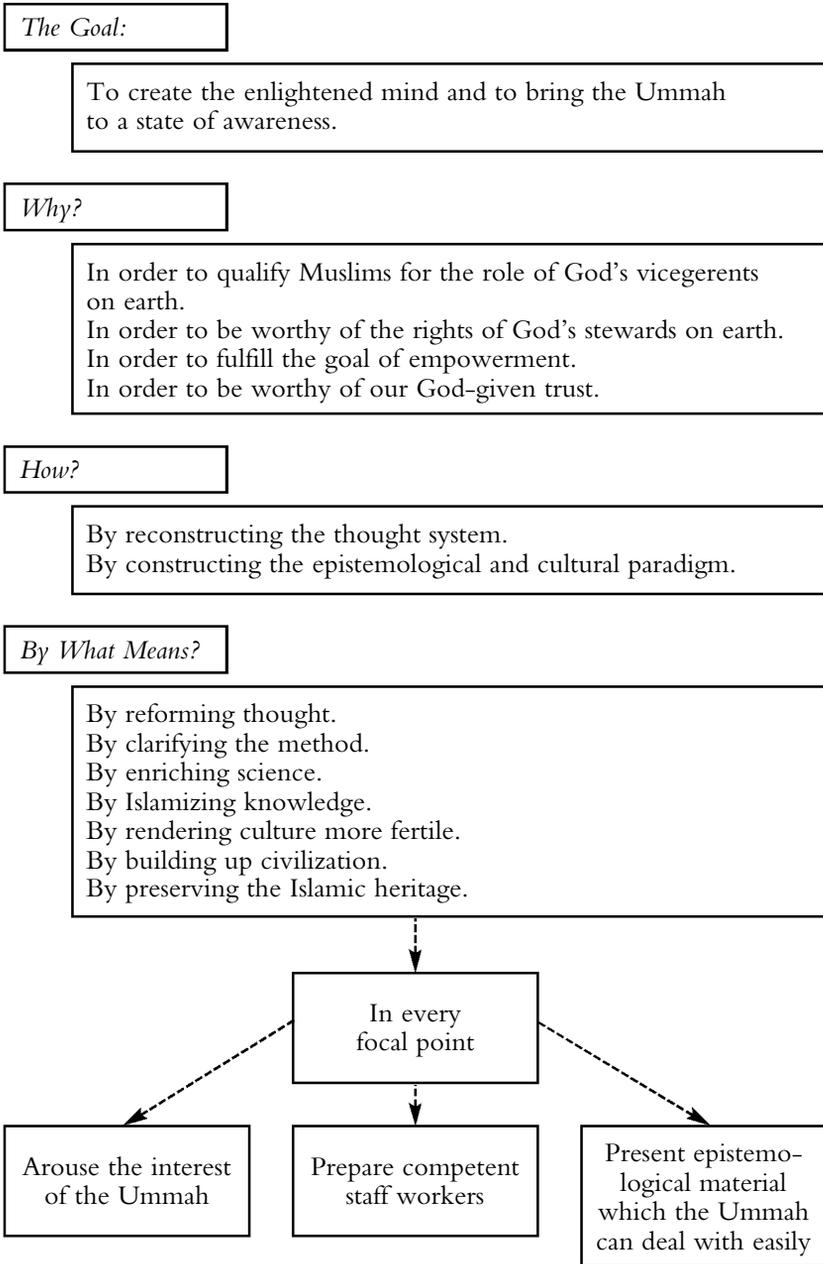
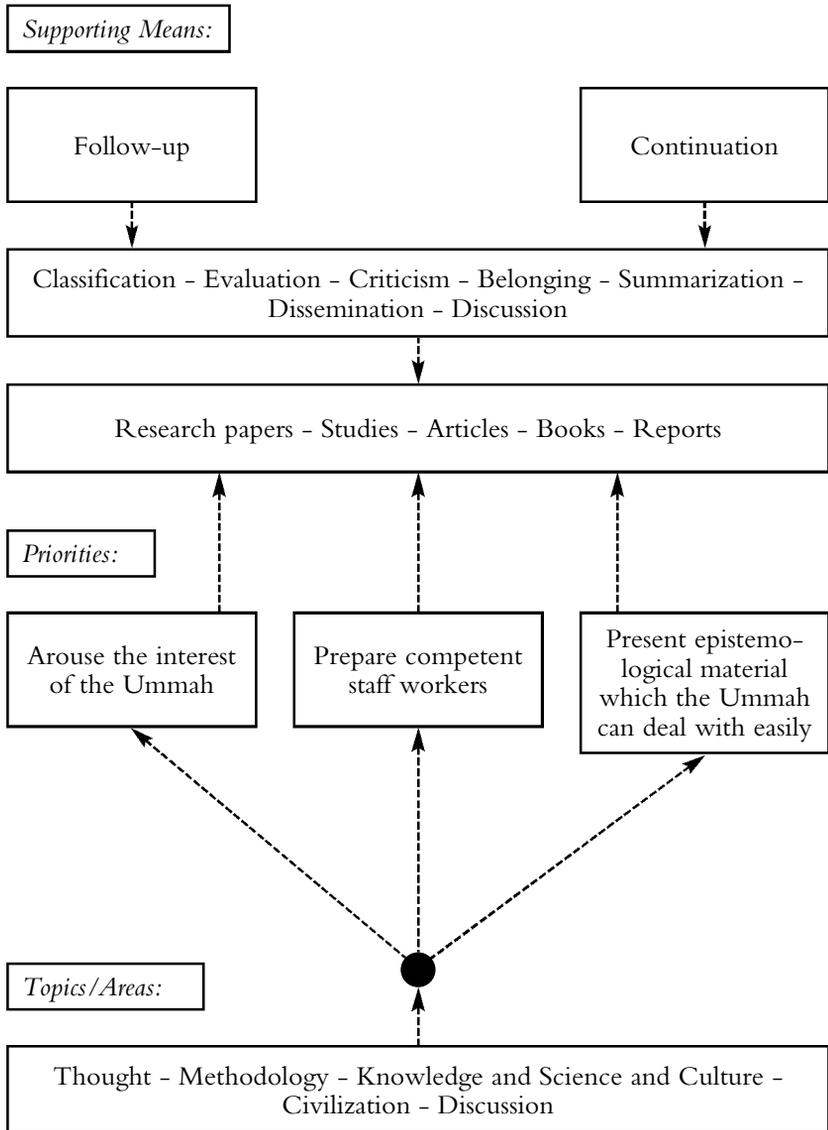


Figure 4.4



*Figure 5.1*

## THE BASIC PROGRAM

- 1 --- Preparation of detailed, carefully researched papers on each focal point of the work.
- 2 --- Acting promptly to publish whatever production is worthy of wider dissemination in order to accumulate the requisite amount of relevant materials.
- 3 --- Intensifying contacts with intellectual and cultural figures and officials in universities and other houses of learning, and directing their attention to the various focal points of our work.
- 4 --- Creating close ties with university professors and department heads and inviting them to adopt the ideas associated with the focal points of the work.
- 5 --- Contacting graduate students, offering them suggestions and proposing academic projects of relevance to the work's focal points.
- 6 --- Laboring to create social science libraries of distinction.
- 7 --- Creating a substantial number of graduate degree programs and promoting them among universities.
- 8 --- Selecting a set of research topics which are necessary to crystallize the focal points of our work and awarding prizes to students who choose to write on such topics.

Figure 5.2

## THE AUDIENCE: OFFICIALS

*Audience Characteristics:*

Accustomed to unilateral action and one-sided thinking.  
 Not open to competition.  
 Reject these which come in conflict with their own in any area.

*Reasons for its Prominence:*

Government control over the organs responsible for education, consciousness-raising and the media.  
 Falling back on position, influence, and the fear of losing same when confronted with opposition to any existing policies.

*Their Attitudes Toward Renewal:*

Caution and circumspection, and attempts to implement established policies locally and internationally at times.

*Entry Points for Communication:*

Their desire to introduce what is beneficial through the institutions which they oversee.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Form:*

Presenting the cause to them in a convincing manner.  
 Persuading them that the cause represents a solution to many of the crises which they face.  
 Linking the cause with their interests and issues.

*Its Aims:*

For officials to assist in presenting the cause to others.  
 For them to increase others' awareness of the cause and recruit potentials and resources in its service.

Figure 5.3

## THE AUDIENCE: SECULARISTS

*Characteristics:*

Category 1: Believes in dialogue.  
 Category 2: Rejects and attacks.  
 Category 3: Accepts and understands.

*Reasons for their Prominence:*

The secular orientations of some regimes in Islamic countries.  
 The Western intellectual invasion.

*How they View the Cause:*

Category 1: As an intelligent attempt which merits discussion.  
 Category 2: As a step toward ousting them from their positions.  
 Category 3: Understands the true nature of the cause and its presentation.

*Distinguishing Marks of Communication with Them:*

Category 1: Readiness for dialogue.  
 Category 2: Acceptance of the true nature of the cause.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Form:*

Bypassing secularists to reach their wider audience.  
 Creating a counter-current within the positions they occupy by criticizing the epistemological foundations of Western civilization in a coherent, serious, scientific manner, and encouraging this same type of criticism of secular theses.

*Its Aims:*

To open up channels for dialogue in order to communicate and explain the cause.  
 To prepare the way for a transition by those who understand the cause from a position of denial or hostility to one of acceptance and loyalty.

*Figure 5.4***THE AUDIENCE: MEMBERS OF ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS***Characteristics:*

Dominance by the Salafite trend.  
 Diminution in the roles of Egypt and Syria.  
 Emerging influence of the traditional Iraqi and Gulf school.

*Reasons for its Prominence:*

Diminished role of thought and tendency to lend all dialogue a doctrinal or juristic focus.  
 Granting positions of intellectual leadership to individuals who lack the needed experience in the realm of public action.  
 Failure on the part of the intellectual leadership to perceive the importance of the intellectual dimension and the civilizational approach.

*How they View the Cause:*

As an intellectual luxury.  
 As aiming to shift loyalty away from Islamic movements and undermine public confidence in their leadership by revealing their bankruptcy and powerlessness.  
 As an inaccurate diagnosis of the Ummah's crisis.  
 As a threat to these movements' organization and systems.  
 As a rational attempt to offer an alternative to such movements.  
 As aiming to demonstrate its intellectual 'superiority' over others.

*Entry Points to Communication:*

Islamic movements' desire to present their issues skillfully and in a variety of styles, and to ensure their ongoing existence.  
 Their need for intellectual provisions with which to confront opponents.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Forms:*

Linking the cause to the Islamic reform movement.  
Avoidance of partisan disputes and the use of negative 'buzz words'.  
Establishing friendly relations with the leadership of such movements.  
Participation in cultural events and occasions.  
Addressing educated youth.

*Its Aims:*

For Islamic movements to adopt the cause.  
To broaden understanding of the cause.  
For Islamic movements to integrate the cause into their own projects.  
To reassure them and to overcome their fears relating to the cause.  
For Islamic movements to benefit from many aspects of the cause.

*Figure 5.5*

**THE AUDIENCE: GRADUATES OF RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES  
AND SCHOOLS**

*Characteristics:*

Concern to be the official spokespersons for Islam.  
 The belief that it is they who determine the legitimacy of what is said about Islam.  
 Dependence on imitation and tradition.  
 Avoidance of independent reasoning and a lack of the tools which it requires.  
 Tendency to shift responsibility for implementation and planning onto others.  
 Reduction of Islamic issues and questions to words of advice, homilies and legal decisions.  
 Tendency to view themselves as incapable of straying, error, negligence or backwardness.  
 Rejection of whatever undermines their status or marginalizes their role.

*Reasons for their Prominence:*

Dominance of the view that traditional jurisprudence in its existing form is sufficient in and of itself.  
 The prevalence of illiteracy and the marginalization of Islam's role in society.

*How they View the Cause:*

As something which imposes additional burdens which they cannot bear.  
 As something for which they are not qualified.  
 As something which will embarrass them and reveal their impotence and failure.

*Entry Points for Communication:*

Their sincerity and purity of heart.  
 The fact that they rejoice in what serves Islam so long as it does not compromise their own status or marginalize their role.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Forms:*

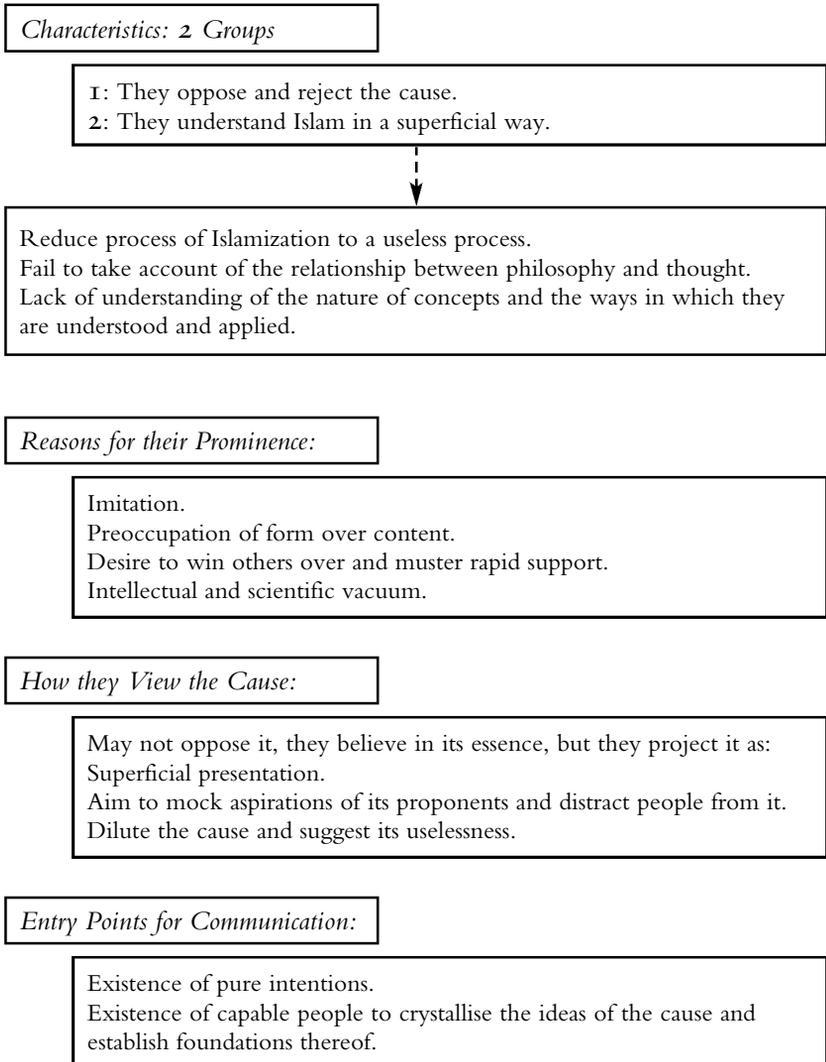
Inviting their participation in seminars and conferences.  
Recruiting youthful energies from among them through research projects and studies.  
Benefiting from some of them by seeking out their counsel and expertise in the areas of their specialization.  
Offering them suitable practical suggestions.

*Its Aims:*

For the cause to give them an important role.  
For many of them to aid the cause with their potentials and talents.  
To deliver them from ignorance and forgetfulness.  
To rescue them from the marginal role to which they have been relegated since the fall of the Islamic state.

Figure 5.6

THE AUDIENCE: THOSE WHO APPROACH MATTERS FROM A  
SUPERFICIAL PERSPECTIVE



## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Forms:*

Continuing to present the cause in all its varied dimensions.  
Establishing the sources of ideas.  
Giving examples and models.  
Publishing research papers and studies linking the technological crisis with the crisis of thought and culture.  
Modifying their ideas with the important evidences for the requirements and needs of the cause.  
Observing their results.  
Criticising what they present in an objective and diverse manner.

*Its Aims:*

Crystallizing the concepts of the cause to them.  
Encouraging them to adhere to the methodological principles like Islamic jurisprudence, literature, research and debate.  
Modifying their ideas of the crisis and its solution.

Figure 5.7

## THE AUDIENCE: PROPONENTS OF COMPROMISE AND ECLECTICISM

*Characteristics:*

They choose from Islam, its heritage and its civilization that which supports preconceived ideas (an ideology).  
 They possess nothing but the appearance and form of methodology, while lacking its essence and basic principles.  
 They pass over a number of fundamental contradictions between the 'authoritative Islamic framework' and the 'authoritative Western framework.'

*Reasons for their Prominence:*

The assumption of the infallibility of the Islamic heritage.  
 Belief in the possibility of applying traditional Islamic models to today's world, lock, stock and barrel.

*How they View the Cause:* See Figure 5.4

*Entry Points for Communication:* See Figure 5.4

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Form:*

Objective criticism of what they have to offer.  
 Highlighting the symptoms of the malady of imitation and its devastating effects on thought and society.  
 Concern for reality-based jurisprudence and its most important new developments.  
 Presenting juristic models in a comprehensive, yet simple way.

*Its Aims:*

To increase their understanding of the cause's foundations.  
 To clarify to them the ideas associated with the cause.  
 To encourage competent, capable individuals to contribute to the cause.

Figure 5.8

## THE AUDIENCE: THE GENERAL POPULACE

*Characteristics:*

Predominantly illiterate with smatterings of knowledge.  
Widespread charlatanry, superstition and magic.

*Reasons for their Prominence:*

Blind imitation.  
Illiteracy.  
Contempt for knowledge and thought.

*How they View the Cause:*

As mere talk bandied about by intellectuals.

*Entry Points for Communication:*

Addressing them on their own level, in terms they can understand.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Form:*

Presentation of the cause through a variety of simplified approaches.  
Focus on the issues of predestination, compulsion vs. choice,  
human action and human dignity.  
Clarification of the relationship between causes and effects.

*Its Aims:*

To wage war on unawareness of the concept of human  
responsibility and its basis.  
To overcome lack of awareness of the nature of the Qur'anic  
discourse and its directives.  
To raise the intellectual and cultural level of the general public rather  
than bypassing them.

*Figure 5.9*

## THE AUDIENCE: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

*Characteristics:*

Thinking devoid of the Islamic vision.  
Open to a variety of influences.  
Marked by Islamic sentiments, but without Islamic concepts/  
thoughts/ideas.  
Lacking in Islamic doctrine.

*Reasons for their Prominence:*

Adoption of knowledge which rules out Revelation.  
Distancing from the teachings of Islam.  
Imitation and perpetuation of a state of intellectual and cultural  
subservience to the West.

*How they View the Cause:*

With a willingness to accept projects to resolve the crisis based on  
their experience of masked unemployment and economic, social  
and civilizational crises.

*Entry Points to Communication:*

Their desire to deal with the crisis.  
Their desire to compete with the West.  
Their desire to work toward civilizational revival.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Forms:*

Spreading awareness of the crisis.  
Clarifying the Islamic vision of society.  
Developing an Islamic scientific sense.

*Its Aims:*

To form a staff of scientifically-minded workers capable of contributing to the cause.  
To awaken university students' interest in the cause and to give them a role in bearing its burdens.  
To guide the writing of practically-oriented dissertations in a manner which serves the cause.

*Figure 5.10*

**THE AUDIENCE: ACADEMICS (RESEARCHERS AND  
UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS)**

*Characteristics:*

Category 1: Secular and pro-Westernization in the sense that they adopt a method and a culture which perpetuate a state of intellectual and cultural dependence on the West.

Category 2: Tradition-bound in the sense that they adopt a traditional culture which is unable to create an autonomous Muslim mentality capable of engaging in independent reasoning.

*Reasons for their Prominence:*

The absence of any meaningful competition with the West  
Educational curricula which are unable to create an effective Islamic framework.

The lack of an Islamic vision.

*How they View the Cause:*

Varies according to which of the two aforementioned categories they belong to.

*Entry Points to Communication:*

Their desire to engage in full-time academic pursuits.  
Their willingness to take part in intellectual and cultural activity.

## THE DISCOURSE

*Its Forms:*

Demonstrating a constructively critical attitude toward the Western thought enterprise and encouraging others to strive for intellectual autonomy.  
Highlighting and discussing the Ummah's intellectual crisis and issues.  
Focusing on clarification of those ideas which will help to crystallize methods and direct research.

*Its Aims:*

To enumerate, critique and evaluate existing intellectual orientations.  
To form research teams to study intellectual, cultural and educational topics.  
To strengthen ties with outstanding and effective university faculty.

*Figure 6.1*

## OVERALL FEATURES OF THE DISCOURSE

*Description:*

It does not address the elite alone while bypassing the general public.  
 It does not deal with the select few while neglecting the masses.  
 It does not strive to win the masses over [at others' expense].  
 It does not seek to form organizational bases.  
 It does not present itself as an alternative to Islamic movements and parties.  
 It goes beyond an absolutistic scholastic perspective in presenting Islam to others.  
 It goes beyond an absolutistic juristic focus on particulars.  
 It insists on taking into account the human, temporal and spatial dimension as well as universals, intents and ultimate aims.

*Form:*

It goes beyond the kind of doctrinal approach to matters which leads inevitably to the temptation to brand as infidels [those who differ with one's particular interpretation of doctrine].  
 It aims basically to fill the gap associated with thought, knowledge and culture.  
 It steers clear of judging people and labeling others infidels.  
 It strives to endorse and reinforce the means available to the Ummah and to assist sincere individuals in rescuing it from the crisis it faces.  
 It avoids reducing reform to nothing more than legal decisions and rulings, seeing it instead as an issue to be treated.  
 It seeks to affirm the necessity of stationing oneself on the frontier of intellectual, epistemological, cultural and civilizational issues.

*Function:*

It is distinguished by the simplicity of its presentation and the ease with which it can be understood and dealt with.  
 Given the aforementioned two qualities, it possesses the ability to reach the entire Ummah.

*Figure 6.2*

## CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF DISCOURSE

- 1 --- Not discontinuing efforts before having: (a) created the necessary awareness of the cause, (b) put together a group of workers of sufficient size to implement the necessary phases, (c) provided the material needed for a successful university course, and (d) prepared 'incubators' in universities, institutes and centers.
- 2 --- Engaging in ongoing evaluation, review and criticism of the IIIT's progress in promoting the cause.
- 3 --- Avoiding one-sided thinking or unilateralism, that is, viewing what the IIIT has to offer as the sole solution to the Ummah's crisis.
- 4 --- Avoiding partisanship, the formation of blocs and responsiveness to attempts at polarization.
- 5 --- Avoiding inconsistent theses in the area of the cause's principles and intents and proceeding from two basic starting points: (a) viewing Revelation and the universe as two fundamental sources of thought, culture, knowledge and civilization, and (b) looking critically at both the Islamic heritage and the human heritage in the social and cultural areas.
- 6 --- Not forgetting the scale of priorities which serves the interests of the Ummah.
- 7 --- Refusing to be isolated from the Ummah's concrete concerns.
- 8 --- Avoiding immersion in abstract thought.
- 9 --- Exhibiting the greatest possible degree of flexibility and creative initiative.
- 10 --- Not holding up personal desire or preference as the equivalent of thought.



# ENDNOTES

## FOREWORD TO THE ARABIC EDITION

- 1 The phrase ‘seventy autumns,’ which appears in a hadith, is another way of saying ‘seventy years’, and refers to the period of time it will take the person concerned to reach the bottom of the pit. As such, it serves as a hyperbolic indication of the depth of the person’s fall and, by extension, the seriousness of his transgression [translator’s note].
- 2 No. 9, 1991, reviewed and introduced by Umar Ubaydah Hasanah, supervisor of *Kitāb al-Ummah* published in Qatar, and former part-time advisor to the IIIT and supervisor of the IIIT’s Qur’anic studies file.
- 3 See Appendix.

## PREFACE TO THE ARABIC EDITION

- 1 Qur’an 25:52.
- 2 Qur’an 41:26.
- 3 Qur’an 2:143.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Kitāb al-Manāqib*, the section entitled, “The Messenger of God.”

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, *Silsilat al-ʿmāl al-Majhūlah*, pp. 91-99, Edited and with an Introduction by Ali Shalash, (London: Dar Riyad al-Rayyis li al-Kutub wa al-Nashr, 1987).
- 2 That is, the science which examines both later Qur’anic texts and earlier texts which the later ones are believed to have abrogated [translator’s note].
- 3 That is, the study of Qur’anic verses which are allegorical in nature and/or whose meanings are not self-evident (*al-mutashābih*), and those whose meaning is self-evident

- and firmly established (*al-muḥkam*) [translator's note].
- 4 Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī (d. 32 AH/652 AC), one of the earliest of the Prophet's Companions to embrace Islam, was a man of legendary honesty and integrity who, after the Prophet's death, took up residence in the desert regions of Syria, then moved to Damascus, where he made a habit of urging the poor to insist on a share of the wealth owned by the rich. Some of the wealthy raised complaints about Abū Dharr to Muʿāwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān, then Governor of Syria, who referred his case to Caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. Obeying the Caliph's summons to come to Madinah, Abū Dharr continued spreading the message that the rich ought to share their wealth with the poor. More complaints were made to ʿUthmān, who exiled Abū Dharr to the village of al-Raydhah near Madinah, where he remained until his death. Abū Dharr was so averse to the accumulation of wealth that when he died, not enough money was found in his home to buy his burial shroud. Interestingly, his biographer notes that "perhaps he was the first socialist to be pursued by state governments." (See Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-Aʿlām Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-ʿIlm lil-Malayin, 1999, 14th Printing) [translator's note].
  - 5 The Rafidites (Arabic: Rawāfiḍ, singular, Rāfiḍah) are a sect of Shiites who allow defamation of the Prophet's Companions. They came to be known by this name (derived from the verb *rafada*, meaning to reject or refuse) because they rejected their Imam Zayd ibn ʿAlī when he forbade them to cast aspersions on the caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb [translator's note].
  - 6 The term Khawārij (singular, Khārījī) refers to those who rebelled against the legitimate Muslim authority during the caliphate of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and, which thereafter came to have a number of specific doctrines associated with their sect (See Muhammad Rawwas Qalʿajī, et. al., *Muʿjam Luḡhat al-Fuqahāʾ* [Dictionary of Islamic Legal Terminology], Beirut: Dar al-Nafāʾis, 1996) [translator's note].
  - 7 The Karmatnians (Arabic: Qarāmitah) are a group of extremist Shiites whose movement began in Iraq in the year 281 AH/894 AC, and whose teachings include the belief in secret or hidden interpretations of the Qurʾān, and a form of libertinism (see *Qalʿajī*) [translator's note].
  - 8 An example of this can be seen in the comment on Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī quoted in Note 4 above [translator's note].
  - 9 The term *ijtihād*, or independent reasoning, refers to the effort exerted by a suitably qualified scholar of jurisprudence to arrive at an accurate conceptualization of the Divine will based on Muslim legal sources (the Qurʾān, the Hadith, analogical deduc-

tion and consensus) and the means by which to apply this will in a given age and under given circumstances; as such, *ijtihād* is the effort exerted by such a scholar to derive a legal ruling from Muslim legal sources, and to reach certainty on questions of an ambiguous nature [translator's note].

10 Qur'an 41:42.

11 Qur'an 4:46.

12 Qur'an 2:257.

13 Qur'an 14:2-3.

#### CHAPTER ONE

1 Qur'an 13:11.

2 For further discussion of this theme, see Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Khawātir fī al-Azmah al-Fikriyyah wa al-Ma'ziq al-Haḍārī li al-Ummah al-Islāmiyyah: Risālat Islāmiyyat al-Ma'rifah*, (IIIT, First Printing, 1989) and *Al-Azmah al-Fikriyyah al-Mu'āshirah: Tashkhiṣ wa Muqtaraḥāt 'Ilāj: Silsilat al-Muḥāḍarāt*, (IIIT, First Printing, 1989) sections of *Azmat al-'Aql al-Muslim* by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, and *Al-Azmah al-Fikriyyah fī al-Wāqī' al-'Arabī al-Rāhin* by Abu al-Qasim Hajj Hamad.

3 Qur'an 3:110.

#### CHAPTER TWO

1 Qur'an 2:67-73.

2 Qur'an 2:71.

3 The tradition being referred to here is narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Mājah and Aḥmad. The version narrated by al-Bukhārī reads as follows: "Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī reported that the Prophet once said, 'Verily, you will follow the ways of those who came before you, hand span by hand span and cubit by cubit to the point where even if they went down into a lizard's burrow, you would follow them there.' 'O Messenger of God,' we asked, 'are you speaking of the Jews and the Christians?' 'Of whom else would I be speaking?' he replied."

4 A solitary hadith is a report narrated on the authority of the Prophet by one or more individuals, but whose chain of transmission does not fulfill the requirements of *tawātur*, that is, the reliability characterized by the report of an event by a group of individuals sufficiently large and disparate that it would be impossible for them to have colluded in falsification [translator's note].

## CHAPTER THREE

- 1 For a sample of this point of view, see Abd al-Azim Anis, *Hal Yumkin Aslamat al-‘Ulūm?* (Is it possible to Islamize the sciences?) which appeared in a special issue of the Egyptian magazine *Qaḍāyā Fikriyyah*, 1990 under the title, “Political Islam.” This issue was republished later as a book in a second printing in Morocco in January, 1991, in which Anis’s article appears on pp. 180–183. See also Zaki Najib Mahmud, *Laki Allah yā ‘Ulūm al-Insān!*, (You have God, you humanities!) which appeared in *Al-Ahram* news paper in 1987, and elsewhere.
- 2 An example of this phenomenon may be seen in the “Vancouver Declaration” issued by the UNESCO-sponsored Seminar on “Science and Culture in the 21st Century: A Program for Survival”, held in Vancouver, Canada, September 10–19, 1989. International experts who signed the aforementioned declaration spoke explicitly of the need to link science with values and to acknowledge the reality of religion’s role in human life if we want human beings to survive into the coming century.
- 3 See *Islāmiyyat al-Ma‘rifah: Al-Mabādi’ wa Kḥiṭṭat al-‘Amal*, The Islamization of Knowledge Series, Second Printing, IIIT, 1406AH/1986AC, pp. 66–70.

## CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 See our *Ibn Taymiyyah wa Islāmiyyat al-Ma‘rifah* and *Takāmul al-Manhaj al-Ma‘rifī ‘ind Ibn Taymiyyah*, both published by the International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- 2 That is to say, predestination belongs to the realm of the unseen, knowledge of which God has reserved entirely for Himself and which, as a consequence, human beings are not to preoccupy themselves with, since such preoccupation distracts us from the concrete, immediate issue of our responsibility for our actions on a day-to-day basis [translator’s note].
- 3 This hadith is narrated by al-Tirmidhī with an unusual chain of transmission, i.e., one which relies on a single chain of authorities. However, it is supported by a large number of authentic traditions which deal with the same theme.
- 4 This hadith is narrated by al-Tirmidhī at the end of his book, where he writes, “Anas [ibn Mālik] related that a certain man said, ‘O Messenger of God, shall I hobble it [my she-camel], or let it loose and trust in God [that it won’t run away]?’ And the Prophet replied, ‘Hobble it, and trust in God.’” [Translator’s note: The Arabic phrase translated in the main text as “Be conscious of them, and trust [in God]” (*i‘qalḥā wa tawakkal*) is the same as that rendered “Hobble it, and trust in God.” The she-camel in the hadith just quoted is a metaphor for earthly causes in general, while the verb translated as

- 'hobble' (*i<sup>c</sup> qal*) can also convey the sense of understanding or perceiving something with one's mind (*ʿaqil*).]
- 5 Narrated by 'the five' (that is, Muslim, al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and al-Tirmidhī) on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.
  - 6 Narrated by the two shaykhs [Muslim and al-Bukhārī] and al-Nasā'ī on the authority of Anas ibn Mālīk.
  - 7 Narrated in all the *Ṣiḥah*, with the exception of al-Bukhārī, on the authority of Sulaymān ibn Buraydah, while the wording is al-Tirmidhī's.
  - 8 Narrated by Muslim on the authority of 'Ā'ishah.
  - 9 Narrated by Ibn Mājah in *Kitāb al-Fitan*.
  - 10 Concerning those who recorded the Revelation, see Muhammad Mustafā al-Azami, *Kitāb al-Nabī Ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1978).
  - 11 This hadith is narrated by Aḥmad in his *Musnad*. For a detailed treatment of the Prophet's teachings on the etiquette of disagreement in Islam, see our book entitled, *Adab al-Ikhtilāfi al-Islām*, The Issues in Islamic Thought Series (2), Second Printing (London: IIIT, 1987).
  - 12 Specifically, the desert Arabs were contesting their obligation to pay zakah, which is the primary monetary obligation required of all Muslims who possess the minimum amount of wealth. In doing so, they were drawing an invalid distinction between Muslims' monetary obligations and their bodily obligations, which include ritual prayer, utterance of the testimonies of faith, fasting and the pilgrimage to Makkah [translator's note].
  - 13 See Muhammad al-Khaḍrī, *Tārīkh al-Tashnīʿ al-Islāmī*, 9th Edition, (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tijariyah al-Kubra, 1970), p. 279.
  - 14 Qur'an 17:15.
  - 15 Qur'an 17:7.
  - 16 *Islāmīyat al-Maʿrifah: al-Mabādi' al-ʿAmmah, Khittat al-ʿAmal, al-Injāzāt*, pp. 73-117.
  - 17 Qur'an 74:18. (The Arabic verbs are in the past tense, *fakkara wa qaddara* [translator's note].)
  - 18 Qur'an 16:44.
  - 19 Qur'an 6:50.
  - 20 These include, for example, *Mawāqifi ʿIlm al-Kalām* by Aqidat al-Din al-Ijī, with explanations and notes. See al-Ijī, Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad (d. 756 AH / 1355 AC) (al-Asitanah: Dar al-Tibaʿah al-ʿAmirah, 1311 AH / 1893 AC), 2 parts in 2 volumes, as

well as: (1) *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* by al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, (2) commentaries on *Mawāqif fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* by Hasan Halabī and Abd al-Hakīm al-Siyalakutī and (3) *Maṭāliʿ al-Anzār Sharḥ Ṭawāliʿ al-Anwār* by al-Isfāhānī. (4) On the margins of Part 2 of *Mawāqif fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* there is a work entitled, *Sharḥ al-Tajdīd* by al-Qawshajī. We have made note of these titles in response to the many comments we have read and heard from proponents of this or that movement which denigrate thought and belittle its importance.

21 *Iḥyāʿ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*.

22 The term ‘method’ (Arabic: *manḥaj*) may be defined, generally speaking, as a clear way or path. As a specialized term employed in the natural sciences and the humanities, the word ‘method’ refers to orderly steps taken by a researcher in order to deal with one or more questions and, ultimately, to arrive at a conclusion. Generally speaking, a method is the clearest way of expressing, doing or teaching something in accordance with particular principles and a particular system, and with the intention of arriving at a particular goal. (See *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ* by al-Jawharī, Entry *nun, ha, jim*.)

23 An authentic hadith which is traced back to its original sources by Muslim, on the authority of Jābir, as in *al-Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr (fī Takhrīj Ahādīth al-Raḥīʿī al-Kabīr)* within hadith No. 1012.

24 An agreed-upon authentic hadith as it appears in *al-Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr* within hadith No. 284.

25 This hadith may be found in *al-Faṭḥ al-Kabīr* (2/52) where it reads as follows, “If your people had not just recently emerged from a time of ignorance, I would raze the Ka‘bah and rebuild it with two doors.” (Traced back to its original sources by al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā‘ī on the authority of ʿĀ‘ishah). A similar version reads, “If your people had not just recently emerged from a time of ignorance, I would spend the treasure in the Ka‘bah in the cause of God, I would raze it and rebuild it [literally, I would place its door in the ground], and I would join it with the northern wall.” (Narrated by Muslim, also on the authority of ʿĀ‘ishah).

26 Qur’an 96:1–5.

27 See our introduction to the book entitled, *Al-ʿIlm li Imam al-Nasā‘ī: Dirāsah wa Tahqīq* by Faruq Hammadah, pp. 9–25, (IIIT: 1993), the *Taysīr al-Turāth al-Islāmī Series* (4).

28 As in, for example, the statement, *ʿalimtu zaydan jāhīlan*, that is, “I knew Zayd [to be] ignorant” [translator’s note].

29 In his valuable study, *Al-Thaqāfah, al-Ḥadārah, al-Madīnah* (IIIT, 1994).

30 Qur’an 2:180.

- 31 Qur'an 4:8.
- 32 Qur'an 2:185.
- 33 On the concept of *hadārah*, see Nasr Muhammad Arif, op. cit., pp. 20–22.
- 34 Qur'an 2:143.
- 35 See Shaykh Mustafā al-Wardani, *al-Nahī 'an al-Istī'ānah wa al-Istinšār fī Umūr al-Muslimīn bi Ahl al-Dhimmah wa al-Kuffār*, introduced and edited by Taha Jabir al-Alwani (Riyadh: al-Abikan li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, n.d), p. 15.
- 36 Qur'an 6:38.
- 37 For a discussion of the concepts of presence and existence, see Malik Bin Nabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, 1st Edn., (Cairo: 1959) p. 21.
- 38 Qur'an 30:22.
- 39 Qur'an 16:78.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 This is what took place in the *Tahayyuz* (Bias) conference held in Cairo, which aroused significant reactions not only in the Egyptian Arab Republic, but, in addition, throughout the Arab world and even internationally. The seminar was a watershed in building up a critical epistemological sense toward contemporary Arab knowledge overall, and particularly in the Arab world. Many Arab scholars would rarely have the opportunity to become familiar with Western criticism of Western thought. How much less so, then, would they have the chance to become familiar with others' criticism of it! See the proceedings of this conference.
- 2 Qur'an 46:9.
- 3 For a discussion of conflicts among reform movements, see Tariq al-Bishri.
- 4 Qur'an 54:32.
- 5 Qur'an 17:88.
- 6 Qur'an 17:20.
- 7 Qur'an 6:124.

#### CONCLUSION

- 1 Qur'an 11:88.

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**F**or the first time, Muslims are faced with a worldwide positivism which is working to use knowledge, the sciences and their discoveries and achievements in a manner which severs the relationship between the Creator, the created universe and man, thereby disregarding the world of the unseen and driving a wedge between science and values.

Lacking even the most modest store of vital Islamic doctrine on the intellectual level, university students and researchers in the Islamic world are confronted with doctrines and philosophies which are presented to them together with a flimsy, miserable defense of Islam. There is not a single academic institution in the Islamic world in which Islamic thought is taught and in which the Islamic vision is given a deep-rooted foundation with the same force and persuasiveness with which Western ideas and the Western vision are taught to students in the West, in a coherent, comprehensive manner accompanied by seriousness and commitment on the part of all.

The book argues that this approach is diametrically opposed to the Islamic perspective and that we must disengage human scientific achievement from positivistic philosophical premises and reemploy these sciences within a systematic epistemological framework based on divine revelation, conferring honor upon all forms of knowledge, as having been bestowed upon man by their Creator.

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