

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*



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Translated from the Arabic by
NANCY ROBERTS



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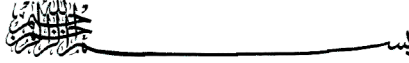
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CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Foreword to the Arabic Edition</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Preface to the Arabic Edition</i>	<i>xiii</i>
INTRODUCTION	I
Why the Call for the Islamization of Knowledge	
CHAPTER ONE	19
The Crisis of Contemporary Islamic Discourse: Motive Forces Behind the Crisis and the Crisis Mentality	
CHAPTER TWO	33
The Crisis Mentality and Crisis Proliferation	
CHAPTER THREE	43
Resolving the Crisis Through the Reform of Islamic Thought and the Islamization of Knowledge	
CHAPTER FOUR	49
Major Features of the Reform of Islamic Thought and the Islamization of Knowledge	
CHAPTER FIVE	95
Discourse and its Audience	
CHAPTER SIX	123
Hindrances and Impediments	

CONCLUSION	129
APPENDIX	137
ENDNOTES	165

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^c 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,¹ 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*

*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.² 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 Buraysh³, 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."¹ 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.'"²

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."³

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."⁴

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.⁵

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.¹ 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*,² the science of *al-muḥkam wa al-mutashābih*,³ 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,⁴ '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 Rafidite⁵ and Kharijite⁶ movements, as well as movements of a similar nature such as those of the Karmatians⁷ 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.⁸ 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*⁹ 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."¹⁰ 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"¹¹ 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."¹² 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.¹³

For 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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