

## Methodological Principles and Values

### GOALS OF THIS CHAPTER

1. To clarify the meanings of the terms “principles” and “values” in the context of a discussion of Islamic methodology, and to highlight the reciprocal, complementary relationship between them.
2. To discuss the levels of methodological principles.
3. To identify the principles of Islamic methodology in the realms of thought, research, and conduct.
4. To identify the principles that are derived from the higher Islamic values of monotheism (*tawhīd*), purification (*tazkiyah*), and societal development and prosperity (*‘umrān*).
5. To explain the importance and various manifestations of *tawhīd* in thought and life.
6. To explain the importance of purification on the levels of both individual thought and behavior and the building up of society, its systems, and its forms of governance.
7. To explain the normative value of the Qur’anic concept of civilization (*‘umrān*), which serves as a guide for developmental efforts and achievements on the levels of the individual, the society, and the ummah.

### INTRODUCTION

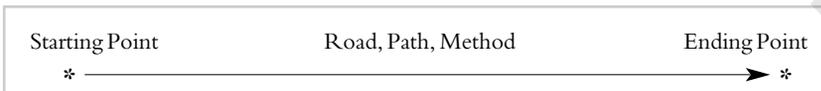
In this chapter we will attempt to define the concepts of “principle” and “value” within the Islamic intellectual framework in general, and within the framework of Islamic methodology in particular. Although

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each of these two terms has its own distinct meaning, they nevertheless overlap significantly on the level of semantics and usage. The overlap is so great, in fact, that the terms “principle” and “value” are used synonymously or interchangeable in many writings, and one of the two terms will sometimes be defined with reference to the other. One author might speak, for example, of “the principles and values upon which [this or that] movement is based...,” or speak interchangeably of “the principle of monotheism” and “the value of monotheism.” Similarly we might read that “by ‘foundational principles’ we mean the set of values that are derived from Islam’s primary source....” This should come as no surprise, since both principles and values are viewed as guidelines and standards on the basis of which we make judgments concerning the power and validity of ideas and the soundness of the behavior to which these ideas give rise.

Islam’s central higher values – monotheism (*tawhīd*), purification, and development/prosperity/civilization – are both complementary and comprehensive. As a result, numerous secondary principles can be derived from any one of them. This higher value system can thus be viewed as a set of universal principles which govern the process of epistemological integration. For example:

1. The value of monotheism (*tawhīd*) yields the principles of creation, the complementary of this world and the next, the complementary of the written revelation and the created world, the complementarity of reason and sensory perception, the epistemological integration model, and so on.
2. The value of purification (*tazkiyah*) yields the principles of: the complementarity of body, mind and spirit; the complementarity of the individual and society; the complementarity of knowledge and action, etc.



3. The value of civilization, societal development and prosperity (*‘umrān*) yields principles such as the complementarity of life’s social requirements (agriculture, industry, trade, communication, etc.), the complementarity of epistemological fields (the sciences of revelation, the humanities, the natural sciences, and the technical sciences), and the complementarity of utility and enjoyment.

We hope to show in what follows that each of these three elements of the higher value system serves as a foundation for a number of secondary values, and is manifested in numerous practical expressions of Islamic life. It might be noted here that in our discussion of *tawhīd*, we have avoided a doctrinal or theological treatment of this value; in discussing the value of purification, we have omitted its mystical-experiential aspect; while in our discussion of societal development and prosperity, we have avoided their cultural aspects. In so doing, our intention is not to disparage these emphases, each of which is of great significance within its own proper context. However, as we have noted on more than one occasion, each of these three values has a universal quality that manifests itself in all of life’s dimensions, not in a particular dimension to the exclusion of others.

*What is the Relationship Between the Principles of Islam  
and the Principles of Methodology?*

- “Know, then, that there is no deity save God...”  
(*Sūrah Muḥammad*, 47:19)
- “...produce your evidence if you truly believe in your claim.”  
(*Sūrah al-Naml*, 27:64)

If we start with a principle, where do we end? We should reach the ends we hope to achieve, goals after their realization, the form in which applications and practices emerge, or one’s final verdict on a given issue or question.

What are the ideas that would not be considered principles? They include things such as the essential elements of the Friday prayer, for example, or a wife’s share of her deceased husband’s estate when she has borne him no children.

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### First: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF METHODOLOGY

#### (I) “Principle” as Term and as Concept

The noun “principle” (Arabic, *mabda’*, plural, *mabādi’*) as it is used in discussions of Islamic methodology is a modern term. There is no reference in either the Qur’an or the Prophetic Sunnah to the technical sense of this word as it is used today. The noun *mabda’*, which is derived from the verb *bada’a*, meaning “to begin,” is not found in the Qur’an. However, the Qur’an does use numerous forms of the verb *bada’a*, all of which speak in one way or another of the commencement of an action. Most Qur’anic verses in which some form of the verb *bada’a* appears couple this verb with its opposite, that is, *a’āda*, meaning “to bring back” or “do again.” We read, “God creates [man] in the first instance, and then brings him forth anew...” (*sūrah al-Rūm* 30:11). The verse reads literally, “God begins the creation” (*Allāhu yabda’u al-khalqa*), “then creates again” (*thumma yu’īduhu*). Similarly we read, “...as We brought into being the first creation, so We shall bring it forth anew...” (*sūrah al-Anbiyā’* 21:104), which reads literally, “As We began the first creation” (*kamā bada’nā awwala khalqin*), “we will create again” (*nu’īduhu*). We are told, “...As it was He who brought you into being in the first instance (*kamā bada’akum*), so also [unto Him] you will return (*ta’ūdūn*)” (*sūrah al-A’raf* 7:29), and “...He begins the creation of man (*bada’a khalq al-insān*) out of clay” (*sūrah al-Sajdah* 32:7). The phrase *bādiya al-ra’y* (*sūrah Hūd* 11:27), translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali as “in judgment immature,” refers to someone who forms a point of view in haste, without careful thought or examination. Similar uses of the root *b-d-’* are found in the Prophetic Sunnah. According to one saying of the Prophet, “Islam began as a stranger (*bada’a al-islāmu gharīban*), and as it was in the beginning, it will become a stranger once again (*wa sa ya’ūdu kamā bada’a gharīban*). Blessed, then, are the strangers.”<sup>1</sup> One of the beautiful names of God mentioned in the Prophetic Sunnah is *Al-Mubdi’ Al-Mu’īd*, derived from the Qur’anic description of God as the One “Who creates from

the very beginning, and He can restore (life)” (*sūrah al-Burūj* 85:13, Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

When used as a technical term, the word “principles” appears in a variety of contexts. Depending on the context, the word “principles” can refer to information, beliefs, postulates, assumptions, premises, constants, or relationships between the concepts that define the theories and conclusions that can be tested and proven. The word “principles” can refer to governing values that guide behavior and standards for regulating and evaluating conduct. Similarly, it can refer to the foundations of an intellectual edifice, a religious belief, a practical course of action, and so on.

The term “principles” can also be used with varying degrees of generality or specificity. We might speak, for example, of principles of religion, principles of science, principles of thought, principles of research, principles of behavior, etc. The principles of Islam are its five well-known pillars, while the principles of faith consist of six pillars.<sup>2</sup> The principles of chemistry are the fundamental topics of this science. In other words, a book with a title “Principles of the Science of Chemistry” will most likely be an introduction to the science of chemistry, or the fundamental information from which students commence their study of this field. They may then go on to study the same discipline at higher levels and in greater depth and detail.

On the level of a specific book, principles may consist of the set of axioms or assumptions upon which the author bases his or her writing. The principles that contribute to the formation of a book on research methods, for example, might include the assumptions that research is a highly beneficial, worthwhile intellectual and professional activity; that development of research skills is critical to any profession; and that the process of learning research methods need not be daunting or tedious.

A principle might also be the scientific foundation, such as a scientific theory or a natural law, on the basis of which a particular device functions. The principle for the operation of a remote control device, for example, is the electrical contact that takes place between the remote control and another device via infrared rays without the use of any wiring. The remote control device in this case works together

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with some other device (a television, for example) by aiming the rays being emitted by the remote control at an electronic eye located in the television, which receives the rays and responds by opening or closing the electrical current, changing the channel, reducing or increasing the volume, etc. In the case of a natural phenomenon such as thunder, twilight, solar or lunar eclipses, etc., its underlying principle will be its scientific foundation, which consists in facts, theories and laws that enable us to understand how the phenomenon in question takes place.

In the realm of human conduct, a principle is the foundation for one's actions or a fundamental doctrine. For example, an ethical or moral principle is a type of commitment. Someone who is committed to a particular position in relation to his or her behavior or point of view is said to be a person of principle, since it is the principle in which the person believes that brings about the commitment in question. Such a person will accept or reject an idea or a course of action on the basis of principle, as a result of which his or her position on the matter will be nonnegotiable. In a situation in which a person lacks complete information on the idea or course of action concerned, he or she might make a tentative decision based on principle, with the decision being subject to review once more information is available, or once the idea or course of action has been examined in greater detail.

As we have seen, the Arabic word translated as “principle,” namely, *mabda'*, is derived from the verb *bada'a*, meaning a starting point of some kind. The existence of a starting point requires, of course, the existence of some kind of ending point, as well as a road or path that connects the two points. Movement or change proceeds from the beginning point, then continues in the direction of an end point or goal. The path or road that connects the beginning and ending points is referred to in Arabic as a *manhaj*, which, as we have seen, is also applied to a method or approach. In order to reach the goal or finish line, one must commit himself or herself firmly to the appropriate *manhaj*, that is, path or method.

Given our definition of “methodology” as a science which concerns itself with ways of thinking, research methods, and patterns of behavior, it follows that, like other sciences, the science of methodology will have associated principles. The principles of methodology are the

topics that constitute the basics of the science, that is, its major facts and concepts, how it began and developed, its theories, and its practical applications. Therefore, the main themes of the methodology sessions and workshops organized by the IIIT reflect the principles of the science of methodology: methodological concepts and other relevant notions, the evolution of the concept of methodology, the sources, tools, and schools of methodology, how methodology is applied to the various scientific fields, and so on.

### (2) *How Principles Relate to Methodological Issues*

Intellectual reform (which includes both the reform of thought and the Islamization of knowledge) is a necessary condition for the cultural advancement of the Muslim ummah. Moreover, such reform requires that we define an Islamic methodology which is capable of achieving the desired aims. In applying Islamic methodology it will be necessary to proceed on the basis of fundamental principles, without which our vision will be blurred, our ideas will be unorganized, the character of the Muslim community will be tarnished, and its members will lack the impetus they need to move forward.

The methodology of which we are speaking is an action we engage in, an effort we make. Hence, it must begin with a conceptualization of where it will lead, it must arise out of the beliefs we hold, and it must adhere consistently to the standards, criteria and values that reflect these beliefs. In the context of a discussion of Islamic methodology, what we mean by “principles” are the premises on the basis of which the methodology proceeds in the realm of thought, research and conduct, to which it appeals in its efforts to reach its goals, and which lend their distinctive mark to its expressions and formulations.

The principles of methodology fall on a number of levels, of which we refer here to two: the level of the general or universal, and the level of the partial and specific. On the general level these principles have to do with the pillars of Islam, the pillars of faith and higher values, or *Maqāṣid*, while on the partial, specific level, they take the form of rules, standards and defining features of thought or research activity that aims to acquire, test and employ knowledge, or criteria for regulating and

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guiding conduct. The principles of methodology on the first level are well known. As for the specific level, it includes the following:

1. *Thought-related* methodological principles call for thinking to be universal, comprehensive, orderly, causal, aims-oriented, strategic, and practical.
2. *Research-related* methodological principles have to do with documentation (which should be done with honesty, integrity, and objectivity) and evidence (which should be practical, rational, and consistent with written revelation). These principles can be summed up in the motto: “If you are transmitting information, strive for accuracy, and if you are making a claim, provide proof.”
3. *Conduct-related* methodological principles have to do with (a) intention, (b) adherence, and (c) creativity. On the level of intention, the researcher is expected to undertake his/her work for God’s sake with a pure heart and a clear conscience. On the level of adherence, one is expected to follow a path that is tried and true, thereby aiming to reach one’s goal in the most efficient manner possible, to emulate the example set forth by the Prophet, and to act collectively when this would serve one’s community’s best interests. On the level of creativity, one is expected to strive for greater and greater wisdom, to go beyond what has already been achieved when possible, to do good for others in the awareness of the divine presence, and to master whatever one undertakes.

### *(3) Principles of Islamic Methodology*

In what follows we will make brief mention of a number of Islamic methodological principles, the content of which will have become sufficiently clear from the discussions contained in earlier chapters. Numerous other writings have also presented them in detail. (See in particular the works of Dr. Taha Jabir Alalwani, AbdulHamid Abu-Sulayman, Nadiya Mustafa, and Sayf al-Din Abd al-Fattah.) The Muslim undertaking research in a given area will be expected to:

1. Strive for internal consistency and harmony between his/her Islamic worldview, the epistemological system to which he/she adheres, and this system's methodological elements.
2. Adopt the Qur'an as his/her final authority, the concept of the Qur'an's structural unity, and the Prophetic Sunnah as a clarification and application of the Qur'anic message on the level of both facts and precepts.
3. Combine the readings of both the word of God i.e., the Revealed text, and work of God, i.e. the created world, undertaking both of them in light of God's oneness (*tawhīd*) and the complementarity of sources that forms the basis for the epistemological integration model.
4. Apply the Islamic system of higher methodological values – that is, the triad of monotheism (*tawhīd*), purification (*tazkiyah*) and societal progress and prosperity (*‘umrān*) as the sources of all other Islamic principles and values on the levels of both theory and practice.
5. Apply the fundamentals of the Islamization of knowledge, which calls for competence, comprehension, and the aspiration to stretch existing boundaries by striving for continual progress toward human perfection.

### *Second:* THE BASICS OF METHODOLOGICAL VALUES

The aforementioned tripartite system of higher values within Islamic methodology will be discussed in some detail, for three reasons.

First: Because this system is an all-encompassing framework for Islamic methodology.

Second: In order to emphasize these values as standards and regulations that govern all other methodological principles, whether on the general level of thought, theory and doctrine and belief, or on the concrete level of practice and procedure as they pertain to thought, research and conduct.

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And third: In order to broaden the domain of action known as the ethics of scientific research method and to tie it into the overall goals and approaches of Islamic methodology.

### (I) *Monotheism (Tawhīd): The First Foundation of the Triad of Governing Values*

In his view of Qur'anic guidance and the major principles to which it gives rise in what he terms "the system of governing values," Taha Jabir Alalwani defines its elements as the three value-based concepts of monotheism (*tawhīd*), purification (*tazkiyah*), and societal development and prosperity (*ʿumrān*).<sup>3</sup> In Alalwani's view, these three values together constitute an aims-based frame of reference which reveals God's purposes for creation. They are also a normative value system which gives rise to all of the other primary and secondary values in the Islamic religion. At the same time, however, this value system is an expression of the true nature of things, not something extraneous that is imposed on them from without.

These three values are intimately linked. The first value – *tawhīd* – is an absolute truth to which we are led naturally by contemplation and reflection on the nature of things. Affirmation of *tawhīd* frees human beings from the states of confusion, anxiety and lostness that grow out of all other ways of conceiving God and the universe. The second value, that of *tazkiyah*, entails a process of bringing the human soul to a higher plane and purging society of all forms of corruption and perversity, and cleansing people's wealth by distributing it more justly among the members of the community and putting it to more beneficial use. These are all processes that bring about greater peace of mind while promoting a sense of responsibility and social solidarity and building a society with unified, cohesive structures and systems. As for *ʿumrān*, it requires efforts to put human potentials in a way that enables human beings to fulfill their purpose as *khalīfah* on earth by developing human civilization to its fullest potential. In short, this triad of higher values brings together the elements of the Islamic worldview as it relates to God, human beings, and the world.

Islamic doctrine places central importance on affirmation of the divine oneness. Seen from the Islamic perspective, this affirmation is of intrinsic value, with all other values being derived from it. The entire world is subject by its very nature to the requirements of the divine unity. Hence, if human beings want to be in harmony with the world, they have no choice but to be purified from within by turning to God alone in worship. Allah Almighty is the Lord of mankind as he is the Creator and Sustainer (*tawhīd al-Rubūbiyyah*). He is the Sovereign King of mankind, who has the right to order and legislate (*tawhīd al-Ḥākimiyyah*). He is the God of Mankind who is the only one to be worshipped (*tawhīd al-Ulūhiyyah*).<sup>4</sup> It is human beings as *khalīfah* on Earth who stand in need of purification and reform. This purification and reform take place as we submit ourselves to the divine guidance by caring for all of God's creatures and managing their affairs. Hence, purification is both the end and means of societal development and prosperity; as such, it is an inseparable part of a sound, thriving social structure.

Despite the integrated, interconnected nature of the Islamic value system's three elements, they are not necessarily of equal importance, since the divine unity, or *tawhīd*, remains the most central and fundamental of them all. It is *tawhīd* that ensures continuity between human efforts in this world and reward or retribution in the world to come. Indeed, the affirmation of God's oneness has always been the foundation of the divinely revealed religion and God's message to His apostles and prophets. As God Almighty declared to the Prophet, "... before thy time We never sent any apostle without having revealed to him that there is no deity save Me, [and that,] therefore, you shall worship Me [alone]!" (*sūrah al-Anbiyā'* 21:25). Utterance of the words, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God" is the way in which one enters Islam and commences the erection of its five pillars by affirming the religion on the level of doctrine, worship and lifestyle. The aforementioned dual testimony of faith defines the six pillars of faith<sup>5</sup> and releases people's God-given intellectual and psychological potentials by enabling them to achieve the proper balance between material and spiritual concerns. It frees them from the illusions so rampant in human society, planting their feet in the

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certainty of true knowledge. When the pillars of faith have been affirmed, believers are established as brothers and sisters who build a single community whose members work to achieve advancement, prosperity and true human *khilāfah* on Earth.

Affirming God's oneness involves more than simply fulfilling the basic requirements of faith and submission to God. Rather, it goes beyond these to the level of inward goodness, where the mind, the heart, and one's entire physical being are released to achieve ever advancing levels of purity as one is freed from the effect of the misconceptions that arise from *shirk* – association of partners with God – on the levels of both belief and behavior.

Elsewhere<sup>6</sup> I have treated the subject of the divine oneness as it is presented in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, tracing the various ways in which this topic has been dealt with throughout the history of the Muslim community. The present discussion will be limited to a particularly noteworthy treatment of this topic which stresses the impact of affirming the divine oneness on the individual and society in their spiritual and material dimensions alike. The work to which I refer, entitled *Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*,<sup>7</sup> was written by the late Isma'īl al Fārūqī (d. 1986), a pioneering scholar and thinker of the Islamization of knowledge school.

*Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* is distinguished for the way in which it views *tawhīd*, or affirmation of God's oneness, as the most central and significant value of the Islamic religion and the source of virtually all other Islamic values as well. The book presents an overview of the various ways in which the value of *tawhīd* has been manifested in all areas of life. A serious modern attempt to revive and reactivate scholastic theology, *Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* links scholastic theology to the movement of history and to Muslims' legitimate longings for cultural advancement in the modern age. The book does a superb job of presenting the methodology of epistemological integration, a methodology which the author himself adhered to, thereby consolidating the link between the Islamic authority underlying this methodology and its manifestations in thought, scientific and academic research, and the cultural practices of both individual Muslims and the Muslim ummah.

Beginning with the reality being experienced at present by the Muslim ummah, al Fārūqī discusses *tawhīd* as a value that governs all areas of Muslims' lives on both the individual and collective levels. His aim is to present a vision of existence that will help young Muslims to progress along the path of true reform, and to analyze the concepts of Islam in such a way that they serve as a measuring rod for reform programs. *Tawhīd* is the essence and heart of Islam; as such, it is both the launching pad for reform and its defining content. Hence, all thirteen chapters of al Fārūqī's book have to do with *tawhīd*, which, lying at the heart of all divinely revealed messages, provides the standard for judging history, the realm of the unseen, ethics, the social system, economic and political systems, the family, the world order, and even aesthetics. The special merit of al Fārūqī's book is that every one of its chapters affirms the centrality of the divine oneness as a standard for evaluating and discussing that chapter's theme.

Al Fārūqī shows the way in which the *tawhīdī* worldview integrates and combines the philosophical, epistemological and practical dimensions of a culture. Without burdening the reader with conceptual overload as sometimes happens in traditional writings on Islamic philosophy and scholastic theology, al Fārūqī aims throughout to promote the reform of Islamic thought and the contemporary Islamic reality.

The following are examples of the way *tawhīd* serves as the source of other values in all realms of human life.

(a) *Manifestations of Tawhīd in the Social System: The Nuclear Family and the Muslim Ummah*<sup>8</sup>

The teachings of Islam encompass all aspects of life, while the task of acting as God's *khalīfah* focuses primarily around the ordering of social life and relations in accordance with God's commands. Such commands are not limited to family affairs, but go beyond them to include rulings on financial and economic transactions, affairs of state and governmental administration, judicial rulings, and laws intended to ensure justice, all of which touch on the social dimension. Rulings on rituals of worship and individual ethics make up only a small proportion of Islamic legislation. It should also be borne in mind that many rulings on

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those rituals are social in nature, having to do with practices such as the distribution of zakah and the major and minor pilgrimage to Makkah, i.e., Hajj and Umrah, while others, such as ritual prayer and fasting, impact the social dimension in effect as well.

The ethical guidance Islam provides gives concrete form to the moral trust human beings bear as *khalifah* in this world. Human beings can only bear their God-given trust in the context of a social system, in which ethical values might be likened to a spirit that rules relationships. Such relationships include, for example, the processes of buying and selling, in which people cooperate in providing for their basic needs. It is in social interactions such as these that integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness come into play. If there were no society, such ethical values would be meaningless. Moreover, the concrete measures designed to regulate people's behavior differ from one society to another and from one time period to another. These differences illustrate the dialectical relationship between the essence of an ethical value and the practical, concrete forms this value takes.

The Islamic social system, being founded upon the belief in God's oneness, views the family as the foundational unit of society and stresses the importance of promoting and strengthening family ties. In this respect the Islamic social system differs from all other systems. Communism, which attempted to do away with the role of the family, worked to undermine family ties and relationships, while the spirit of individualism in the West has damaged family cohesiveness to the point where the family is on the verge of dying. Similarly, anthropological theories that view relationships among people as analogous to those that exist among animals have encouraged people to believe that there are no significant differences between animals and human beings, which has in turn undermined the honorable role assigned to the family. Hence, given the intimate connection between the family and human culture, human civilization is in danger of disintegrating.

It is significant, therefore, that the Qur'an contains numerous detailed laws and legal rulings pertaining to marriage, divorce, the nursing of infants, and inheritance – all of which have to do with the family – whereas in all other areas, it contents itself with general principles and only the occasional detailed ruling.

The Muslim family continues to preserve a number of its distinctive characteristics thanks to its adherence to rulings of Islamic law, all of which arise from the doctrine of *tawhīd*, or the oneness of God. The reason for this is that the purpose for the creation of human beings was to perfect the ethical side of the human will via the actions of human beings' themselves. This process takes place on four levels: the individual self, the family, the tribe or nation, and the Muslim community at large. The first two levels are self-evident. As for the third level, it derives its value entirely from the fourth level, since, if tribal and international relations restrict peoples' cooperation with each other to those who belong to the same race, whose skin is the same color, and who speak the same language, this does nothing but destroy human dignity, generate a spirit of superiority and entitlement, and lead to conflicts and wars.

As for the community whose existence is based on the doctrine of God's oneness, it is also based on harmony with people's inborn nature and what this nature requires, namely, relationships marked by good will, compassion, and shared responsibility. The basic unit for building such relationships is the family, which consists of a husband and a wife and the relationships to which their marriage gives rise with in-laws, children, grandchildren, and so on. These familial relationships involve a network of responsibilities to which reference is made in Qur'anic phrases such as *ūlū al-arḥām*, which is translated variously as "kindred by blood" and "closely related" (its literal rendering being, "those who share in wombs") and *dhawū al-qurbā* – literally, "those marked by nearness" – and which is translated as "near of kin" or simply "kin." These phrases are often used in relation to legal rulings whose purpose is to order social relationships and to ensure that they are sound, healthy and stable. Such rulings are rendered effective by virtue of people's faith in God's oneness. For unless a society adopts the family within its legal framework, the manifestations of the principle of *tawhīd* will not be evident in human society.

The extended Muslim family does not rely on the notion of financial autonomy for the man and the woman, the husband and the wife. Rather, it is founded on cooperation and mutual support which make it possible to marry at an early age. The children in the family live with

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its older members, and a single household will embrace at least three generations. Such a household is a place where cultural norms, customs and traditions are passed down naturally from one generation to another, and children are raised on long-established values. Love, good will, and compassion are freely exchanged in an atmosphere that deepens empathy, affection, and respect. This type of family atmosphere nurtures the various expressions of normal life with its joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, seriousness and banter, and shared sacrifice, and life within such a household is marked by an optimistic view of the future. All these phenomena serve to promote the psychological health that every one of us needs. As for the nuclear family, its choice is based on a materialistic view of life and the world in which the husband and wife attempt to flee from God-given social responsibilities. In reality, however, they bear even greater responsibilities that fill their lives with hardship and burdens, not to mention the fact that such a life does not require them to develop greater psychological maturity (and hence, psychological health) or a deepened sense of their own humanity.

Islam sets down a clearly defined concept of the family, which is the building block of the larger community of faith. In addition, it offers a clearly defined concept of the larger community of faith. The Arabic word *ummah*, being translated here variously as “the Muslim community” or “the larger community of faith,” is a uniquely Islamic term which points to a reality that is linked to Islam’s vision of the world. The term *ummah* differs from the terms *mujtamaʿ* (society), and *jamāʿah* (group) in terms of its linguistic denotations and its idiomatic significance. It is difficult to convey the full meaning of the Arabic term *ummah* in translation, since it refers neither to a specific people (*shaʿb*), nor to a state (*dawlah*), nor to a national or ethnic group or tribe (*qawm*). The term *ummah* is not linked to any particular place or geographical boundaries. Nor is it tied to ethnic origin, nationality, or political affiliation. Rather, all human beings on earth either belong already to this *ummah*, or community of faith, or are invited to join it.

The unity of the Muslims or *ummah* is a religious and ethical unity, not a unity of biology, ethnic origin, language or politics. This is why the Prophet referred to the Jews of Madinah as an *ummah* despite the fact that they formed part of the society of Madinah and shared with

the Muslims of the city in the same geographical, linguistic, political and cultural milieu. In other words, it is religious identity which defines the concept of ummah. Nevertheless, the existence of political, geographical, ethnic and linguistic unity supports and reinforces an ummah's religious unity. After all, it is those nearest to us in all these respects who have the greatest claim on us. At the same time, these various types of unity are not the basis for the ummah's makeup and identity. They are defining characteristics which exist of necessity, and some of which may be outside of our control. However, membership in an ummah in the religious sense is something we consciously decide on, and which comes about by virtue of a deliberate individual choice. Consequently, it cannot be forced upon us from without.

(b) *Manifestations of Tawhīd in the Political Order*

As a central value in Islam, affirmation of the divine unity is the source of other Islamic values as well. Its content is reflected in all realms of thought and life, from the political system to aesthetic and artistic values. The divine unity is manifested most fundamentally in the unity of the Muslim community, or ummah, which is a basic condition for fulfillment of the purposes of human *khilāfah* in the political realm, as elsewhere. In other words, the ummah is the major formative unit of the Islamic political system. If unity is an attribute of God Almighty, this calls for the unity of the community of faith associated with God's religion. As God has declared, "Verily, [O you who believe in Me], this community of yours is one single community, since I am the Sustainer of you all: worship, then, Me [alone]!" (*sūrah al-Anbiyā'* 21:92).

As we have seen, the concept of ummah is a uniquely Islamic one characterized by a universality that goes beyond ethnicity, color, language, and location. Similarly, it transcends political authority, and in this way it enables Muslims to carry out their religious obligations while at the same time enjoying their legitimate rights anywhere on earth. Such individuals can adhere to the civil laws of the society in which they reside as long as these laws allow them to carry out their Islamic religious obligations. In such a situation, by virtue of their ethical conduct, Muslims can be an example that draws others to their

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religion, encouraging others to embrace Islam and, in so doing, to join the Muslim community. If, on the other hand, Muslims are not free in the country where they reside to practice their Islamic faith, they have the option of emigrating to some other country where they will be free to do so: “And he who forsakes the domain of evil for the sake of God shall find on earth many a lonely road, and well as life abundant...” (*sūrah al-Nisā’* 4:100).

The Prophet’s Companions and their immediate successors demonstrated great interest in the sayings and actions of the Prophet. This interest was a reflection of the nature of the Islamic religion itself and the historical movement that was produced by the application of Islamic principles. For the Islamic religion is, first and foremost, a practical, realistic, applied religion, not a utopian, pie-in-the-sky preoccupation with things that can never be. The details of the Prophet’s life helped his Companions and those who succeeded them to move from the realm of abstract, theoretical understanding into realms that would translate this understanding into concrete action. Practical details are the ways in which the values of the religion express themselves. They also perform an educational function in that they make such values easier to grasp.

The Islamic understanding of the ummah, or Muslim people, has three distinguishing features. First, the Muslim ummah is one in its worldview, which consists of an awareness of the values that shape the divine will and the ability to discern how these values apply to new and changing situations, problems and questions. It is this ability that gives Islamic values an ongoing vitality and effectiveness. Second, the Muslim community is one in its readiness to translate the values that determine what ought to be into concrete practices on the level of individuals, groups, and leadership in such a way that the members of the Muslim ummah work together toward their desired aims. Third, the Muslim ummah is one in its practical orientation and creativity, both of which are needed in order for its members to be *khalīfah* on earth. In other words, the Muslim ummah strives together for the legitimate enjoyment of the blessings of this world, including a prosperous life and a sense of individual and collective security. This striving includes efforts to prevent the spread of ignorance, poverty, and disease or, at

the very least, to minimize their impacts. These three distinguishing features are thus indicative of the Muslim ummah's consensus in terms of vision, will, and action.

The affirmation of God's oneness expressed in the testimony that "there is no god but God" means, among other things, that the divine guidance is valid for everyone everywhere, that the Muslim ummah is the foundation for human togetherness, and that the concept of ummah differs from non-Islamic religious concepts in that it gives the followers of other religions the right to come together on the basis of their own religion; in fact, it urges them to do so. The ummah integrates the followers of these other religions into Muslim society while allowing them to retain their own religious identities and institutions. The constitution of a Muslim society must convey to all that they are invited to enter Islam or, at the very least, to enter Islam's protection, while continuing to protect their rights as religious minorities and promote an environment of peace. This global feature of the affirmation of God's oneness is thus an open invitation to peace. It does not necessarily ensure people's entry into Islam. However, it does guarantee the establishment of peaceful relations in the context of which human freedom and dignity are nourished and maintained via mutual understanding, neighborliness, and cooperation in the areas of the economy, society, thought and culture. To deprive people of freedom is to violate their human dignity. Hence, every member of a Muslim society should enjoy complete freedom to choose his or own religious affiliation.

When the world is imbued with ethical values, God's will is done, and human beings' care for and preservation of this world become a form of worship. Every one of God's creatures is an instrument for the perfect fulfillment of God's will. However, human beings are creatures upon whom a special honor has been bestowed. As such, they possess the ability and the will to fulfill the divine will. They are not in an existential predicament from which they have no ability to escape; hence, they do not need a rescuer or savior. Rather, all they need is to carry out their duties, and once they have done this, their value will increase in proportion to their achievements. Affirmation of the divine oneness is likewise an affirmation that it is God's will for blessing to come to all human beings. Ethical action possesses the same value regardless of

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people's customs, the color of their skin, or where they live. Hence, an ethical life is of universal value, and is societal in nature.

### *(c) Manifestations of Tawhīd in the Economic System<sup>10</sup>*

In al Fārūqī's view, the value-based dimension that follows from the testimony that "there is no god but God" is among the most significant manifestations of *tawhīd* in Islam. The will of God Almighty possesses ultimate value, and everything else derives its value from this will. People's worship of God Almighty is a fulfillment of the divine will, which is what gives true value to time and place. The divine purpose for creating the world was to build a world filled with values through human beings' possession of the divine worldview and the ethical action with which they fill their lives. As human beings are mindful of all the things around them, every one of which is of cosmic value, they perceive their obligation to preserve, improve, and beautify this world. All human beings are equal, and no one surpasses any other except by virtue of good works (consciousness of God). Similarly, all things in this world operate in keeping with God's laws, and their value is enhanced by their being put to beneficial use by human beings in their endeavors to help the world fulfill its God-given potential.

As a religion that declares God's oneness, Islam affirms the need for a balanced relationship between the material and the spiritual. By virtue of this affirmation, Islam seeks to bring benefit and blessing to human beings everywhere by striving to make beneficial use of the Earth's resources, by providing for people's material needs, and by promoting integrated development. Any and all spiritual progress or advancement must be accompanied by material improvement as well (and vice-versa), because, if there is no balance between the material and spiritual dimensions, the order of life will be disturbed.

The economic system in Islam is based on two principles. According to the first principle, no individual or group has the right to exploit others. According to the second principle, no individual or group has the right to impose an economic blockade on others or deny them access to merchandise or services. Ibn Khaldūn made clear that principles such as these are universal social laws. Human beings are civic by

nature. In other words, human life requires some sort of a collectivity in order for there to be cooperation and integration between individuals and communities with interconnected, shared interests. Hence, the Prophet did away with the arrangements that had been in place among the various tribes of the Arabian Peninsula in order to facilitate transportation, travel, migration and free trade. Similarly, the second Caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb abolished all customs border checkpoints in order to ease the movement of persons and merchandise among the various territories of the Islamic state. Indeed, trade between the various Islamic administrative districts and the Byzantine Empire remained unfettered even in times of hostility and armed conflict.

Belief in the divine oneness is likewise reflected in the general principles operative in an Islamic economy. It has manifested itself, for example, in Muslims’ work ethic and Islamic principles of production. One such principle stipulates that one should produce more than one consumes, offer more services than one uses, and give the world during one’s lifetime more than one has received. Another Islamic principle of production stipulates that agricultural and industrial production should be geared toward what will most benefit consumers without doing harm to the resources of which human beings have been made *khalīfah*. A third such principle stipulates that if one is given use of something that belongs to someone else, one should always return it to its owner in the same or better condition than it was when one first received it. A fourth principle requires that products be untainted in any way, and that services be rendered in an entirely honest and straightforward manner, not for fear of detection by surveillance institutions but, rather, out of a desire to abide by the noble ideals that arise from belief in *tawhīd*, by a God-given aspiration to do good, and the inward satisfaction that comes from doing the divine will and anticipating a goodly reward in the life hereafter.

With respect to the ethics of production and consumption, belief in *tawhīd* gives rise to a number of principles. These include a positive attitude to material consumption, in other words, an awareness of the value of material things and the importance of meeting one’s fundamental material needs, yet not to the point of wastefulness and extravagance. Surplus production in an Islamic economy is to be reinvested in

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order to increase production, enrich the Muslim ummah, and contribute to social services and other good causes in the hope of winning God's favor and demonstrating compassion and solidarity with those in need. There are numerous possible ways of spending funds in order to meet basic needs on the levels of the individual, the society, and the state. On the level of the individual, one is required to support his family and distribute the zakah he owes among the individuals and groups specified in the Qur'an.<sup>11</sup> Individual Muslims may also extend voluntary charity to whoever else they feel moved to assist. When a Muslim dies, whatever wealth he or she has left is distributed according to a highly precise and equitable system. On the level of the state, there is an ample treasury which is supplied from specific sources, including public properties and zakah funds that exceed people's needs. Non-zakah funds collected from the wealthy, through various types of taxes, for example, is spent by the government to strengthen and protect the Muslim ummah by spearheading production and investment projects in agriculture, industry, and services. Out of the proceeds of such enterprises the state pays the salaries of the military and government employees, builds roads, opens schools and hospitals, and so on.

The ethics of an Islamic economic system as they apply to work, production and consumption promote positive attitudes, responsibility and equity, thereby helping to achieve material and spiritual well-being for the members of society.

### *(d) Manifestations of Tawhīd in the Aesthetic Realm<sup>12</sup>*

In keeping with Islam's emphasis on strict monotheism (*tawhīd*), Muslim artists developed the art of embellishment. They then developed this art into a form of abstract representation known as "Arabesque," which extends infinitely in all directions until it is disconnected from the material nature of things and is transformed into nothing but a field of vision. With their various forms, including the intricate interlacing of shapes and letters, Arabesque and Arabic calligraphy convey a highly developed awareness of the transcendent. Even when Muslim artists use the forms of plants, animals, or human beings in their drawings, they shape them in such a way that they transcend materiality. Muslim

artists thus turn their linguistic and literary heritage into a panorama of meanings and ideas by projecting their aesthetic values onto the interiors and exteriors of buildings. In this way, *tawhīd* becomes the key to explaining and interpreting the works of Muslim artists whose view of the universe has been transformed by Islam into elements that transcend geographical location, language, or ethnicity.

The absence from Islamic culture of art forms that involve the representation of persons – such as sculpting, drawing, painting, and drama – has been an expression of the absolute commitment to the divine oneness and the refusal to attribute any quality that might be associated with creatures to God the Creator. The absence of these art forms has thus been an attempt to avoid any sort of *shirk*, or association of partners with God, by fostering a constant awareness of the divine transcendence and hence, the impossibility the Divine's being embodied in any way. Attempts to represent God in any sort of natural form, even in the form of a human being, are viewed by Islam as superficial and naïve, incapable of symbolizing the All-Transcendent One who deserves to be recognized as totally Other than the finite creation. Muslims' realization that God Almighty cannot be represented in any kind of material, visible form is, in fact, the most sublime aesthetic value to which human beings can attain, since no physical creature can represent God in His transcendence and perfection. The Qur'an's declaration concerning God Almighty that "...there is nothing like unto Him..." (*sūrah al-Shūrā* 42:11) embodies the most perfect awareness of beauty.

Al Fārūqī holds that seen in light of the doctrine of *tawhīd*, art might be likened to an attempt to read into nature an essence that is not there, and to give this essence the visible form best suited to it. However, rather than being found in Nature, this essence exists above and beyond Nature, because it belongs solely to Nature's transcendent Creator. This pre-existing essence, which is the object of aesthetic experience and perception, is the aspect of beauty that stirs human emotions and lifts them beyond material forms which, in and of themselves, are devoid of all true value.

Al Fārūqī describes representative art as the expression of the inexpressible, which is, of course, an impossibility! However, Muslim artists

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have approached this impossible task through what al Fārūqī terms “the Islamic artistic genius,” and “Islamic artistic breakthroughs.” The example al Fārūqī cites of this phenomenon is that of a Muslim artist who represents a plant or a flower in a manner that differs entirely from the way in which an individual plant or flower would actually appear. Instead, the artist presents infinitely repeated images of the plant or flower, thereby canceling out its individuality and driving its natural attributes out of human consciousness. The aesthetic depiction of the infinite and inexpressible through the repetition of the object being depicted is an attempt to convey nonverbally a message similar to that contained in the verbal formula, “There is no god but God.” The genius of the Arabic language and Arabic poetry were both sources of great pride to the Arabs of the pre-Islamic era. The revelation of the Qur’an then brought Arabic to new heights which created for the Arabs, then for the entire Muslim community after them, new standards of beauty that found sublime expression on the levels of visible form, sound, and profound universal meanings.

In concluding our discussion of the doctrine of the divine oneness we wish to emphasize two points. The first is that Muslim scholars are in unanimous agreement that *tauhīd* is the very cornerstone of Islam, that gives Islamic civilization its identity. Utterly central to the Islamic worldview, *tauhīd* serves as the source of Islamic values that find concrete expression in virtually all aspects of Islamic life, from thought and rational investigation, to the political, social and economic systems, to the realm of aesthetics and Muslims’ approach to the various art forms. The second point is that *tauhīd* is the foundation for the unity of knowledge, which serves in turn as the foundation for epistemological integration in the Islamic worldview, and in Islamic methodology and practice.

### *Tazkiyah, “Purification” in Islam’s Governing System of Values*

In the Islamic perspective, a divinely revealed religion has no meaning without an affirmation of a single Creator, nor without a process by which to purify human beings who, as God’s creatures, need to be empowered to bear the trust involved in being *khalīfah* on Earth. It is

human beings who are addressed by the revelation that has been sent down from on high by the One Creator, who believe in the Creator's unity, who acknowledge themselves as His servants, and who strive accordingly to use their mental and physical capacities to better the Earth and human life. And it is through such striving that human beings purge themselves, their possessions, and their relationships of all that is unworthy of God's blessing.

Our purpose in this discussion is to arrive at an epistemological perspective on purification, *tazkiyah*, which occupies an important place in the Qur'anic value system. The object of purification and reform is human beings who – as individuals, groups, and members of the wider ummah – are accountable before God for the way they dispose of what they have been entrusted with on Earth. Since human beings live on both a material plane and a spiritual plane, the process of purification likewise takes place on both these planes. Reform must advance human beings along the path of purification; otherwise, it is devoid of value. *Tazkiyah* is both the end served by human development and the means by which development takes place. More than a matter of individual feelings, emotions or scruples, *tazkiyah* is also a vital element of social development.

A discussion of *tazkiyah* will touch on the various meanings of the term *tazkiyah* as it is used in the Holy Qur'an, the place occupied by the concept of *tazkiyah* in the thought and practice of Muslim ascetics, mystics and warriors, as well as *tazkiyah* as a fundamental purpose of divine revelation.

#### *Purification-Related Terms and Concepts in the Holy Qur'an*

Derivatives of the Arabic root *z – k – w* occur fifty-nine times in the Qur'an. These include *zakā*, *zakkā*, *azkā*, *zakiyyan*, *zakāh*, and others. The term *zakah* – which connotes purification, blessing and growth – occurs thirty-two times in reference to the portion of a Muslim's wealth that he or she is required to spend on needy members of the Muslim society, and four times in the sense of praise and commendation. The word *tazkiyah* occurs four times in reference to one of the four purposes of the divine revelation, while the remaining occurrences refer to

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processes such as purging, advancement, development, and increased goodness and benefit. In what follows we will discuss selected passages that serve to clarify a number of the specific meanings conveyed by the term *tazkiyah* in the Qur'an.

### *Purification of the Individual*

An individual is purified by entering into faith. God Almighty once reminded the Prophet that a certain blind man who had approached him in search of understanding "...might perhaps have grown in purity" (*sūrah Abasa* 80:3). It is by seeking self-purification that one avoids the fires of hell: "For, distant from it shall remain he who is truly conscious of God: he that spends his possessions [on others] so that he might grow in purity" (*sūrah al-Layl* 92:17-18). Those who strive for self-purification bring great benefit to themselves. Thus did God Almighty explain to the Prophet, "...thou canst [truly] warn only those who stand in awe of their Sustainer although He is beyond the reach of their perception, and are constant in prayer, and [know that] whoever grows in purity, attains to purity but for the good of his own self, and [that] with God is all journeys' end" (*sūrah Fāṭir* 35:18). Someone who is characterized by faith, goodness, righteousness and loyalty may be described as "an innocent human being," that is, a pure soul or "a soul endowed with purity" (*nafs zakiyyah*), (*sūrah al-Kahf* 18:74 and *sūrah Maryam* 19:19). The longest oath sworn by God in the Holy Qur'an has to do with purification of the soul:

By the Sun and his [glorious] splendour;  
By the Moon as she follows him;  
By the Day as it shows up [the Sun's] glory;  
By the Night as it conceals it;  
By the Firmament and its [wonderful] structure;  
By the Earth and its [wide] expanse;  
By the Soul and the proportion and order given to it;  
And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;  
Truly he succeeds that purifies it,  
And he fails that corrupts it!                      (*Sūrah al-Shams*, 91:1-10)

God Almighty swears in this passage of the Qur'an by a number of His creation – the sun, the moon, the day, the night, the heavens and the earth, and the human soul. Given the sheer number of entities by which the Almighty has sworn, there can be no doubt that the declaration whose truth He has sworn to must be of great import. And indeed, the truth to which the Almighty has sworn is that those who purify their souls will meet with success, and that those who corrupt their souls will meet with failure: “Truly he succeeds that purifies it [the soul], and he fails that corrupts it!” Purification of the soul involves avoiding sinful acts that would incite God's displeasure and performing works of righteousness that merit His favor. As for corruption of the soul, it comes about by succumbing willfully to the temptation to act unrighteously, which prevents one's soul from progressing spiritually and thereby experiencing blessing and growth in goodness.

The human soul that either prospers due to having undergone purification or is cast into the abyss of loss and despair due to having allowed itself to be corrupted represents the entire human being – body, mind and spirit. A “soul” may be either an individual human being or a human collectivity. Human beings possess various forms of wealth by divine proxy. In other words, this wealth has been entrusted to them by its Owner, who is God Almighty. They also live in a God-given environment over which God has appointed them *khalīfah* who are responsible for using their God-given wealth to develop the Earth to the fullest and build human civilization. However, the focal point of purification is the human psyche, the seat of emotion, caring and feeling, which brings about the ascent and progress of the restless inner self, “...for, verily, man's inner self does incite [him] to evil,...” (*sūrah Yūsuf* 12:53; cf. *sūrah al-Ma'ārij* 70:19). After hearing the accusing voice of conscience, the soul continues to grow in purity until it becomes fully pleasing to God in every respect and worthy to hear the Almighty address it with the words, “Return thou unto thy Sustainer, well-pleased [and] pleasing [to Him]; enter, then, together with My [other true] servants – yea, enter thou My paradise!” (*sūrah al-Fajr* 89:28-30).

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### *Purification of the Feelings and Social Relations*

Derivatives of the word *tazkiyah* are often used in the sense of a cleansing and elevation of the emotions and of social relations. When, for example, a husband and wife divorce, there is a tendency for people to succumb to feelings of hatred and bitterness where there had once been love and affection. Such feelings might prompt the woman's family to forbid her to return to her husband even in situations where the husband and wife wish to be reunited. However, God makes it clear in the Qur'an that reconciliation is best for everyone, and that reestablishing harmony and goodwill in their marriage will bring greater purity to their hearts than continuing to harbor doubt and suspicion. The issue, then, has to do with the promotion of thoughts and feelings that will purify people's hearts, strengthen relationships, and reinforce systems that are beneficial to society. God Almighty says:

And when you divorce women, and they fulfill the term of their 'Iddah [waiting period], do not prevent them from marrying their [former] husbands if they mutually agree on equitable terms. This instruction is for all amongst you who believe in God and the Last Day. That is [the course making for] most virtue and purity amongst you (*dhālika azkā lakum*). And God knows, and ye know not. (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:232)

According to Ibn Ashur, the phrase translated here as “[the course making for] most...purity amongst you” means that a wife's return to her husband,

will be most conducive to a life of purity on both her part and his, more likely to preserve both her honor and his, as well as being most conducive to goodness and blessing for everyone concerned. The term *azkā* (“purer”) refers to increase and abundance. This is because they [the wives' families] had been hindering them from returning to their husbands out of a zeal to prevent their reputation from being tarnished. However, God informs them that allowing the woman to be reconciled to her husband will do more to protect their honor, since it will help to preserve the goodwill between the families who been brought closer through the ties of marriage. Hence, if, by hindering a divorced woman from being reunited to her husband, her family is attempting to ward off harm or prevent injustice, their

decision to allow her to return to her husband is an act of magnanimity and pardon by means of they seek to mend what needs mending.<sup>13</sup>

The phrase “most conducive to your purity” (*azkā lakum*) or “most conducive to their purity” (*azkā lahum*) recurs in contexts in which a given practice might cause offense or harm. For example, refraining from asking to be received as a guest in someone’s house out of respect for others’ privacy, refraining from looking unduly at members of the opposite sex, and refraining from sexual relations in the wrong situations in order to preserve one’s own and others’ honor, all result in the purification of both one’s conscience and one’s outward conduct. As a result, one’s whole being is lifted to a higher plane and one becomes more aware of God’s surveillance of everything one thinks and does. We are told, for example, “...if you find no one within [a house], do not enter it until you are given leave; and if you are told, ‘Turn back’, then turn back. This will be most conducive to your purity (*huwa azkā lakum*); and God has full knowledge of all that you do” (*sūrah al-Nūr* 24:28). And, “Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: this will be most conducive to their purity (*dhālika azkā lahum*) – [and] verily, God is aware of all that they do” (*sūrah al-Nūr* 24:30).

### *Purification of Wealth*

With regard to the term *zakah*, which refers to one of the five pillars of Islam and a uniquely Islamic religious obligation, Ibn Ashur holds that prior to the revelation of the Qur’an the word *zakah* was never used in the sense of wealth spent for God’s sake, and that it is only in the Qur’an that we find the word used in this way.<sup>14</sup> As a pillar of the Islamic religion, *zakah* is on a par with the testimony that “there is no God but God,” ritual prayer, fasting the month of Ramadan, and making the major pilgrimage to Makkah. A unique mainstay of the overall social system, *zakah* functions to purify the individual Muslim of niggardliness by helping him or her not to become too attached to his or her wealth; at the same time it honors the rights of the community and its members. *Zakah* is of great importance to the economic system, since the act of collecting money is looked upon in Islam as a form of

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worship. Zakah, which consists of a specified portion of the individual's wealth which is given to the community, only comes into force when the individual has full possession of the wealth concerned and is therefore free to dispose of it as he/she sees fit due to his/her having earned it through honest labor. Zakah is levied on production, agricultural yield, industry and trade, and is associated with specific times and amounts. It is due on wealth that exceeds a particular amount and must have been in its owner's possession for an entire year. It is also associated with specific times of the year, such as the harvest season ("...give [unto the poor] their due on harvest day..." – *sūrah al-An'ām* 6:141). As for the amount due, it may be 2.5 percent, 5 percent, 10 percent, or 20 percent depending on the type of wealth in question and the type of work performed in order to acquire it. The percentage of wealth spent on society's interests might be as much as 100 percent in the case of energy resources that cannot be held as private property.

Zakah is a guaranteed means of bringing blessing and increase: "And [remember:] whatever you may give out in usury so that it might increase through [other] people's possessions will bring [you] no increase in the sight of God – whereas all that you give out in charity, seeking God's countenance, [will be blessed by him:] for it is they, they [who thus seek His countenance] that shall have their recompense multiplied!" (*sūrah al-Rūm* 30:39). So, whoever is looking for a kind of commerce that is guaranteed to multiply his wealth, let him give of his wealth in the form of zakah.

God Almighty has promised to be with His people. "And God said: 'Behold, I shall be with you!...' " (*sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:12). What a marvelous Companion to have! However, God's companionship is tied to certain conditions, one of which is one's willingness to distribute one's wealth in charity, that is, zakah: "...If you are constant in prayer, and spend in charity (zakah), and believe in My apostles and aid them, and offer up unto God a goodly loan,..." (*sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:12). God's companionship is a great blessing, one that guides us and protects us. However, it is also conditional, since it requires that we,

obey Him by conducting ourselves according to His conditions...and that we base our economic life on an approach that guarantees that wealth will not simply be

passed back and forth among the wealthy, lest wealth amassed in the hands of a few lead to economic depression due to the masses' inability to purchase and consume. In such a situation the wheel of production will grind to a halt, or, at the very least, become painfully slow, leading to luxury and opulence on the part of some, hardship and deprivation on the part of others, and corruption and imbalance in the society at large...All these evils are prevented by *zakāh*. They are prevented by God's approach to the distribution of wealth and economic management...<sup>15</sup>

The contemporary Islamic economic order rests on usurious interest, and most people would have a hard time conceiving of a valid system based on any other practice. *Zakah* has become little more than a form of individual altruism which could never serve as the basis for a modern economy. Hence, people in our day have lost their sense of what *zakah* is and could be, since they have never witnessed the implementation of a truly Islamic economy.

*Purification of the Community of Faith as a  
Purpose of Divine Revelation*

Derivatives of the root  $z - k - w$  occurring in four verses of the Qur'an refer to purification as an explicit purpose of the divine revelation, particularly the divine revelation given to the seal of the prophets, Muhammad. These four verses read as follows:

“O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto Thee, and make out of our offspring a community that shall surrender itself unto Thee, and show us our way of worship, and accept our repentance: for, verily, Thou alone art the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace! O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle from amongst themselves, who shall convey unto them Thy messages, and impart unto them revelation as well as wisdom, and cause them to grow in purity (*yuzakkīhim*); for, verily, Thou alone art Almighty, truly Wise!”  
(*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:128-129)

Even as We have sent unto you an apostle from among yourselves to convey unto you Our messages, and to cause you to grow in purity (*yuzakkīkum*), and to impart unto you revelation and wisdom, and to teach you that which you knew not.  
(*Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:151)

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Indeed, God bestowed a favour upon the believers when he raised up in their midst an apostle from among themselves, to convey His messages unto them, and to cause them to grow in purity, and to impart unto them the divine writ as well as wisdom – whereas before that they were indeed, most obviously, lost in error. (*Sūrah Āl-Imrān*, 3:164)

He it is who has sent unto the unlettered people an apostle from among themselves, to convey unto them His messages, and to cause them to grow in purity, and to impart unto them the divine writ as well as wisdom – whereas before that they were indeed, most obviously, lost in error. (*Sūrah al-Jum'ah*, 62:2)

The first passage cited here contains a supplication that was uttered by Abraham, upon him be peace, in which he asked God to make his offspring into a nation or community submitted to God, and to send them an apostle who would be one of their own. The apostle that Abraham asked God Almighty to send would come to accomplish four tasks: (1) to convey God's messages to his people, (2) to impart revelation to them, (3) to give them wisdom, and (4) to cause them to grow in purity. As for the other three passages, they speak of the way in which God graciously answered the prophet Abraham's supplication by sending His Messenger, Muhammad and by bringing the Muslim ummah into existence. In this connection two observations are in order. The first observation is that purification is mentioned in Abraham's prayer as the fourth task or purpose which the coming apostle was to accomplish, whereas in the other three passages cited above, purification is listed immediately after that of conveying God's messages. The second observation is that the purification spoken of was to take place within the Muslim ummah for whom God's prophet Abraham had prayed. In the second passage cited above, God addresses this community directly, while in the third and fourth, He speaks of them in the third person as "believers" and as "an unlettered people" respectively. Hence, it will be seen that neither purification nor any of the other three purposes the Apostle was sent to fulfill had to do with disciplining the individual, building individual character, or refining or elevating individual consciousness, sentiments, or emotions. However, although the Qur'anic passages addressing human beings as agents who are accountable to God are generally addressed to a plurality they

nevertheless include all units of that plurality, from the individual to the family to the tribe and beyond, since the aim of divine revelation ultimately is to purify all of human civilization.

These four Qur'anic passages set forth a program for educating the Muslim community. This program consists of four principle components which work together to build up the community, define its image, and determine its defining characteristics. The first component of the divinely-inspired program is that of conveying God's signs. It should be remembered that the word translated as "signs" here is the same used in Arabic to refer to verses of the Qur'an (*āyāt*). Hence, "conveying [God's] signs" (*tilāwah al-āyāt*) can also be understood as "reciting [God's] verses." This process involves wiping out illiteracy or "unletteredness" on its various levels, from the inability to read and write to ignorance in the realms of learning and culture, and elevating those to whom such recitation is addressed to a plane on which they experience the dignity of being honored by God by virtue of reciting His revelation and benefitting from its content. The second component is purification, which encompasses the dimensions of refinement, purgation, blessing, increase and abundance. The third component is that of imparting revelation, that is, conveying its content to people on the levels of knowledge and moral guidance. And the fourth component is instruction in wisdom, that is, teaching others the content of the revelation in such a way that it bears fruit on the level of both word and deed, acquiring greater spiritual discernment and insightfulness, and developing the ability to weigh matters properly by understanding both their causes and their purposes.

*Purification as Understood by the Schools of Renunciation (Zuhd),  
Mysticism (Taṣawwuf) and Struggle (Jihad)*

During the early days of Islam, some of the Prophet's Companions chose to adopt a lifestyle of asceticism. Later, as some classes of Muslim society became increasingly worldly and as ongoing political strife became the order of the day, the tendency toward asceticism developed into a kind of isolation from society, and the associated practice developed into what came to be known as Sufism. Sufism was marked

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by the renunciation of the passing satisfactions of this earthly life and regular engagement in acts of piety in pursuit of greater nearness to God Almighty. As time went on, these forms of self-purification and personal piety took on a collective quality as like-minded practitioners gathered into distinct groups whose members committed themselves to the teachings of a defined leadership and particular patterns of behavior in the areas of worship and *dhikr*, or invocation of the Divine, as well as in their manner of relating to each other as members of a spiritual community. Eventually there grew up a specialized vocabulary having to do with Sufi thought and practice with the result that some Sufi terms, while appearing to mean one thing to the layperson, might bear another, esoteric meaning to members of the Sufi brotherhood or its spiritual leaders. An example of such terminology is what came to be known in certain Sufi orders as the tripartite system of *takhallī* – *tahallī* – *tajallī*. The term *takhallī* refers to the abandonment of sinful actions, while *tahallī* means taking on certain virtuous, godly qualities. Steady commitment to both *takhallī* and *tahallī* may enable the aspirant to enter a state of spiritual transparency and psychological transport to which Sufis refer as *tajallī*, in which the aspirant experiences the divine presence descending upon him and manifesting itself within him.

However, some Sufi practices became associated with terms and forms of behavior that were viewed as unacceptable innovations, while other practices having to do with asceticism and advancement along the path of self-purification remained within the realm of orthodoxy. Some Sufi orders engaged in armed conflict against the enemies of Islam, while others worked to propagate the Islamic faith in numerous regions of Africa and Asia.

As one might expect, *tazkiyah* is associated with various forms of struggle, or jihad. There is the inward struggle against one's baser self. This type of struggle is referred to in God Almighty's declaration that "But as for those who strive hard in Our cause – We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us: for, behold, God is indeed with the doers of good" (*sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt* 29:69). There is the struggle that involves sacrificing personal comfort, possessions, and sometimes one's very life. This type of struggle is spoken of in the Qur'an's reference to "Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the

faith, with their property and their persons, in the cause of God,..." (sūrah al-Anfāl 8:72, Abdullah Yusuf Ali). In addition, there is a struggle that involves the sacrifice of one's wealth; the Qur'an speaks approvingly of the person who "...spends his possessions [on others] so that he might grow in purity" (sūrah al-Layl 92:18).

It thus becomes clear that on the individual level, purification has to do with feelings, thoughts, intentions, attitudes, and personal conduct. Those who strive for self-purification are promised success in the true sense of the word. *Tazkiyah* also takes place on the level of the social life. Hence, the Prophet who was sent to Mankind helps people to grow in purity by improving relations between people and reforming social and economic systems. *Tazkiyah* also takes place in relation to people's wealth and possessions. The zakah which the Muslim is required to distribute among the needy is a means of purifying the individual who distributes the wealth, the wealth of the individual, and the wealth of the society as a whole; this is a process that brings both blessing and increase. The various meanings of the term "*tazkiyah*," which complete and complement one another, encompass everything the Muslim might contemplate, everything he or she might strive to learn about through study and research, and everything he or she strives to achieve in this world and the next. These, then, are the three spheres of Islamic methodology: thought, research, and conduct.

*‘Umrān, Societal Development and Prosperity in  
the Islamic Value System*

If *tawhīd*, the affirmation of the divine unity, has fundamentally to do with the Islamic vision of the God who creates and orders the universe, and if *tazkiyah*, or purification, has to do with the Islamic view of human beings as creatures with God-given responsibilities and tasks, then *‘umrān*, or societal development and prosperity, has to do with the Islamic view of human beings' function as *khalīfah*. In keeping with this worldview, human development and prosperity constitute a normative standard, i.e., a value, on the basis of which the value of life is measured both individually and collectively. It is also a normative standard for evaluating and correcting the development efforts and achievements of the individual, community or nation.

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As we have stated before, the values of *tawhīd*, *tazkiyah* and *‘umrān* are intimately linked. Taken together, they constitute an integrated system which forms the foundation for the methodology of epistemological integration. *Tawhīd* is the most significant fact of existence. The divine unity is a reality with intrinsic value out of which other realities proceed. The entire cosmos is subject by nature to the requirements of the divine unity. This is why, if human beings wish to be in harmony with the universe, they must strive for self-purification by worshipping God alone and submitting to God’s guidance in relation to how they manage their affairs and relate to other creatures. Purification is both the means and the end of human development and prosperity; as such, it lies at the very heart of the social structure.

This tripartite system of values makes up an authoritative frame of reference in relation to which we can discern God’s purpose in creation. It likewise serves as a normative system of values that yields all of the primary and secondary values in the Islamic religion. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that it is an expression of the true nature of things, not an external frame of reference which is imposed on things from without.

We will be discussing the value of *‘umrān* in the sense of prosperous human development (civilization) from a juristic perspective, i.e., *fiqh al-‘umrān*, and the link between this “value” and the life God desires for human beings. Jurisprudence is simply what God Almighty has to say about people’s actions: which actions merit God’s favor, which actions God forbids, and which actions He exhorts us to avoid, the aim throughout being to ensure people’s well-being and spare them undue hardship. Prosperous societal development constitutes a value that governs our understanding of human striving in this earthly life, particularly the striving of society as a whole as this relates to systems of administration and public affairs. Societal development manifests itself in the material aspects of our lives, including buildings and roads, agriculture and industry. It also manifests itself in the emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives, including ways of maintaining security, upholding justice, and engaging in collective consultation. The task of society’s influential and wealthy stratum, including its rulers, is to serve the interests of the ordinary members of society, while the task of

society at large is to pray for God to grant blessing and strength to those in positions of influence.

During the days when the Muslims heeded “the jurisprudence of prosperous human development” (*fiqh al-‘umrān*), their lives were filled with blessing. Institutions of learning spread far and wide and God opened up to them the treasures of heaven and earth. They enjoyed an abundance of all that they needed, and thanks to the advanced, refined civilization they propagated, they were sought out by other nations. When, conversely, Muslims disregarded this same jurisprudence, they grew weak. Their power and authority waned, their empire crumbled, and they were vanquished by their foes. Their negligence and inattention were revealed in a lack of ambition and a preference for a life of ease and indolence. At times these weaknesses were exacerbated by writings that promoted unwholesome notions which had no claim to being valid understandings of Islamic law. Such writings promoted a disdain for the life of this world, a denial of its value, and a refusal to involve oneself in its affairs. The result was a tendency to neglect society’s affairs and a failure to protect people’s interests and rights or demonstrate a sense of belonging to the Muslim ummah.

We will commence our discussion of *‘umrān* with an examination of this term’s use in the Holy Qur’an. We will then look at the link the Qur’an draws between the population and development of the Earth, the nature of the life to which this leads, and the fate that awaits human beings thereafter. The discussion will be concluded with a reference to the pioneering work of Ibn Khaldūn, who drew inspiration from Qur’anic guidance for the creation of a new discipline which he termed “the science of human development” (*‘ilm al-‘umrān al-bashari*).

### *‘Umrān in the Language of the Qur’an*

Derivations of the trilateral root *‘ - m - r* occur twenty-five times in the Qur’an. Three of these are in the form of a proper noun:

Behold, God raised Adam, and Noah, and the House of Abraham, and the House of ‘Imrān above all mankind. (*Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* 3:33)

And [We have propounded yet another parable of God-consciousness in the story of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity, whereupon We

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breathed of Our spirit into that [which was in her womb], and who accepted the truth of her Sustainer's words – and [thus,] of His revelations – and was one of the truly devout. (*Sūrah al-Taḥrīm*, 66:12)

when a woman of [the House of] 'Imrān prayed, “O my Sustainer, Behold, unto Thee do I vow [the child] that is in my womb, to be devoted to Thy service. Accept it, then, from me: verily, Thou alone art All-Hearing, All-Knowing!” (*Sūrah Āl 'Imran*, 3:35)

The root  $^c - m - r$  occurs three times in reference to the rite of minor pilgrimage or “pious visit” (*umrah*) to the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Unlike the major pilgrimage (hajj), which can only be performed during a particular month of the year, the minor pilgrimage can be performed at any time, as a result of which the Sacred Mosque in Makkah is filled with pilgrims all year round,  $^c - m - r$ : “And perform the pilgrimage (hajj) and the pious visit (*umrah*) [to Makkah] in honour of God; and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford...” (*sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:196).

The root  $^c - m - r$  occurs three times in connection with visiting and maintaining mosques:

It is not for those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God to visit or tend (*ya'muru*) God's houses of worship, the while [by their beliefs] they bear witness against themselves that they are denying the truth. It is they whose works shall come to nought, and they who in the fire shall abide! Only he should visit or tend (*ya'muru*) God's houses of worship who believes in God and the Last Day, and is constant in prayer, and spends in charity, and stands in awe of none but God: for [only such as] these may hope to be among the right-guided! Do you, perchance, regard the [mere] giving of water to pilgrims, and the tending of the Inviolable House of Worship (*imārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*) as being equal to [the works of] one who believes in God and the Last Day and strives hard in God's cause? These [things] are not equal in the sight of God. And God does not grace with His guidance people who [deliberately] do wrong. (*Sūrah al-Taubah* 9:17-19)

Another use of the root  $^c - m - r$  is as an adjective describing a house of worship: “Consider Mount Sinai! Consider [God's] revelation, inscribed on wide-open scrolls. Consider the long-enduring house [of worship] (*al-bayt al-ma'mūr*)!” (*sūrah al-Ṭūr* 52:1-4).<sup>16</sup>

In three other places the same root occurs in the sense of settling on land and cultivating it, constructing dwellings and castles, and establishing a settled community after having lived a nomadic existence. God speaks of peoples who dwelled on the land for a long time, built up strength, tilled the land and extracted its minerals:

Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth and beheld what happened in the end to those [deniers of the truth] who lived before their time? Greater were they in power than they are; and they left a stronger impact on the earth, and built it up (*amarūhā*) even better than these [are doing] (*akthar mim mā amarūhā*); and to them [too] came their apostles with all evidence of the truth: and so, [when they rejected the truth and thereupon perished,] it was not God who wronged them, but it was they who had wronged themselves. (*Sūrah al-Rūm* 30:9)

This may be a reference to the people of <sup>ʿ</sup>Ād to whom the prophet Hūd was sent, who constructed edifices on the heights and built castles and fortresses. God addresses these people, saying, “Will you, in your wanton folly, build [idolatrous] altars on every height, and make for yourselves mighty castles, [hoping] that you might become immortal? And will you [always], whenever you lay hand [on others], lay hand [on them] cruelly, without any restraint?” (*sūrah al-Shuʿarāʾ* 26:128-129). They thought mistakenly that they would dwell in their land for all time.

The root <sup>ʿ</sup> – m – r occurs once in the sense of “life,” where God Almighty swears by the life of His Prophet, saying, “Verily, by thy life [*la amruka*] (O Prophet), in their wild intoxication, they wander in distraction, to and fro” (*sūrah al-Hijr* 15:72, Abdullah Yusuf Ali). As for the remaining occurrences of this word, they all refer to the passage of time in a human being’s life: “Nay, We have allowed these [sinners] – as [We allowed] their forebears – to enjoy the good things of life for a great length of time:... (*hattā ṭāla ʿalayhim al-ʿumur*)...” (*sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ* 21:44). “And God has created you, and in time will cause you to die; and many a one of you is reduced in old age to a most abject state (*ilā ardhal al-ʿumur*), ceasing to know anything of what he once knew so well. Verily, God is All-Knowing, infinite in His power!” (*Sūrah al-Nahl* 16:70).

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The passage of time is necessary for us to be able to accomplish tasks and reach goals we have set for ourselves. It is a factor in the individual's physical, psychological and spiritual growth and the emergence of certain defining characteristics. Similarly, it is necessary for time to pass in order for society to achieve various levels of development and cultural formation. Malek Bennabi proposed an equation that combines the elements of civilization, and which clarifies the role played both by human effort in bringing together material causes and by the passage of sufficient time for cultural institutions and apparatuses to develop. According to Bennabi, however, the combination of these three elements – people + soil + time – does not necessarily result in a civilized state of affairs. Rather, such a result calls for a degree of spiritual energy, or a spark capable of activating these elements in such a way that they are capable of performing their function in cultural advancement.<sup>17</sup>

The opposite of the term *‘umrān* as it is used in the Qur'an is corruption, killing, bloodshed, destruction, ruin, annihilation, and desolation. All of these terms as used in the Qur'an are set in contrast to life's proceeding in harmony with the laws and patterns God has established in the universe such that houses of worship are filled with worshippers who invoke God's name, and people live in keeping with God's guidance. The Qur'anic term *‘umrān* thus yields a variety of interrelated and overlapping meanings which together form a semantic field populated by complementary denotations and connotations. The following are among the meanings conveyed by the word *‘umrān*:

### *‘Umrān as the State of Life*

As the years of a person's life pass, his or her life comes to completion. As we read in *sūrah al-Shu'arā'* 26:18, “[But when Moses had delivered his message, Pharaoh] said, ‘Did we not bring thee up among us when thou wert a child? And didst thou not spend among us years of thy [later] life (*‘umrika*)?’” The individual begins his life in his mother's womb, then emerges into this world. When death comes, his life on earth comes to an end. He then finds himself in the womb of the Earth until Resurrection Day, at which point he is raised to another, eternal, life. Each of us begins his or her earthly life as a newborn. He then

becomes a young child who has yet to reach puberty. After he has reached his peak in terms of both mental and physical prowess, he continues to age until he reaches his nadir, or what the Qur'an refers to as "a most abject state."

Just as an individual has a definable lifespan, so does a community. The community witnesses the passage of years and generations, and as it does so it retains its life in terms of presence, authority and stability in a specific mode of being. If its life comes to an end, its identity and power dissolve and vanish. The homes that had once stood erect become nothing but tumble-down, abandoned shells: "Behold, then, what all their scheming came to in the end: We utterly destroyed them and their people, all of them; and [now] those dwellings of theirs are empty, [ruined] as an outcome of their evil deeds. In this, behold, there is a message indeed for people of [innate] knowledge" (*sūrah al-Naml* 27: 51-52). With the passage of time one's life may lose its value if one fails to respond to God's invitation to a true, genuine vitality: "O you who have attained to faith! Respond to the call of God and the Apostle whenever he calls you unto that which will give you life;..." (*sūrah al-Anfāl* 8:24). Unless people respond to this call of God, their lives will not be complete, filled with truth, blessing and righteousness. As a consequence, their lifetimes will lack true value; in fact, they will have been spent in falsehood and futility.

Developing and prospering the Earth is linked directly to life on Earth – on land, on the sea, and in the air – and to the preservation of living beings in all these spheres. Consequently, it also entails avoiding the destruction of life, whether directly, or indirectly by destroying, depleting, or tainting the resources and environments upon which life depends. The process of developing and prospering the Earth on which we and other creatures live thus involves making sound use of all that God has deposited on our Planet – on its land, in its seas, oceans, lakes and rivers, and in its atmosphere – be it in the form of living creatures, natural phenomena and cycles, or sources of energy.

### *Umrān As Living and Settling in a Particular Place*

The term *Umrān* conveys the sense of settling in a particular place and

making it one's home; hence, it requires that one abandon a life of nomadic wandering through deserts and steppes, till the land, construct dwellings and build factories to meet the requirements of a settled life. This type of settled existence is what one finds in villages and cities as opposed to a life of desert wandering. The prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, is recorded in the Qur'an as having stated that when his father Jacob's family gave up their Bedouin existence and moved to the city, this was a blessing and grace from God. He said, "...O my father! This is the real meaning of my dream long ago, which my Sustainer has made come true. And He was indeed good to me when He freed me from the prison, and [when] He brought you [all to me] from the desert after Satan had sown discord between me and my brothers..." (*sūrah Yūsuf* 12:100). There may, of course, be some degree of development and prosperity in the desert, whether of a material or a spiritual nature. However, it differs from the development and prosperity one finds in urban areas. This is because a desert or steppe might be inhabited at one time, then become desolate wasteland that no one makes his home. The Qur'anic meaning of words derived from the root  $\text{c} - m - r$ , namely, to dwell in, to inhabit, or to tend, can be seen in the use of the adjectives  $\text{c}āmir$  and  $ma\text{c}mūr$ , both of which mean populated, filled to capacity, prosperous, thriving, civilized, and so on, and the noun  $al-ma\text{c}mūrah$ , which refers to the inhabited world.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, when it is said that  $\text{c}umrān$  has spread in this or that country, it means that it is filled with populous areas where people have built homes and taken up residence in them.

#### *$\text{c}Umrān$ as Material Development and Prosperity*

Material development and prosperity have to do with the concrete aspects of civilization resulting from the knowledge and experience that accumulate over time as we observe the regularity in the universe, discover the laws that govern objects and events, and acquire the ability to predict events' occurrence. These advances lead in turn to the ability to avail ourselves of the opportunities such knowledge provides while avoiding the dangers it heralds. The application of newly acquired knowledge enables human beings to make better use of the Earth's

resources, construct buildings, build roads, bridges and factories, produce merchandise and improve means of transport and communication. And now with the existence of digital, virtual worlds and their associated developments and inventions, people can meet, converse, and exchange information, the arts and products of various sorts without leaving their homes!

Another aspect of material development and prosperity is realized through tilling and cultivating arable land and improving means of livelihood to the point where every square meter of arable land is in productive use and every able-bodied adult enjoys gainful employment, as well as modern edifices and facilitated means of transport and communication. It is to this type of development that the Qur'an refers in *sūrah al-Rūm* 30:9 when, by way of reprimand, it asks, "Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth and beheld what happened in the end to those [deniers of the truth] who lived before their time? Greater were they in power than they are; and they left a stronger impact on the earth, and built it up (*‘amarūhā*) even better than these [are doing] (*akthar mim mā ‘amarūhā*)..."

Signs of material development and prosperity can be seen both on land and sea; at the same time, however, such development has been accompanied by signs of corruption and destruction to which the Qur'an makes reference when it states, "[Since they have become oblivious of God,] corruption has appeared on land and in the sea as an outcome of what men's hands have wrought: and so He will let them taste [the evil of] some of their doings, so that they might return [to the right path]" (*sūrah al-Rūm* 30:41). In order to avoid such destruction, we must cease engaging in practices such as burying nuclear and radioactive waste or dumping it into the sea, and pass and enforce laws that regulate the pollutants that are released into the air by automobiles and factories.

### *‘Umrān as Intellectual and Cultural Development and Prosperity*

The non-material side of human civilization is advanced as people gain experience in ordering their social and economic affairs, including the passage of laws and establishment of systems that regulate and manage

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relations among people living in the same location. Such advances give rise to cultures and subcultures and the crystallization of customs and traditions as people willingly submit to the authority of an administration or government for the sake of ensuring security and stability. The powers with which God has blessed human beings over other creatures, including even the angels (who, unlike Adam, were not taught the names of all things) may be part of the process by which God has enabled the human race to establish itself on Earth and, thereby, carry out the task of developing and prospering the Earth not only in the material sense, but in the spiritual, cultural sense as well.

Just as God commends those who seek to tend and maintain houses of worship, He reprimands those who seek to harm or destroy them: “Hence, who could be more wicked than those who bar the mention of God’s name from [any of] His houses of worship and strive for their ruin, . . . ?” (*sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:114). In His wisdom God Almighty has established certain patterns of human behavior which serve to preserve diversity among us. One of these patterns may be seen in the way in which different groups of people are allowed by God, when conflicts arise among them, to defend and protect God’s houses of worship as places to remember and extol His name. The Qur’an reminds us that “...if God has not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques – in [all of] which God’s name is abundantly extolled – would surely have been destroyed [ere now]...” (*sūrah al-Hajj* 22:40). In other words, it is God who enables believers to confront their enemies, thereby helping to preserve and protect the facilities they have constructed for His worship and the remembrance of His name.

Other such patterns include the practice of coming together in support of systems and laws which order people’s affairs, accepting the rule of an elected leader who seeks out the counsel of experts who have likewise been elected by the population, and establishing a judiciary whose representatives serve society by ruling on people’s disputes and upholding their rights.

Still another pattern of this sort is the fact that people differ in the amount of knowledge they possess, as a result of which those with less knowledge seek out those with more. This process leads to the establish-

ment of schools and universities, training centers, institutes, and centers devoted to study, research, and problem-solving. These and similar phenomena are manifestations of progress in the spheres of thought, culture, education and administration. People rightly take pride in such progress, vying with each other for distinction in various fields of knowledge and being classified on the basis of their specializations.

One of the established patterns and unchanging laws that have been observed in the rise and fall of the Earth's civilizations is that a country's prosperity or ruin, the pleasantness or misery of its life, is simply the outcome of its inhabitants' practices. The Qur'an relates the stories of nations that had reached advanced levels of material and spiritual success, but who were not grateful to God for the blessings they had received. Instead of acknowledging their achievements as gifts from God, they dealt unjustly with both themselves and others, and as a consequence, the laws God implanted in the workings of the universe led to their downfall and destruction. Such countries were brought to ruin together with the evidences of civilization and development that were devoid of life and spirit. The mansions and castles they built are still standing. However, they are empty of their unjust inhabitants, whose material prosperity proved of no use to them. As for the manifestations of cultural and development that related to the use of water, they are still usable, but they no longer have anyone to use them and benefit from them. They stand as monuments to the advances their inventors and artisans had achieved; however, they are also witnesses to these people's failure to preserve their progress or give thanks for their blessings: "And how many a township have We destroyed because it had been immersed in evildoing – and now they [all] lie deserted, with their roofs caved in! And how many a well lies abandoned, and how many a castle that [once] stood high!" (*sūrah al-Hajj* 22:45).

The destruction these peoples witnessed did not take the form of a devastating earthquake that leveled their edifices to the ground, for example. Nor was it because they no longer had access to means of subsistence such as vital water supplies ("...We made out of water every living thing? Will they not, then, [begin to] believe?" – *sūrah al-Anbiyā'* 21:30). Rather, these people were overtaken by destruction even though the products of their material development and prosperity

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remained intact and their means of subsistence remained available in abundance. This fact may provide an explanation for the difficulties being faced by some present-day Arab and Islamic societies, whose countries exhibit numerous signs of material prosperity, but whose members are content to lead lives of indolence, consumption and dependency. Such people lack the strength to ward off the assaults of their enemies, the productivity they need to achieve self-sufficiency, the just governmental policies needed to provide them with stability and security or nurture a sense of belonging to their society and the resultant motivation to preserve and protect its foundations, and just economic systems that would provide people with jobs while ensuring that state funds are spent on high-priority areas and necessities such as local agricultural and industrial production.

Situations such as these have made life for most people a kind of perdition and emptiness. Rather than being filled with fruitful labor, reform efforts, generosity, hope, and creative contributions that enable them to be pioneers in contemporary culture or, at the very least, to take part effectively in and make distinctive contributions to this culture, their lives are filled with grumbling, complaining, envy, resentment, hostility and name-calling. As a consequence, they have despaired of any possibility of reform, since they see themselves as irretrievably lost and dying.

### *‘Umrān as Development, Prosperity and Life*

The act of preserving life is linked in the Qur’an to that of giving life, or bringing to life. Hence we read that “..if anyone slays a human being – unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind (*aḥyā al-nāsa jamī’an*, literally, given life to all people)” (*sūrah al-Mā’idah* 5:32). The acts of preserving life and affirming its value and sacredness are ways of developing and prospering the Earth, while taking life is an act of corruption. Al-İṣfahānī may have derived his definition of the word *‘umur* (meaning “lifetime”) from the phrase *‘umrān al-ḥayāh*, which might be rendered “thriving life,” or the

notion of a person's body being filled with vitality (*ʿumrān badan al-insān bi al-ḥayāh*).<sup>19</sup> The Arabic word *istiʿmār*, rendered in English as “colonization,” refers in essence to a process of striving for development and prosperity, since it is derived from the same root as the nouns *ʿumrān* (populousness, prosperity, thriving civilization), *iʿmār* (the act of populating and developing) and *taʿmīr* (the act of populating, prolonging life, repairing, reconstructing). It is through striving for development and prosperity on Earth that human beings act as *khulafāʾ* (plural of *khalīfah*), (“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels, ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth’...” – *sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:30, Abdullah Yusuf Ali). The opposite of striving for development and prosperity and acting as *khulafāʾ* is the act of wreaking destruction on Earth, and the most terrible form of such destruction is the act of taking human life.

When the individual undertakes to be *khalīfah* on Earth, a task that includes working for human development and prosperity, he or she is engaging in a task that will enrich his or her life in this earthly sphere. After the individual dies, blessing will be extended to others as well based on the ongoing charity he or she had given during his days on earth, knowledge he or she left to posterity, or righteous offspring who pray for him or her. The Prophet is reported to have said, “When a servant of God dies, his work on Earth is over with the exception of three things: ongoing charity, knowledge from which others can benefit, and righteous children who will pray for him,”<sup>20</sup> not to mention the abundant, never-ending existence he will enjoy in the afterlife. This task extends to the entire human race, passing from one generation to the next and one nation to another as long as the human race endures. However, if this prosperous development is tainted with corruption, people's lives on Earth will become nothing but error and distress: “But as for him who shall turn away from remembering Me – his shall be a life of narrow scope; and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind” (*sūrah Ta Ha* 20:124). Development and prosperity in the true sense require that we live in accordance with divine guidance, which means goodness and blessing both in this life and the life to come, whereas corruption leads to a straitened existence both in this life and the life to come.

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As we have seen, a positive response to God's call to develop and prosper the Earth leads to life (cf. *sūrah al-Anfāl* 8:24), whereas a refusal to answer this call leads to corruption and death. The person who rejects this call is one who, "...whenever he prevails, he goes about the earth spreading corruption and destroying [man's] tilth and progeny: and God does not love corruption" (*sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:205). The fruits of such a person's corruption will affect not only him, but what the Qur'an refers to as people's "tilth and progeny," that is, the land on which everyone lives and its suitability for agricultural use, as well as future generations. On the collective level the same is true: If a nation or state refuses God's call to seek right guidance and act as a steward on Earth – shedding blood by waging unjust wars, hindering people's efforts to earn their keep via agriculture or otherwise, and squandering the Earth's resources and filling the Earth with poisons and pollutants – the outcome will be the destruction of tilth and progeny all over the world unless other nations take it upon themselves to restrain this rogue state. After all, the Earth upon which human beings have been placed as *khulafā'* is like a ship on which all of us are passengers. If it sinks, everyone on it sinks, the bad and the good alike. Their ultimate reckoning, of course, remains with God, who will judge all in His perfect knowledge, compassion and justice.

A good life in this world thus results from personal happiness, peace of mind, overall blessing, an atmosphere of goodwill among people, an overall sense of security, an openness to knowing one another and working together, and the availability of the resources required for a life of ease and satisfaction. These things are made possible when people engage in righteous action and demonstrate practical concern for reforming whatever needs to be improved or corrected: "As for anyone – be it man or woman – who does righteous deeds, and is a believer withal – him shall We most certainly cause to live a good life; and most certainly shall We grant unto such as these their reward in accordance with the best that they ever did" (*sūrah al-Nahl* 16:97). If, on the other hand, people's lives together are tainted by corruption and the desire to seek their own narrow interests at others' expense, the result will be lostness, misery and privation. This principle applies on all levels: that of the individual, the community, and the human race as a whole. As

for the good life in the world to come, it involves a better reward and a better outcome, one that results from having developed and prospered the earthly realm through righteous action and efforts toward reform.

People's lives in this world are only complete when they work together to manage their affairs. As we have seen, people are communal by nature, and do not thrive in isolation from one another. Rather, the individual lives within a family whose life is ordered by rulings, relationships, and responsibilities, while families come together in groups, tribes, peoples and nations. Families are sometimes spread out among different communities and states. They may develop ties of cooperation and beneficial exchange in times of peace, whereas, in times of rivalry and conflict, hostilities may surface between them. People's lives are marked by various living patterns in relation to food, drink, attire, type of dwelling, and modes of transport and communication. Each individual has his or her own life trajectory and story, one that will be marked by wealth or poverty, health or illness, knowledge or ignorance. Each nation also has its own history, which will be characterized by nomadic wanderings or urban settlements, backwardness or progress, sciences and industries, and so on. Those who wish to record the lives and histories of individuals and nations will need a proper understanding of the nature of human civilization and the laws that govern its evolution, since only then will they be able to document events and facts and test narratives for validity and reliability on the level of both their content and the individuals on whose authority they were passed down.

People's lives on this Earth have a purpose. God created human beings for a specific end, which is to worship Him: "...I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me" (*sūrah al-Dhāriyāt* 51:56). In order for us to understand the meaning of worship as the purpose for our existence, God revealed the following words: "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth'..." (*sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:30, Abdullah Yusuf Ali). Hence, what worship means is for us to act as *khulafā'*, that is, as vicegerents, by developing and prospering the Earth on which He has placed us. As the prophet Ṣāliḥ reminded the people of Thamūd, "...He brought you into being out of the earth, and made

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you thrive (*ista<sup>ʿ</sup>marakum*) thereon...” (*sūrah Hūd* 11:61). Human beings’ concern in this earthly life should be to cause the Earth to thrive just as God has caused them to thrive on the Earth. For while other creatures render God worship and praise by submitting instinctively to His laws, human beings must do so by conscious choice just as they choose consciously to believe in the divine unity.

The Earth existed before we did. Then we were created in order to be *khalīfah* on the Earth. This is why God holds us accountable for what He has given us. He says, “Yea, indeed, We have given you a [bountiful] place on earth, and appointed thereon means of livelihood for you:...” (*sūrah al-A<sup>ʿ</sup>rāf* 7:10). “Are you not aware that God has made subservient to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and has lavished upon you His blessings, both outward and inward?...” (*sūrah Luqmān* 31:20). Hence, we are accountable to God for what we do as *khulafāʾ* on Earth. This is what true worship entails, and this is the purpose for which we were made.

### *ʿUmrān as Expounded by Ibn Khaldūn*

Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH/1406 CE) grasped many more aspects of the concept of *ʿumrān* than his predecessors had, though few thinkers who came after him built on his discussion of it. Ibn Khaldūn wrote a book on history entitled, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ wa al-Khabar fī Akhbār al-ʿArab wa al-ʿAjam wa al-Barbar wa man ʿĀsarahum min Dhawī al-Sultān al-Akbar* (The Book of Lessons to be Gleaned From Accounts Concerning the Arabs, the non-Arabs and the Berbers and Their Most Influential Contemporaries). However, Ibn Khaldūn’s introduction to this tome was destined to be better known to posterity than the book itself. Even though it is simply an introduction to a book on history – a field of study that was well-established in his time – it nevertheless contains chapters on a variety of topics which, long after Ibn Khaldūn’s time, developed into independent disciplines in their own right, and to which present-day researchers in the social and human sciences continue to devote their efforts.

What Ibn Khaldūn did was to take the Qur’anic concept of *ʿumrān* – civilization, human development and prosperity – and make

it into a new science that concerns itself with people's lives, the various changes and transformations they undergo, and the relationships and institutions that come into existence as a consequence. Ibn Khaldūn referred to this new science as science of *‘ilm al-‘umrān*: “the science of human development and prosperity,” “the science of civilization” or what we now know as sociology. Announcing the birth of this new field of study and setting forth its methodology, Ibn Khaldūn invited those who came after him to complete the work he had begun by researching the relevant topics and issues, saying:

It is our intention (now) to stop with this First Book, which is concerned with the nature of civilization (*tabī‘at al-‘umrān*) and the accidents that go with it... perhaps some later (scholar), aided by the gifts of a sound mind and of solid scholarship, will penetrate into these problems in greater detail than we did here. A person who creates a new discipline does not have the task of enumerating (all) the (individual) problems connected with it. His task is to specify the subject of the discipline and its various branches and the discussions connected with it. His successors, then, may gradually add more problems until the discipline is (completely) presented. “...God knows, whereas you do not know.” [*sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:216]<sup>21</sup>

In introducing his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn moves from history – which is a report of events – to the subject of history, which is world civilization and the various conditions it has witnessed. He states:

It should be known that history, in matter of fact, is information about human social organization, which itself is identical with world civilization (*‘umrān al-‘ālam*). It deals with such conditions affecting the nature of civilization, as, for instance, savagery and sociability, group feelings, and the different ways by which one group of human beings achieves superiority over another. It deals with royal authority and the dynasties that result (in this manner) and with the various ranks that exist within them. (It further deals with) the different kinds of gainful occupations and ways of making a living, with the sciences and crafts that human beings pursue, and with all the other institutions that originate in civilization through its very nature.<sup>22</sup>

The aim of this discipline is to change the purpose of history-writing from that of narrating reports and hunting down curiosities to

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the establishment of “a normative method for distinguishing right from wrong and truth from falsehood in historical information by means of a logical demonstration that admits of no doubts.” Consequently, he continues, “(The subject) is, in a way, an independent science. (This science) has its own peculiar object, that is, human civilization (*al-‘umrān al-basharī*) and social organization. It also has its own peculiar problems, that is, explaining the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization, one after the other.”<sup>23</sup>

The fluctuating circumstances and successive tragedies Ibn Khaldūn witnessed in his lifetime may have contributed to his desire for a time of seclusion in Ibn Salamah Castle (west of modern day Alger), where he could devote himself to study and reflection and record his conclusions concerning the state in which the Muslim community found itself in his day. From this period of study and reflection, Ibn Khaldūn deduced certain laws governing human civilization as they pertain to human psychology, the history of nations and civilizations, geographical environments, government and politics, economics and wealth, principles of social organization, educational curricula, and so on.

One of the divinely ordained patterns to be observed in human societies is that in the course of human advancement, people develop a tendency to immerse themselves in luxury and ease, which undermines the society’s strength and cohesiveness and leads eventually to its collapse as a civilization. It is then succeeded by a more youthful nation marked by greater unity and esprit de corps. This nation, like the one that preceded it, reaches a peak; it maintains this peak for a period of time, then gives way to a successor. As God reminds us in the Qur’an, “If misfortune touches you, [know that] similar misfortune has touched [other] people as well; for it is by turns that We apportion unto men such days of fortune and misfortune:...” (*sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* 3:140). Hence, no matter how long a state, nation or empire endures, it is destined eventually to fall prey to a spirit of sloth and decadence which brings it in turn to a phase of weakness and imminent collapse.

Ibn Khaldūn possessed a distinctive understanding of history and social organization and how these relate to the natural world and the laws of existence. This understanding set Ibn Khaldūn apart from others who had treated these subjects before him. Human society had been

the subject of reflection and investigation on the part of other thinkers prior to Ibn Khaldūn, among them Plato, Aristotle, al-Fārābī and Augustine. However, the theoretical and philosophical conceptualizations that had colored these other thinkers' efforts remained disconnected from the realities of human life and society. These other thinkers' approach had been prescriptive or normative in nature in they set out to determine what society *ought* to be like rather than how it actually *is*. Ibn Khaldūn, by contrast, relied in his study of society on what happens in reality, basing his observations on his practical experience with society. Hence, although he did not disregard what society ought to be like in the ideal, neither did he allow himself to be confined within an abstract philosophical framework or point of view. Instead, he approached his subject realistically, with an awareness of divine guidance as he understood it to be set forth in the Qur'an. As a consequence, Ibn Khaldūn combined descriptive reports with normative declarations. He talked about the concrete, observable world without disregarding the world of the unseen, and he recognized the authority of reason without forgetting the authority of divine revelation.

However, the most important distinguishing feature of Ibn Khaldūn's approach to the study of human civilization is his insistence that we can only understand the nature of civilization if we have first understood the laws and defining characteristics of human organization. The reason for this insistence on Ibn Khaldūn's part is that what actually happens in human society takes place in accordance with God-given laws and patterns which resemble those that govern the material universe. Therefore, it is necessary to study social facts and events in keeping with an organized method that reflects reality as it is. Ibn Khaldūn asserted that "the normative method for distinguishing right from wrong in historical information on the grounds of (inherent) possibility or absurdity is to investigate human social organization, which is identical with civilization. We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature...."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, when Ibn Khaldūn identified the subject matter of sociology, or "the science of civilization" and the issues it addresses, he concluded by saying, "Thus, the situation is the

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same with this science as it is with any other science, whether it be a conventional or an intellectual one.”<sup>25</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn’s words might be understood as a call to present-day advocates of reform and change in Muslim societies to study the laws that govern change both in people’s minds and hearts and in social conditions. Such a study and the knowledge it might yield of natural laws and patterns would then form the basis for reform efforts. After all, real change does not take place through limited personal experiences, the so-called expertise of shallow-minded individuals who get ahead by happenstance, or slogans bandied about without well-thought-out, practical programs regardless of how valid these slogans might be in and of themselves. Change will not take place as a result of the hopes of well-meaning individuals, however heartfelt they may be. Nor will it come about in response to believers’ prayers, however loudly they raise their voices in supplication! Rather, change will only take place in response to concrete, determined human effort based on a methodology that integrates knowledge of the laws of the universe, the causes that operate in the world, concrete reality and its requirements, and application of principles and values that will guide and purify human striving.

In the course of creating the discipline of sociology, Ibn Khaldūn was not merely following in other scholars’ footsteps, be they Muslims or adherents of other religions. Rather, he undertook this enterprise based on the realization that what earlier scholars had accomplished was not sufficient to provide a thorough understanding of human civilization and the mechanisms of transformation and evolution in human beings’ lives. It was this realization that led Ibn Khaldūn to devote himself for a period of four years to sustained reflection, reading, and writing until, by the end of his stay in Ibn Salamah Castle, west of modern day Alger, he had completed both *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* and the chapters that make up the *Muqaddimah*, which contains the foundations of modern sociology. What he accomplished in these two works was a prodigious feat of creativity which he himself praised, saying:

It should be known that the discussion of this topic is something new, extraordinary and highly useful. Penetrating research has shown the way to it. . . . In a way, it

is an entirely original science. In fact, I have not come across a discussion along these lines by anyone.... We, on the other hand, were inspired by God. He led us to a science whose truth we ruthlessly set forth.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, the science Ibn Khaldūn was inaugurating involves more than simply studying the known laws of change; rather, it goes beyond this to a rational examination of these known laws in order to determine how they are related to the topics of study and their extent in space and time. It is a process that calls for the same genius as that demonstrated by Ibn Khaldūn himself in his own day and age. It may also call for the concerted efforts of numerous researchers working both individually and in teams so that their knowledge and expertise can be integrated. Given these conditions, they may be able to revise positions that require revision and help society to solve its many problems.

The Qur'anic understanding of civilization in the sense of human development and prosperity – *‘umrān* – is thus a universal concept that combines and integrates a variety of elements. These elements include: the ways in which human beings develop and prosper the Earth, the process by which people's lives develop and prosper through righteous action and material advances, and the refinement and purification of people's hearts through God-consciousness and hope in God's mercy and forgiveness. The meaning of human civilization in the sense of development and prosperity is reinforced by an awareness of their opposites. The life that is promoted through human development is opposed to death, while righteousness and edification are opposed to destruction, ruin and perdition. Similarly, our understanding of human development is reinforced by an awareness of the origin from which it springs, that is, a faith grounded at once in the heart and the mind, and a determination to base one's life on concrete adherence to divine guidance. The outcome that springs from this source is a life of prosperity both in this world and the next:

If the followers of the Bible would but attain to [true] faith and God-consciousness, We should indeed efface their [previous] bad deeds, and indeed bring them into gardens of bliss; and if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel

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and all [the revelation] that has been bestowed from on high upon them by their Sustainer, they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth. Some of them do pursue a right course; but as for most of them – vile indeed is what they do! (*Sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:65-66)

Yet if the people of these communities had but attained to faith and been conscious of Us, We would indeed have opened up for them blessings out of heaven and earth: but they gave the lie to the truth – and so We took them to task through what they [themselves] had been doing. (*Sūrah al-A'rāf* 7:96)

The Qur'an's emphasis on *'umrān* as a source of material benefits may be a means of gaining a hearing from individuals who crave this type of outcome. For whereas rational discussion and logical analysis may be gateways to faith for some, the promise of “the blessings of heaven and earth” in the sense of material abundance, a handsome livelihood and a life of ease may serve better to entice other individuals to enter the fold of faith. Once inside the fold, peace of mind and certainty follow as the fruit of the sweetness of faith. The generous, noble Qur'an addresses different types of people in different ways out of compassion for them in their varied states, and in the hope that all will benefit. The differences that exist among people require these varied forms of address.<sup>27</sup> Some people benefit most from a message that addresses itself to the conscience and the emotions; others benefit more from a discourse that focuses on the physical senses and practical benefits. Hence, Qur'anic discourse reflects a varied yet integrated methodology that speaks to one and all.

### CONCLUSION

The subject of this chapter has been methodological principles and values. We have noted the semantic overlap between the terms “principle” and “value,” and we have seen that the principles of methodology (*mabādi' al-manhajīyyah*) are the premises on which Islamic methodology bases its thought, research, and conduct. It is these principles to which Islamic methodology appeals in its efforts to achieve its aims, and which are reflected in its various expressions and formulations. We have posited that one of these principles is the

adoption of a system of ruling values or ideals. This tripartite value system – consisting of the divine unity (*tawhīd*), purification (*tazkiyah*), and human development and prosperity (*‘umrān*) – governs the Islamic methodology of epistemological integration. Being a comprehensive, integrated value system, it is possible to derive numerous secondary principles from each of its three primary components.

These three components – affirmation of the oneness of God the Creator; purification of people’s lives on the level of the individual, the group and the wider ummah; and human civilization identified as the process by which people develop and improve the various dimensions of their lives – constitute a system of values which the Muslim ummah needs to adopt as a basic constituent of its approach to thought, knowledge and conduct. At the same time, we need to deepen our understanding of this value system through additional studies and research, then work to derive secondary value systems which can be transferred from the realms of personal piety and the Islamic legal sciences to that of the humanities and the social and the physical sciences. This achieved, we can then apply these principles in such a way that Muslim communities become beacons of right guidance for other societies of the world.