

Missing Dimensions in Contemporary Islamic Movements

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines several dimensions that I believe are totally or partially absent from the thought or practice of many contemporary Islamic movements. However, I acknowledge that the majority of these movements are only extensions of those reform and independence movements that played a pioneering role in safeguarding the Ummah's identity and resisting colonial penetration and hegemony at the turn of the twentieth century. This paper seeks to remind them of some missing dimensions on the grounds that "remembrance does the believer a world of good" and that "wisdom is the quest of believers; wherever they find it, they should cherish it."

I fully realize the sharp distinction between the discourse characterizing the stage of liberation and safeguarding the Ummah's identity, and that of the post-colonial stage that, by necessity, must be distinguished by mature reconstruction. This implies that examining the missing or underemphasized dimensions in contemporary Muslim discourse requires considerable effort and meticulous attention and objectivity.

In this study, I will uncover these missing dimensions in the hope of contributing to the development and maturity of Islamic discourse. If I succeed, then praise be to Allah, the Bestower of merit in this life and the Hereafter. If I fail, my excuse is that humanity is prone to oversight and forgetfulness. I ask for His pardon if I forget or err, and ask Him to make us benefit from what He has taught us and to teach us what is beneficial. He is the All-Knowing, All- Responding.

Since Allah created Adam, taught him all concepts, and made him vicegerent on Earth, human history has been progressing toward the goal

ordained by the Creator. Meanwhile, people have fallen into two groups: those who perform their roles according to the divine teachings, and those whose roles emanate from their own (or their ancestors') conceptions and desires. The first group sees history as the product of a sanctified dialectic between Allah, humanity, and the universe, whereas the second group views it as the outcome of conflict between humanity and nature. As a result, they ignore, deny, or bypass the central place of Allah in His divine plan, or worship false deities to which they ascribe Allah-like roles. Islam endeavors to correct such people's basic assumptions, revamp their vision, help them find peace of mind, and provide them with the ultimate answers to their quintessential questions.

THE CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC DISCOURSE: MISSING DIMENSIONS

Viewing Islam as the foundation for both thought and practice in all aspects of life is the Muslims' prime aim and driving force. Islam takes an abiding interest in human issues and humanity's destiny. Therefore, Allah has revealed a perfect text that answers the questions of existence, both as issues and courses of events and also at the level of humanity as vicegerent or the universe as home and instrument. In the final analysis, the Qur'an is the Word of Allah, the all-encompassing miraculous Book that He has described as a mercy to humanity:

On the day We shall raise from all peoples a witness against them from among themselves. And We shall bring you [Muhammad] as a witness against these [your people]: and We have sent down to you a Book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy and glad tidings to Muslims. (16:89)

TESTIMONY AND RESPONSIBLE WITNESSING

After the Messenger fulfilled his mission, the task of responsible witnessing and testimony, as the Qur'an predicted, was passed on to the Ummah at large: "Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations ..." (2:143).

Through the Messenger's testimony and that of the justly balanced Ummah, whose collective effort is geared to doing good deeds and achieving universal harmony, Allah will make His purpose prevail: "He has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth that he may proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagans may detest [it]" (61:9).

Bearing witness is a responsible act, one that is both conceptual and actual. Thus, its need to be transmuted into the living world is paramount. Each application has its own economic, social, and intellectual components that, in turn, are based on a specific cultural order as well as on a specific order in terms of scientific and research methodology. The Qur'an contains and rectifies all methodologies, because it is by nature a perfect, divine text. It is equally equipped to engender and guide all cultural orders due to its message's universality. In addition, being Allah's final revelation to humanity, Islam can cope with humanity's cultural crises as well as the methodological problems inherent in branches of human knowledge. Thus, it can reconstruct their methods of reasoning and, eventually, solve these problems in the light of divine guidance and the religion of truth. Our responsibility in witnessing, then, is much greater than what we have envisioned or put into practice so far.

MISSING DIMENSIONS: A DISCOVERY PROCEDURE

Several important dimensions are absent from our perspectives and practices. These may be uncovered through a critical evaluation of our current practices and applications. For this, we need to weigh them against the objectives inherent in our active witnessing as a justly balanced Ummah. These objectives are laid down in the Qur'an:

Alif lām rā'. A Book that We have revealed to you so that you might lead humanity out of the depths of darkness into light – by the leave of their Lord – to the Way of [Him] the Exalted in Power, worthy of all Praise. (14:1)

The purpose of such guidance is to lead us to the straight path of *tawhīd*, which should enable us to rebuild ourselves and reconstitute our Ummah so that it might overcome the deficiencies of current methodologies, their human-made limitations, and atomistic introversions.

The new darkness of contemporary civilization is manifold, for it engulfs all processes, cultures, and sciences. Negative experiences accumulate, for the West as well as for others, and require people to acquire a general awareness of how to confront them. Otherwise, Muslims will be starting from where the West started and eventually end up in a similar confusion and stagnation:

Like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by [dark] clouds: depths of darkness, one

above another. If a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it. For any to whom Allah gives no light, there is no light. (24:40)

Against this compound darkness is the light to which Allah guides those who seek it:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and Earth. The parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp; the lamp enclosed in glass; the glass, as it were, a brilliant star lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it, light upon light. Allah guides whom He wills to His light, sets forth parables for people, and knows all things. (24:35)

TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE AWARENESS

The issue of reform and change is both complex and universal, a fact that calls for a comprehensive awareness to match the challenge. Due to its complexity, this comprehensive awareness must be methodological, one geared to examine all the “depths” of darkness, whether cultural or scientific, at both the level of theory and of application. Its goal must be to understand the characteristics of the flux and the agents that affect change and induce (or obviate) crisis. This exercise seeks to deal with those agents by using a comprehensive method, one unconstrained by reductionism or compartmentalization.

UNIVERSAL CRISIS, UNIVERSAL SOLUTION

The factors affecting the variables of the current state of affairs are not confined to the geographic locale of Muslim societies. In fact, the crisis’ universal aspect emanates from the all-out interaction among nations and peoples in the wake of the contemporary information explosion. A proper understanding of these factors, which infiltrate our minds through our interaction with other cultural orders and methodologies of science, is an essential precondition for comprehending developments in our present state of affairs. These scientific methodologies and cultural orders have not only been transferred to us in the form of government systems and socioeconomic institutions, but have also contributed to shaping our worldview in the image of their paradigm.

Given this, every epistemological paradigm has the potential for taking over another one via an intellectual or institutional invasion, particularly when we are vulnerably located on the margin of an influential and central civilization that is universally dominant in terms of its civilizational

and epistemological orders. If this situation continues unabated, the end-product will be total absorption into this dominant cultural and epistemological order.

THE TENDENCY TO COMPROMISE OR REJECT: ITS ORIGINS

As a result of the above, the tendency to align oneself with the victor (*al-ghālib*) – as the jurist, sociologist, and historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) states in *Al-Risālah*¹ – or to reject the victor out of hand has emerged. Aligning oneself with the victor starts with making concessions and compromises. One example of this is approximating western democracy to Islamic *shūrā* (mutual consultation), thus neglecting the major differences between these two cultural and epistemological paradigms. Democracy emanates from liberal individualism and rests on containing conflict; *shūrā* is based on communal unity and rejection of conflict altogether. Another example is approximating social justice to socialism, for this tends to ignore the fact that socialism is rooted in class conflict, while the Islamic doctrines of social justice are based on the principles of wealth distribution between the individual and the community in terms of *zakah*,² inheritance regulations, and the prohibition of hoarding wealth for its own sake. All in all, the present situation is an outcome of falling under the influence of a cultural and epistemological order that pervades our consciousness and practices in the name of universalism.

Those who opt for outright rejection of the other's dominance defend their rejectionism by contrasting the Islamic heritage with that of the victor. They go to great lengths to glorify that heritage and portray it as the be-all and end-all. This defensive self-glorification has blinded Muslims to the need to examine their history in a critical and analytical manner in order to explore its weak points. In fact, our current grasp of the Islamic legacy and, by extension, of the modern world cannot solve our contemporary crisis. This is attested to by the fact that Islamic culture has been severely marginalized and demeaned on the world scene today. I have discussed that phenomenon elsewhere.³

To recapitulate, the problem is rather complex and multifaceted, for it encompasses numerous epistemological issues and goes beyond the regional to the universal. Thus, the IIIT was established to research these complex and composite dimensions within an objective and universally valid framework of an interactive Islamic universalism. The institute does not preach Islam's basic principles to the world, important as that task is, but seeks to

generate an Islamic methodology that can reconstruct the Muslim mind so that it may overcome its crises.

THE NEED FOR METHODOLOGY

The need for such a methodology is paramount. Its conspicuous absence from the Muslim and global scenes leaves both the humanities and the sciences vulnerable and accident-prone. Belief in Islam's basic tenets are deeply embedded in Muslim hearts, and principles of worship, transaction, and Shari'ah policies are likewise lucidly prescribed and articulated in various sources and references. If we just confine ourselves to the formalities of belief and practices, then there is no need for such institutions as the IIIT. Nevertheless, a concerted effort is needed to establish a new dimension (that of methodology) by means of which other missing dimensions can be uncovered.

THE ACQUISITION OF POWER: IS IT A SOLUTION?

Acquiring political power, on its own, neither solves the Ummah's problems nor provides a methodology for its reform. The quest for power in order to apply our legal heritage is futile, for it belies oversimplification and is a gross error of judgment. Had our problems started immediately in the wake of the West's encroachment and the caliphate's demise, then there would have been some justification (however tenuous) for viewing access to political power as a solution. But our crisis started well before then and under various Muslim regimes. The simultaneous Mongol invasion from the East and the Crusades from the West some seven centuries earlier, which were succeeded five centuries later by the Muslim expulsion from Spain, and – more recently – the pathetic outcome of such contemporary causes as the Palestinian and Afghan independence struggles, were nothing but tokens of an inner failing, one disguised by such august names as *khilāfah* and *salṭānah*.

Thus, acquiring political power alone cannot be a prelude to reform. Rather, reform starts by addressing ourselves to the problems that caused our degeneration. In this sense, focusing on the treatment should prepare the ground for reform. However, we must remember that the roots of the crisis lie in our thought and practice, which have deviated from the true teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah – themselves often misconstrued by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Much ink has been used to explain why Muslims should rise, but little has been written on the causes of their deterioration and collapse. Most writers rarely go beyond saying that Muslims declined because they parted company with the law of Allah, and that, as stated by the Prophet: "The well-being of this Ummah in its latter days will be based on what brought its well-being in the beginning." This is true; but we need to know what caused the Ummah's well-being in the beginning and then apply it to the present. In other words, we need to know how to change that understanding into a viable methodology that can be applied to the present.

CONSTITUENTS OF WELL-BEING IN THE PAST

Several factors gave the Ummah its healthy integration and vitality in the past: a supreme sacred text, a final prophet, a tolerant Shari'ah, a universalist discourse, and an appeal to reason and one's *fitrah*.⁴ Clearly, this did not materialize out of a vacuum, but was brought about by the Divine Will enacted in time and space. Allah, may He be praised, brought together in harmony hearts and souls that otherwise could not have been united:

And [moreover] He has put affection between their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the Earth, you could not have produced that affection. But Allah has done it, for He is Exalted in Might, Wise. (8:63)

Allah made the message ultimate and final, for there would be no more prophets or human infallibility after Prophet Muhammad:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the prophets. Allah has full knowledge of all things. (33:40)

Moreover, Allah made the Qur'an the supreme authority and reference, which is so conclusive that no other is needed to supplement it:

And unto you [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein ... (5:48)⁵

In addition, Allah made the Shari'ah a law of tolerance and mercy in the context of which Muslims are enjoined to do what is just and refrain from what is evil:

... those who shall follow the [last] Apostle, the unlettered Prophet whom they shall find described in their Torah, and [later on] in the Gospel, [the Prophet] who will enjoin upon them what is right and forbid them what is wrong, make lawful to them the good things of life and forbid them the bad things, and lift from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them [aforetime]. Those, therefore, who shall believe in him, honor him, succor him, and follow the light that has been bestowed from on high through him – they shall attain to a happy state. (7:157)⁶

Fallible human beings were to carry the message and endeavor to form bonds of mutual affection and dependence, rather than rely on His direct intervention to incline the hearts to one another. But Allah's grace was to continue, and the message would win over billions of hearts and minds across time and space:

He has sent among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, purify them, and instruct them in the Book and Wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error, along with others of them, who have not already joined them. He is Exalted in Might, Wise. (62:2-3)

WRONG ANALOGY

Those Islamic movements that measure themselves by past models and ignore time and distinctive features, and yet expect identical results, need to reassess and correct their perspective. In this way, a fair and proportionate amount of interaction with the past can be made, instead of vainly trying to resurrect it, body and soul.

THE UMMAH'S DECLINE: UNDERLYING CAUSES

The question, then, is how did the Ummah's great vigor and creativity end and how did a chasm appear between it and its divinely inspired role? This came about and sowed the seeds of later or further decline despite the presence of the *khilāfah* and the relative absence of outside pressure.

SECULARISM VS. REFORM

Secularists in the Muslim world maintain that the idea of transcendence should be excluded from human affairs. This is perhaps based on several false assumptions: the Qur'an has served its purpose and there is nothing further to be gained from it, the Sunnah has been totally consumed and can in no

way benefit the development of modern jurisprudence, and the human effort on which Qur'anic and Sunnah studies rest can no longer expand or renew itself. This view has engendered a trinity directly opposed to the instruments of the divine plan, thus resulting in further weakness and decline.

The secularist trinity can be contrasted with the several constituents of the Ummah's early well-being. First, in contradistinction to the concept of "united hearts and souls," pre-Islamic fragmentation has reasserted itself in such forms as tribalism, regionalism, territorialism, racism, sectarianism, and denominationalism. As a result, Muslims have multiplied into mutually opposing sects and movements, even to the point of trading charges of treason and claiming that their party is the sole custodian of truth and salvation. Such Muslims have not heeded the Qur'anic warning:

And do not be like a weaver who breaks into untwisted strands the yarn that she has spun after it has become strong, using your oaths to deceive one another, lest one party should be more numerous than another. For Allah will test you by this, and on the Day of Judgment He will certainly make clear to You [the truth of] that wherein you disagree. (16:92)

In other words, Muslims have retreated from Islam's universality and the need for unity, and have fallen to the level of warring tribes.

Second, despite the Qur'an's authority and the irrefutable authority of the Sunnah within the revelation's comprehensive context, Muslims have approached the Qur'anic verses and hadiths in a highly selective manner. They have emphasized what they wanted to emphasize and have ignored what they imagined should be ignored for the benefit of some narrow, ephemeral interests on which they conferred legitimacy. In other words, they approached the Qur'an in the same way as some long-ago Israelites approached the Torah: "... and which you treat as [mere] leaves of paper, making a show of them the while you conceal [so] much" (6:91).⁷

In consequence, Muslims have lost sight of the Qur'an's comprehensive totality and its methodology, thereby losing the opportunity to relate to reality and control the inevitable changes in time and circumstances as the Qur'an expects us to do. Rather, Muslims have made circumstance dictate to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and, by selection, have justified their deviation. Instead of improving the condition or situation by referring to the divine message's totality, they have accommodated it to the situation in question and have justified that circumstance by recourse to the divine text. This undertaking, however, contravenes the natural postulate that a divine text projected onto reality is not meant to justify it, but rather to change,

improve, and eventually reform it. The current practice of making circumstance the master of the sacred text is obviously wrong.

The interaction of these negative factors caused the Muslims to virtually dismantle the order of their belief and civilization. They have so misused the divine text that they have lost sight of the purpose of witnessing to humanity, a task with which Allah has entrusted them. In fact, they have lost touch with the Almighty Himself, may He be praised and exalted above all else. Would He bring them together, hearts and souls, as He did in the beginning, even though they have cut themselves off and severed their links with the requirements of religious and cultural witnessing?

Muslims must fully realize their responsibilities toward Islam and humanity. With this must come a commitment to witness based on the supremacy of the divine text in its entirety, its relation to reality, and its totality. But what does that mean and how can it be actualized? What is needed is "human action": to make "conscious" contact with the "divine action" that initiated the divine plan and brought humanity from darkness to light through the Revelation and the practice of the Prophet and the early Muslims. But is it enough to retrieve the fruits of *ijtihād* (endeavor in legislation and other matters) as practiced in early years of Islam and apply them now? Or, is there a qualitatively different situation that requires further *ijtihād*? How can we create the appropriate milieu for this latter *ijtihād*? To what extent does the new (and changing) state of affairs breed new difficulties in actual practice? What problems, if any, cannot be resolved merely by *qiyās* (analogical reasoning)? Such problems would inevitably require a fresh recourse to the totality of the Divine revelation in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

A further question arises: To what extent can we respond, through revelation, to new problems never posed before? This matter requires contemplating the idea of the relative and the variable in the Qur'anic sense, with the Qur'an being the perennial light applicable to every time and place and presiding over social and historical change.

All of the above questions could be irrelevant if the changes taking place in the modern world were quantitative rather than qualitative, namely, changes in degree rather than substance, for the latter would require a quantitative change in research methods as well as in the criteria governing induction and deduction and the study of human and natural phenomena.

Those who claim that the changes in the real world are quantitative in essence adopt a static view, one that is oblivious to and unperturbed by changes in time or place. Their intellectual activity never ventures beyond analogical reasoning, for they continue to apply the traditional problem-

solving methods to modern problems and resort to ancient rules governing induction and deduction. Their scope of research does not reach beyond the specific phenomenon being examined, which is cut off from a more complex reality, and which is commented upon by a principle lopped off from the great expanses of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

This approach is at odds with the method of examining the real world in its objective totality, as well as with the Qur'an in its comprehensiveness and the Sunnah in terms of its methodological guidelines.

TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF THE REVELATION AND THE WORLD

On what grounds does this comprehensive and dynamic view stand? Ibn Khaldūn explained civilization's foundations in terms of environmental factors and within the framework of a society based on agriculture and handicrafts (i.e., the society of natural economy). His method relied on inductive reasoning, and his metaphors were of growth and decline (viz., birth, maturity, and old age).

Contemporary western studies have brought home to us an understanding of the foundations of industrial civilization, one in which humanity has gone beyond the stage of "natural civilization," controlling natural phenomena by discovering their properties and laws of interaction to such an extent that physical labor has been replaced by, successively, steam, oil, nuclear, and solar power, and has gone on to exercise technological control over sound-wave frequencies and image dissemination. As a result, our position in the production process has shifted from handicraft to cerebral and technological expertise.

This quantitative and qualitative change in the nature of human civilization has resulted in new concepts in human thought and social relationships. These have come about in a way radically different from what existed earlier. As a result, humanity's view of itself, as well as people's relationship with the natural universe, human society, and the system of values and ethics that existed during earlier phases of human development, have undergone major changes.

NEW LOGIC

A new logic shaped by technology is taking over the world, not because the world has moved on to a very high technological level, but because certain dominant and highly visible centers of culture, armed with advanced scien-

tific research methodologies, have overwhelmed the world's cultural and epistemological orders and gained control of minds and perceptions *en masse*.

The most significant change to date is that cognitive processes are no longer confined to mental hypotheses, sense-based observation, intuition, or surface experience. In fact, all of these have been subjected to systematic doubt and scientific reasoning, which found their way into the natural sciences and then into the human and social sciences. Science has even surpassed empirical thought, transforming it into "illogical empiricism" in place of "mental empiricism," and thus subjecting us to rarefied laws of logic as a substitute for rational thinking.

Some confusion has arisen with regard to distinguishing between the development of human societies in the material sense and their qualitative changes in the historical sense. Our concern here is with the latter. This view was embedded in the writings of both Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (d. 777) and Ibn Khaldūn. The former started by linking natural phenomena to social phenomena, while the latter merged both in the context of birth, maturity, and old age in his early attempts to establish a philosophy of history and civilization.

The foregoing underscores the need for a dynamic, rather than a static, understanding of human societies. The word *statis* connotes stagnation and unchangeable constants, while *dynamism* suggests perpetual movement. Ibn Khaldūn ranked these two concepts (the constant and the variable) as equal in his perception of civilization's three historical stages.

The variable, whether human or natural, cannot be conceived without understanding its actualization's specific laws, which reformulated the natural and human sciences and then synthesized them into an overall methodological bond that threads all sciences together. This is exactly where science as a whole converges and runs in tandem with the structure of the universe as a whole. These two wholes, in turn, run in concert with the wholeness of the revelation, as embodied in the Qur'an, the Absolute Book that oversees the universe's existence and movement through all time.

METHODOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING AND THE COMBINED READING OF THE QUR'AN AND THE UNIVERSE

Using the Qur'an to reflect on reality and improve it requires a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an and the real world. IIIT was established to undertake such a methodological inquiry. This holistic and disciplined inquiry is most alarmingly absent from the thought and practice of contemporary Muslim movements, which seem resigned to a static view of the universe and a fragmentary treatment of the Qur'anic text.

A holistic reading of the Qur'an corresponds to a holistic reading of the universe. Dispersed throughout the universe are wondrous signs, the comprehensive system and organic unity of which can be discovered by the human mind. By the same token, there are miraculous signs and *āyāt* (verses) in the Qur'an, whose comprehensive system, methodology, and organic unity are there to be discovered. This perhaps explains why the Prophet was inspired to arrange the chapters and verses not in terms of chronology, but in accordance with a subtle methodology decreed by the Almighty:

When We substitute one verse for another – and Allah knows best what He reveals [in stages] – they say you are but a forger. But most of them are lacking in knowledge. Say the Holy Spirit has brought the Revelation from your Lord in truth in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a guide and glad tidings to Muslims. (16:101-2)

The “strengthening” is only a circumstantial event geared to resolving a tense situation. This is further explained by the fact that the circumstances for a particular revelation, sign, or verse (*āyah*) are not prerequisites for that particular verse. In the Qur'anic context, “glad tidings” can only be futuristic. Therefore, the Qur'an has been arranged in a specific sequence so that it can assume its comprehensive methodological unity and thus facilitate bearing witness to the human mind's development. Discerning that methodology in a comprehensive manner requires an examination of the “signs” within the overall pattern of their movement, whether in the form of the Qur'an's miraculous signs or revelations or of nature's miraculous signs:

And [of Our sway over all that exists] they have a sign in the night: We withdraw from it the [light of] day, and they are in darkness. And [they have a sign in] the Sun: it runs in an orbit of its own – [and] that is laid down by the will of the Almighty, the All-Knowing; and [in] the Moon, for which We have determined phases [that it must traverse] until it becomes like an old date-stalk, dried-up and curved. The Sun cannot overtake the Moon, nor can the night usurp the day, since all of them float through space [in accordance with Our laws]. (36:37-40)⁸

The Overseer controls all phenomena, from the infinitesimally small atoms and subatomic particles to the infinitely large galaxies and the universe. This is where we begin to reestablish our methodological engagement with the Qur'an, which is absolute in its methodological unity. This can be achieved by examining how the Revelation handles, through its numeri-

cally limited verses, the universe's unlimited reaches and innumerable aspects, and how it handles the relative through the absolute:

That which We have revealed to you of the Book is the truth, confirming what was [revealed] before it, for Allah is assuredly, with respect to His servants, well acquainted and fully observant. Then We gave the Book for inheritance to such of our servants as We have chosen. But some among them wrong their own souls, some follow a middle course, and some, by Allah's leave, are foremost in good deeds. That is the highest Grace. (35:31-32)

Are we not people – all of us – who either wrong our own souls, follow a middle course, or, by supplication to Allah endeavor, as fallible human beings, to exert our utmost in the way of good?

To start our reading of the Qur'an and the Sunnah on the basis of that holistic vision, in 1982 we chose the Islamization of Knowledge as a means toward that goal. We assumed the need for Islamizing the methodologies of the natural and human sciences through the Qur'an in order to make them the key to understanding the sacred text. In effect, this was a twofold and reciprocal process: The Qur'an was to rectify the prevailing methodologies of knowledge, and the rectified methodologies of knowledge were to provide a means of delving deeper into and engendering a better understanding of the universe of the Qur'an. In fact, this logic underlay our call to combine the two readings, the divine text and the matured universe (both of which require human intellect), as the first revealed verses urge:

Proclaim [read] in the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created – created humanity out of a leach-like clot. Proclaim. And your Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught [the use of] the pen, taught humanity that which it knew not. (96:1-5)

Through this combined reading, which brings together the miraculous signs of the Revelation and nature, we discover the dimensions of interaction that must reject any static thought that ignores the laws of the universe and the logic of change:

You [Allah] cause the night to gain on the day, and the day to gain on the night. You bring the living out of the dead, and the dead out of the living. And You give sustenance to whom You please, without measure. (3:27)

By combining both readings and emphasizing interaction and formation, as well as the historical logic of change, we may become better equipped to

deal with the Qur'an according to a clear methodology, one that should enable us to overcome such impasses as those found in Ibn Rushd's (d. 1198) *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā bayn al-Hikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* or al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, which induced Ibn Rushd to retort with *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. Such tensions also drove 'Uthmān ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān Abū 'Amr ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 1246) to prescribe logic as an "unlawful" activity, and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) to try to reconcile a measure of logic to another from the Qur'an in order to avert the contradiction between tradition and reason. Instead, the Qur'an's totality should be addressed without recourse to any discipline or approach that relies on selectivity in its treatment of the sacred text.

What is required is not "striving by reaction," but striving by a positive intellectual endeavor that is guided by the Qur'an's epistemological methodology. All contemporary crises of the methodologies of the sciences (whether of scientific dialectics or positivistic logic) based on relativity and probability, when added to the crises of international cultural orders and their inherent conflicts, boil down to one fundamental crisis: the deconstructivist approach of the methodologies of sciences and cultural orders that can no longer undertake the kind of reconstruction informed by the cosmic laws elucidated so wonderfully by the Revelation.

As a result of this double failure (reduction with no reconstruction) on both the scientific and cultural planes, hedonistic individualism has been reinforced. In reality, this is no more than a reversion to the primitive times, when people, heedless of the divine laws of mercy, fairness, and responsible trusteeship, killed and pillaged at will.

Within the context of the Islamization of Knowledge, we do not propose to initiate any new sciences or cultural orders; rather, we propose to reformulate the sciences and reorient cultural orders within a specific methodology. In other words, we seek to inspire the natural sciences, which are presently atomistic and deconstructive, to take a universal and reconstructive direction, one that relates natural and human phenomena to their global ambit and ultimately divine origin. Thus, findings derived from the methodologies, tools, and instruments of limited, situational research may be augmented by spiritual considerations, whose impact on both the psyche and the body cannot be ignored. Nature itself interacts and manifests its Allah-given wonders between two poles, infinitely great and infinitesimally small:

Those who dispute about the Signs of Allah without any authority bestowed on them, there is nothing in their hearts but arrogance, which

they shall never attain to. Seek refuge in Allah, Who hears and sees all things. Surely the creation of the heavens and Earth is greater than the creation of humanity. Yet most people do not know. (40:56-57)

At the scientific level of application, the Islamization of Knowledge removes researchers from the atomistic examination of the natural or human phenomena and enables them to examine the universe wherein these phenomena were formed. Current scientific theories are reluctant to examine phenomena within a larger purposeful context, for they do not realize the dialectic of the infinite regenerative cycle of creation, its interactions and fulfillment: bringing the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living, and manifesting the miracle of infinite variety from the simplest elements.

The Islamization of Knowledge is the solution for the modern sciences' current impasses, for it will enable science to generate a new, cosmic understanding of the philosophy of the natural sciences, an understanding that is closely connected with *tawhīd*, where the meaning of the following *āyah* is made clear: "Those who are truly aware of Allah's Presence and Might are those who have knowledge" (35:28).

In this sense, the Islamization of Knowledge is not only confined to natural phenomena that derive their signs from the Qur'an, but extend the scope of research to cover those human phenomena that interact with their natural correlates. Since contemporary science avoids research in this universal and cosmic framework or these complex phenomena, scholars of the Islamization of Knowledge must do so not from a spirit of defiance or a desire to avert the contradiction between the traditionalists and rationalists, but to seek the truth, in all of its complexity and infinitude, guided by the Qur'an's holistic methodology in an age of inadequate methodologies. This is particularly pertinent and urgent in view of the epoch in which we live and whose means of communication and exchange of information – however disproportionate – are instantaneous and global.

IMPASSES OF CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM ACTION

Having identified what is required, we now consider our problems in a rapidly changing world and how to solve them.

These problems crystallized immediately after the early centuries of the hijrah,⁹ around the beginning of the tenth century CE. However, this general estimate does not exclude the occurrence of problems shortly after the

Prophet's death, problems centered around such issues as succession, the nature of the political system, documentation, and why the various schools of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and sects emerged.

If we draw a detailed diagram of the types of problems Muslim reformers confronted, it becomes clear that they were all issues that struck at the roots of our thought, whether jurisprudential, historical, political, social, philosophical, economic, or even linguistic. Our cultural atrophy, to quote Ibn Khaldūn, did not ensue from one single source; rather, it was the result of a multi-dimensional failure that entailed multi-dimensional problems.

COLLECTIVE IJTIHAD AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Over the centuries, some reformers have tackled problems related to Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr*). They have weeded out Biblical fabrications, legends, and myths. Some focused on political tyranny, while others dealt with the nature of government and political order.

However, scholars whose research and intellectual endeavors should contribute to reforming the structure of Islamic thought have not yet sought to reform its methodology. Among these scholars are linguists, sociologists, historians, and researchers into the epistemological impasses of the methodology of contemporary science. Thus, a linguist who penetrates to a certain text's semantic heart and reviews its interpretation and use within one or more historical contexts, a researcher who examines the cultures of agrarian societies, a historian or archaeologist who studies the experiences of past civilizations, may all, in unison, enrich collective *ijtihād*. In this light, we remember the important contributions of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah and Ibn Khaldūn to *ijtihād*.

This supports our call for collective *ijtihād*. Of course, this does not imply that each researcher's individuality and unique skills have to be sacrificed, for each will achieve that which he/she strives. Rather, this concept envisages the integration of all branches of knowledge within a comprehensive framework so that the new "endeavor" can deal more equitably with human and natural phenomena.

By the very nature of its comprehensive logic, this methodology presupposes variety and a successful integration of its research inputs so that it can diagnose objective reality as it exists, and further understand the text's import as well as reanimate the relevant tradition in a critical and scientific manner – one that could articulate the sacred text from within. In this way, IIIT hopes to harness various scientific initiatives so that they may yield a

collective harvest responding to all problems of life and further the Islamization of Knowledge in such fields as psychology, economics, sociology, and the natural sciences. We noted earlier that the possibility of mutual interaction between the Islamization of the sciences (on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah) and the rechanneling of these sciences, once Islamized, into an interpretive reading of the Qur'an and the Sunnah already exists. In this manner, the sciences should derive solutions to their problems from the Revelation, and those scholars dealing with the Islamic text can perceive it better in terms of the epistemological dimensions (of the sciences) and scientific observations.

Reforming methods of thought, as a prelude to rectifying practices, is not necessarily confined to researching the grounds on which earlier scholars approached the Qur'an and Sunnah or of studying the then-prevalent rules of *ijtihad*, for these rules have changed immensely due to the development of epistemological methodologies and research instruments, including research relevant to human cognition. Indeed, some researchers perceive things in their multiplicity, polarity, or unity. In the same vein, some scholars deal with such things by using descriptive interpretation, while others employ epistemological analysis.

Collective *ijtihad*, which can embrace all constituents of actual life and methods of epistemology, should spare us the delusion of possible reform through exclusively or predominantly political or economic efforts within a highly complex actuality.

To be candid, our experiences at IIIT, over a period of approximately ten years of collaborative work on the intellectual plane, have revealed the depth and breadth of the Ummah's crisis and have convinced us of the dire need for collective *ijtihad*. With such experience on the purely intellectual level, one can only wonder about the magnitude and intensity of the effort needed to change the status quo on a political, intellectual, and socio-economic scale and within a complex and ever-changing regional and international context.

GOING IT ALONE: THE PITFALL OF EXCLUSIVENESS

The concept of an exclusive or one-dimensional organization, be it political or intellectual, has wreaked untold damage on the Ummah. It has erroneously led such organizations to believe that they embody the Ummah's will and consciousness, a mistaken concept that does not realize the depth and ramifications of its implications. Such organizations cannot function as

substitutes for the Ummah's collective endeavor. Rather, they will become mere factions on a long list of past and present adversarial groups.

Allah warns us of the dangers of narrow-minded pretension to exclusiveness both at the individual and social levels. Accordingly, He commands us to form the Ummah that enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong. This command harmonizes with two other exhortations to Ummah-wide unity and collective thought and action. There are, however, certain conditioning factors mentioned in the Qur'an:

Let there arise out of you an Ummah inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity. (3:104)

The first guideline stipulates:

Hold fast, all together, to the bond of Allah, and do not draw apart from one another. Remember the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. In this way, Allah makes clear His messages unto you so that you might find guidance. (3:103)¹⁰

The second guideline follows:

Do not be like those who are divided among themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs. For them is a dreadful chastisement. (3:105)

The claim to sole representation of the entire Ummah is not sanctioned by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In fact, both sources caution against such tendencies on account of their divisive nature. "Good intentions" must not be invoked as an excuse for such tendencies. Rather, let all good intentions operate within the framework of constructive interaction with the Ummah. Enriching and complementing this collective effort, while giving due respect to other groups, should be a common policy and objective. This agrees with the divine exhortations to unity and mutual love. Significantly, the group addressed in these verses is not a faction, but one described as an Ummah, a whole nation, or one that bears in its conscience the universal Ummah's aspirations and concerns and is working to fulfill them. The term *Ummah* itself alludes to *umm* (mother), from which it is derived, and thus hints at the ideal mother-child relationship as well as the relationship

between the children themselves. The members of such an Ummah should seek to reform it through collective and concerted action.

The Qur'an treats factionalism and division as serious moral and social evils, the consequences of which pollute the human psyche and the body politic. Partisanship, fanaticism, hypocrisy, and unfairness are among the many ensuing ills. Hence, the path leading to such pitfalls is clearly marked off and condemned as incompatible with the Islamic message. But those who persist, even with a "good intention," in endorsing or legitimizing factionalism are accomplices – however unwittingly at times – to a colossal act of mischief:

There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle you, and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart. Yet is he the most contentious of enemies. When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief throughout the land and destroy crops and progeny. But Allah does not love mischief. When it is said to him: "Fear Allah," he is led by arrogance to more crime ... O you who believe, enter Islam [the creed of peace] wholeheartedly and do not follow Satan's footsteps, for he is your avowed enemy. (2:204-8)

Discovering and then implementing the formula for collective action should be the quest of Muslims, for it will enable them to enter Islam wholeheartedly, as Allah commands. A coherent and viable Ummah, one that addresses itself energetically and intelligently to internal and external challenges, should be the outcome of such a collective effort.

The complex crises facing Muslims require complex and collective solutions. Human sciences have become so finely specialized that their methodologies and research instruments penetrate all social and human phenomena. This is in marked contrast to the time when an encyclopedic scholar could possess all the knowledge of medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy of his/her time.

At that time, such scholars were often accepted as the supreme authority on the knowledge they had acquired. Nowadays, however, the sources of knowledge have ramified and become complementary to each other, resulting in the unquestionable need for collective effort. Moreover, cultural orders have become closely connected with scientific disciplines, thus giving a global dimension to issues and alternatives that effectively places them outside the grasp of any single entity. Given these facts, we emphasize collective action without, of course, neglecting distinctive features and abilities. However, the tendency to go it alone in organization and action,

albeit with “good intentions,” remains a very serious threat to our collective aspirations.

THE GENESIS OF EXCLUSIVE THOUGHT

Exclusive thought sets out in the mistaken belief that it alone has been called upon to reform the current state of affairs. This simplistic notion carries deep within it the delusion of possessing the whole truth. In most cases, this is due to ignorance of the complexities of reality as well as of the nature of truth itself. This mistaken belief results in oversimplifying the proposed reform program for the benefit of potential recruits, in the hope that a more mature engagement with the more substantive issues can be deferred to a nebulous point in the distant future.

This results in “organization” preceding thought itself, and in rigorous intellectual and educational endeavor being replaced by superficial and simplistic “dictation” or rote learning. The major issues are subsumed by formal “programs” that focus on mere slogans. By necessity, this entails accessing readily available ideas from existing and commonplace sources, as well as developing a spirit of abject compliance and imitation, all of which contravene Allah’s command:

Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge, for every act of hearing, seeing, or (feeling in) the heart will be inquired into (on the Day of Judgment). (17:36)

It follows that both the propensity for methodological criticism and the potential for creativity disappear, while blind imitation becomes institutionalized; that the movement’s elements dissolve into a quantitative whole; and that thought and reflection are replaced by a preposterous concept: Leadership, which now occupies the pinnacle of the hierarchy, is infallible. This not only leaves the door wide open to fanaticism, but also perverts the person, both as a leader and a follower.

Such an organization, asserting that it alone possesses knowledge and legitimacy, alienates all members of the Ummah and accuses them of apostasy and ignorance. It starts with the wrong premise of introducing Islam to the world anew, ignoring all history and precedence. The lapse of fourteen centuries and the practices of many generations of Muslims cannot be encapsulated in one group, party, or organization. To claim otherwise is an act of intellectual violence that precipitates and justifies actual violence.

The majority of Muslims, no matter how pronounced their deviations or weakness, live and practice Islam, even if they only meet the minimum requirements. No faction or individual can claim sole representation of the Ummah or a monopoly of truth. Nor is there any justification for resorting to violence, whether by opposition groups or governments. When all is said and done, Allah never assigned power over the Ummah to one person or faction. It is, therefore, most salubrious that some wise and responsible Islamic movements reject violence. However, other movements claiming to possess the truth instill in their young and impressionable followers the legitimacy of violence when dealing with other members of the Ummah. Even established members of such movements are prone to banishment if they disagree with the leadership's dictates. This leads to the absence of diversification or a free exchange of views – an intellectual straitjacket.

In short, Islam is based on the unimpeachable authority of a perfect Islamic text, a universal discourse, and a tolerant and merciful Shari'ah. The true realization of such a composite reality requires a collective awareness and will. Contemporary Muslims, all of whom are in the grip of an awesome and complex crisis, need to focus their efforts, which by nature must also be composite, on the task at hand. There is no room for narrow partisanship or exclusive formulations.

SUMMARY

To sum up, our scholars need to consider some of the Ummah's basic characteristics when surveying those dimensions that are missing from the perspectives of current Islamic movements. These characteristics can be encapsulated as follows: the Qur'an, which is divine in origin and supreme in authority; belief in Muhammad as the seal of all prophets; a universal discourse; a versatile and tolerant Shari'ah; and a combined reading of both the Revelation and the universe. These five characteristics make it incumbent on the Ummah to develop a collective will that is aware of the requirements related to each characteristic and of the means to project all of them onto the Islamic movement, as well as, more generally, onto human effort and reality.

The distinctive features, both present and missing, of existing Islamic movements, can be summarized as follows:

- Islamic movements have become tainted with a partisan mentality and are now at odds with the Ummah's higher interests. Since they cannot

carry out any form of collective work, they have become easy targets for those seeking to isolate or destroy them.

- Some of these movements have confused the sacred texts with human interpretations and jurisprudence derived from *ijtihad* based on these texts.
- This confusion of the divine and the human has resulted in some of these movements claiming that only they have the truth, thus conferring on their own human thought and *ijtihad* the sanctity of fundamental texts. In addition, they have expropriated the Ummah's historical achievements and taken credit for them by claiming that they are the only extension or embodiment of that historical reality.
- Some movements mistakenly believe that they can do without intellectual effort or *ijtihad* as long as they have the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Thus, they fail to link the Islamic text with the real world and lose the ability to actualize the faith. Some of them launch themselves as fully fledged "organizations" well before determining or reforming the world of their thoughts. As a result, they begin to haphazardly select notions from the real world and Muslim tradition in order to respond to the requirements of their organizations and everyday activities, instead of proceeding by sound and rational judgment.
- They have claimed to embody, through organization and membership – and to the exclusion of all other groups – the whole Ummah. This is no more than intellectual immaturity and a juvenile fondness for exclusiveness and theatrics.
- Despite their untiring verbal commitment to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, these movements have not drawn up any appropriate programs for themselves and thus display their members' poor grasp of the methodological foundations of Islamic doctrines and the Shari'ah. As we know, methodology constitutes the cornerstone leading to the development of a comprehensive Islamic discourse that can implement Islam's ultimate objectives.
- Since the beginning of modern contacts with the West, the Islamic discourse has been stranded between high and low tides, between progression and retrogression. At times when an all-out mobilization of effort and resources was needed to ward off an outside danger, it rose to the occasion. However, during times of construction and development, the Islamic discourse seemed almost everywhere to be pathetically lacking in

vigor and wholeness. Be that as it may, an analysis of the present Islamic discourse's salient characteristics ought to instill in us more awareness toward rectifying its form and content in order to make it more viable in an age fraught with intellectual and other challenges.

TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE CRISIS

The Islamic discourse's general features were discussed during our survey of the dimensions missing from contemporary Muslim discourse. In this section, we shall elaborate on these absent dimensions and explore ways of retrieving and incorporating them into the Islamic discourse so that it can regain its effectiveness and overcome its crisis. In this connection, Islam's most salient characteristics need to be borne in mind: the Shari'ah's comprehensiveness and tolerance; the very general approach to humanity, time, and place; the purposefulness of creation; the Islamic discourse's universality; the Qur'an's supreme authority; the conclusive nature of Muhammad's prophethood; and the belief in humanity's capacity to renew its Allah-given ability to discover the divine pattern (and mechanics) of perpetual renovation – a knowledge that would enable people to offer a sound and balanced reading of both revelation and the cosmos.

COMPREHENSIVENESS

Comprehensiveness implies a balanced depiction of quintessential facts. In the Islamic context, these are the fundamentals of the faith, the methodology of thought, the way of life resulting from such faith and thought, the methodology of research, and the approach to humanity and the universe at large. It also implies that all principal issues (e.g., the reality of the divine, the sanctity of life, and the vicegerency of humanity) have been explained by the Divine Revelation, and that all aspects of human activities (e.g., worship and transaction) are described and provided for from within the framework of this vicegerency. This worldview contains no such thing as aimless, nihilistic action; rather, a person's actions, which emanate from or conform with that comprehensive system, are a form of *'ibādah* (worship). The very "bread" that a person earns for his/her dependents, the love (both physical and spiritual) that exists between husband and wife, is a form of worship. Such sanctity secures humanity's dignity and prevents people from falling to the level of that which was originally created to serve them, be it animals, plants, or objects. In this way, humanity rejoices in a sense of peace and security with

its Lord, thus escaping such feelings as nihilism and alienation. In short, it is a divine, comprehensive methodology for life as a whole.

THE GENERAL APPROACH TO HUMANITY, TIME, AND PLACE

This implies that Islam is not confined to a specific community, time, or place. Its message was never meant to be addressed to a particular community located in a particular place at a particular time. Rather, it is a call to humanity, which, within the Islamic methodology, is seen as an indivisible whole. This approach views human unity as a fact of life and an attribute of the living, irrespective of race or any other consideration. One of its features is the Muslims' inherent belief in the unity of all revelation and all prophets. Another is the belief in humanity's common origin and its destiny to seek after the truth and form (re-form) the requisite bonds of love and cooperation.

PURPOSEFULNESS

The notion of a purposeful creation becomes clear upon a close or clear-sighted observation of the universe. Each creature, whether large or small, has been created to play a particular role in this life, whether humanity is aware of it or not. The Qur'an makes this abundantly clear: "Did you think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us [for account]?" (23:115) and "Does humanity think that it is to be left to itself, to go about at will?" (75:36).¹¹

Nothing in this universe can be described as accidental, without purpose, reason, or role. Belief in blind chance is a feature of backward and primitive thought dating back to the time of humanity's emergence. In contrast, Islam has brought humanity out of that time's darkness and transferred people to a mode of thought based on rational and methodological thinking, which should enable them discover the relationship between various phenomena and between cause and effect. Islam engenders a state of mind that should help them to discover the presence of the beneficent Creator in the universe and in humanity, as well as the marks of His purpose and design in every aspect of creation. In turn, this intellectual (cognitive) activity should generate the sciences and branches of knowledge that organize the human mind, equip it to bypass the merely partial significance of objects and phenomena, and link them all together in order to discover their interrelationship and purpose:

We did not create the heavens, Earth, and all between them, merely in [idle] sport. We created them only for just ends, but most [people] do not know. (44:38-39)

UNIVERSALITY

Understanding this crucial aspect of Islam and realizing its significance at this stage in human history is of extreme importance and benefit. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic to a messenger, a man who lived among his own people in Makkah. The Revelation was completed in Madinah, and with it, Islam was perfected. The Arabs then carried the Qur'an to the basin of ancient civilizations in the Middle East and elsewhere not of their own accord or any natural inclination; in reality, they were galvanized into action by a divine impetus that overruled tribal and racial allegiances. Their relationship with the Qur'an and the message was based on the fact that they were molded by Islam, rather than the other way around. They set out to achieve two objectives: call for belief in Allah and become "the best nation (Ummah), evolved for humanity, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil" (3:110).

This call to achieve common human objectives can be summed up as moving people away from worshipping demagogues to worshipping Allah alone, from the oppression practiced by other religions to the justice of Islam, and from the confinement of narrow worldly affairs to the expansiveness and infinite possibilities of the world and the Hereafter. All of these matters benefited everyone who heard this discourse, which is inherently free of any national or individual interest. Rather, with its altruistic and tolerant outlook, it embraced peoples of all cultures and allowed them to freely and creatively express their various cultural experiences, which greatly enriched Islamic civilization. Such peoples enjoyed equal status in upholding the message and shouldering the responsibility of communicating it to others. In the course of a few decades, Islam shed its light from southern Europe to southern China. It incorporated erstwhile pagan nations, such as the Mongols, Persians, Turks, and Berbers, in a massive all-sweeping movement that took place within the framework of, and in accordance with, the system and nature of relationships existing among the nations of that time.

The People of the Book entered, if they so wished and of their own free will, into covenants with the Muslims. Thus, they were allowed to keep their national identities, religions, and cultural characteristics intact and were, in turn, enfolded within the Islamic state in their own right. Byzantine power in Greater Syria collapsed, as did the Persian Empire, and the light of

Islam soon took the region's ancient civilizations under its purview and began to construct the first universal state. Muslims managed to transcend the duality of East and West and to enfold all religious and cultural pluralities within the universality of the Islamic discourse.

Despite contemporary civilization's ability to accommodate plurality, the Islamic discourse's universality has always been characterized by accepting plurality, but only after injecting its ideals into that same plurality and pushing it toward universality so that it could function and develop within a positive universal framework that welcomes variety and shuns sectarian division. In this way, Islam has always functioned as a force of attraction rather than of rejection and discrimination, as is the case with contemporary western centralism.

The Qur'anic promise of victory and ascendancy for the voice of truth is contingent upon pursuing divine guidance and truth. Indeed, the word *Islam* is never used when the promise is stated in the Qur'an, so that people will not be confused or misled into assuming that the promise applies to the triumph of early Islam in Arabia and the ancient world, or to any nominally Islamic movement at any given time. This is because it is not a prophecy to be fulfilled, regardless of reasons or conditions, or an event to be activated by factors duplicating those of the ancient past. Rather, historical change is governed by laws that Allah has set down and that humanity needs to discover and observe.

Humanity has reached an advanced level of scientific knowledge and methodology. The march of science has been long and arduous. Of late, however, people have started to doubt some contributions of the scientific mind and are coming to the realization that although the scientific mind has enabled humanity to deconstruct reality through analysis, it has been unable to help humanity to synthesize or reconstruct it. In addition, humanity has begun to realize the danger of this stage of development, feeling that continuing on this course will lead to nihilism and, eventually, the end of history. And so tension and anxiety, which are common among the educated in the West and elsewhere, have now reached new heights. No doubt, Islam is the solution. In other words, Muslims can introduce the Qur'an as a civilizing substitute on a global level. But how can this be done?

OBSTACLES ON THE WAY TO ISLAMIC UNIVERSALITY

The historical model has entrenched in the Muslim mind certain patterns used in the early phases of Islamic expansion. The notions that the Muslim

Ummah should establish a state like the one founded by the Prophet in Madinah and that Muslims need constant mobilization to make that dream a reality are widely held. Contemporary Islamic discourse has remained captive both to this wish and to the imagined scenarios that are dependent upon it, instead of paying proper attention to the contemporary world and forward thinking. The desire to attain political power and “establish the state” to the exclusion of everything else has become the norm. This has paradoxically (but predictably) made that goal even more remote.

The collapse (or dismemberment) of the Ottoman Empire resulted in every Muslim community mobilizing all of its potential, including religious beliefs, to resist colonization and hegemony. This led to a sharp enhancement of tradition’s status and role, while consolidating the mood of rejecting everything associated with the adversary. Such paradigms became ingrained in the modern Muslim mind. Although there have been many contributions in the intellectual or polemical field, they have been largely influenced by those paradigms. Several generations of Muslims have regarded these contributions as essential to the Ummah’s integrity and survival, and thus have maintained that they should be defended and adhered to *en masse*, whether justified or not, and without any kind of revision or scrutiny.

Furthermore, the loser usually becomes interested in emulating the victor. At the same time, the loser’s behavior assumes the form of mere reaction, particularly if the loser is living in a state of chronic intellectual crisis and mental stagnation, as is the case with the Ummah today. This has made the process of presenting the Qur’anic model of civilization as an alternative a most formidable task.

ISLAMIC UNIVERSALITY VS. WESTERN UNIVERSALISM

The intellectual characteristics of current western universalism or centralism may be summed up as follows: It is a positivistic universalism enhanced and shielded by scientific methodology that has successfully (though not fully) galvanized humanity’s potential for critical and analytical thought. In addition, it has inculcated in humanity a tendency to reject whatever influences its freedom of choice and selection. This universalism has spread all over the world, imposing itself, as well as its values and products, on everyone by using the whole world as its zone of influence. It has also encouraged suspicion of all things religious and ecclesiastical by offering the model of the medieval Catholic church as a dire warning. Given this scenario, how can Islam and its sacred book be introduced as a source for a cultural alternative?

If Islam is presented in the way Muslims and Islamic religious movements are now presenting it, the global response can only be one of rejection, even repression. Furthermore, if Islam is introduced as a comprehensive heading for the geographical area in which Muslims now live, not to mention its self-professed adherents, representatives, and heirs to its historical and cultural legacy (itself conveyed in an antiquated expression), then Islam will be viewed as a distorted image of Judaism or Christianity, albeit free from several of their negative elements and geared to offer a functional religion that could satisfy people's spiritual and other needs.

Be that as it may, Islam is invariably presented in a form that does not match its greatness and potential. It is routinely introduced through a thick tangle of transmitted fiqh more suited to a simple agrarian society and a basic exchange of benefits than to the complex realities of our time. Even if we are assured that this legacy can respond to the complex needs of modern societies and their economies, we are, in effect, burdening it with something that it cannot withstand. This will reflect badly and negatively on Islam and its universality so much so that it might negate its globalism and create the impression that Islam is applicable only to unsophisticated agricultural societies.

This will be most regrettable, for it contradicts the very spirit and teachings of Islam. It is also unfair to actual history, which saw Islam branch out to connect the Atlantic to the Pacific and to occupy a central position that joined Asia, Africa, and Europe and merged diverse civilizations, cultures, and races in one human framework. This Islamic universality has always represented a force for global interaction, doggedly removing barriers all the time, while the secular concept of universalism is invoked only when nationalistic or regional crises erupt and when regional orders begin to atrophy and wither away. In the case of Islamic universality, however, its order for good and unity is sustained by divine order and promise, both of which need to be enacted through human agency.

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN CIVILIZATION: BACKGROUND AND DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Ancient Asian and African civilizations never managed to constitute a universal dimension comparable with Islam's universality. Western Europe, however, produced versions of universalism through the Hellenic and Roman models – the first taking shape in the wake of Alexander's conquest of large Asian territories, and the second by virtue of its inheritance of the Greek Empire. The contemporary West considers itself heir to both.

The Hellenic and Roman civilizations were pagan, deriving their power from the deities on Mt. Olympus in the case of Athens and from the deified Caesars in Rome, before that city converted to a pagan-tainted Christianity. Both civilizations had grown within a cultural order that had its own view of humanity. Both worldviews allowed slavery (if the person was not a “citizen”) to exploit the person’s labor, which was forced and unpaid, and made the slaves implacably subordinate to the interests of Athens or Rome. The most valued slave was the gladiator. The modern inheritors of these two civilizations have not developed a significantly different alternative, as evidenced by their enslavement of people in the mines and other industries in ways that resemble their ancient paragons, who enslaved people to build their temples and row their ships.

This cultural order, both in its original and modern forms, is based on a view of humanity that is conducive to conflict, aggression, and mutual animosity. Contrasted with this is Islam’s universality, which transcends such positivistic approaches, be they Greek, Roman, or contemporary western. The Islamic approach is manifested in the following:

First, as opposed to the coercive Greek and Roman models, Islam came as a liberator. History does not record an instance of Muslim armies fighting the peoples of the countries they liberated. All wars were waged against the armies of emperors and tyrants. The liberated peoples supported the Muslim conquerors against their oppressors. These Muslims were the first in history to be welcomed by the peoples of the conquered countries as liberators. As such, they were committed to a divine scripture that disciplined them ethically and morally to such an extent that they would not permit themselves to become arrogant or “do mischief in the land.” In this way, Islam established the first universal fraternity, as opposed to the high-handed and selective “universalism” that prevailed at that time.

Second, the major centers of Islamic civilization (e.g., Madinah, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and Istanbul) were characterized by a vigorous adherence to *tawhīd*. Allah was not the deity of a race or a faction, but was the Lord of humanity. In fact, Islamic civilization was very much shaped by its uncompromising stance against polytheism as well as by building bridges to other monotheistic traditions, their deviations notwithstanding. Thus, Judaism and Christianity remained and were accepted by Islam. Adherents of other creeds in Persia and India were tolerated and offered protection within the overall structure. In other words, Islam was the first system to accommodate the faiths emanating from the Abrahamic heritage, in addition

to others, and never forced people to change their religion, for: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256).

Third, the Islamic model of civilization was characterized by the non-enslavement of the conquered peoples. Unlike Athens and Rome, Madinah, Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo were not built by unpaid slaves brought over from colonies. Zakah was distributed in the areas where it was collected, and thus benefited those non-Muslims who were allies of the Muslims or who depended on Muslim aid. The Islamic model (in its pure form) was certainly at odds with the Hellenic and Roman models, for it was based on retrieving the heritage of all prophets, emancipating it from all additions, and fusing it into a truly universal and open-ended structure. It sought to emancipate and ennoble humanity by placing believers in direct relation with their Creator, instead of enslaving or demeaning them.

The centralized European civilization, whether it branched out from eastern or western Europe, came about after Muslim power declined after the Mongol sacking of Baghdad and the European reconquest of Spain. The onslaught against the Muslim heartland by wave after wave of "crusading" armies confirmed the West's ascendancy. In passing, we should note that Muslims called these events the "Frankish wars," as can be seen in all contemporary Muslim accounts. Islam does not endorse wars between the "crescent" and the "cross" or between the East and the West, for its nature opposes that kind of antagonistic perspective. Be that as it may, that particular period was a prelude to a later penetration, which culminated in the rise of western colonialism and then imperialism.

In consequence, the concept of universalism that has been imposed on Muslim (and other) regions is shaped after the western fashion in order to produce a world in its own image by creating a new "world order," under which the three constituents of Greco-Roman universalism are reborn: a central universalism rooted in the West but enveloping the world at large; a positivistic centralism in which religious values have no place, despite the lip-service accorded to the Judeo-Christian heritage; and an order based on conflict and appropriation.

Nevertheless, Muslims, along with others in the West and elsewhere, need to help transform the current conflict-ridden situation into a more congenial and agreeable world, one in which humanity may settle down to enjoy peace and security by moving along the path of divine guidance and truth.

THE LOGIC OF ENTERING INTO
THE PEACE OF ISLAM

Islam's condemnation of aggression and racial prejudice is unambiguous. As a faith, Islam addresses humanity and recognizes no superiority or distinction, except in good deeds, which only Allah can evaluate correctly. To inveigh against the West or the East is both un-Islamic and counter-productive, for all it does is blind Muslims to the complexities of reality while sharpening and deepening the present duality. Both fairness and commonsense will take a back seat, and complacency and self-satisfaction will prevail, to the detriment of global peace and unity.

Allah Almighty is the Lord of all Muslims as well as of all Europeans, Americans, and all other people. He has provided for a new Islamic universality, one which is far more comprehensive and equitable than the presently dominant norm. It is a universality of mercy and fairness at a truly global level. In order to explain this further, the following observations are germane.

First, Islamic universality is blessed by the Creator of the cosmos. Its *raison d'être* is the world's desperate need for solutions to its ecological, intellectual, economic, and political crises, all of which will worsen as the world's social and moral order continues to decline. Thus, the Islamic outlook will provide solutions and bring relief not only to Muslims, who in their present state of stagnation and blind imitation are in dire need of succor and reform, but also to humanity in its moral and social decline.

Second, Muslims need to address their discourse to the whole world. Addressing it to the West in particular is also crucial and may take priority, since western culture dominates much of the world's moral, cultural, social, and human behavior due to its universal centrality and advanced technology. In our view, Islamic universality can respond to western anxiety and confusion. On the other hand, the Ummah can only find its way to salvation by adopting this universal message and carrying it forward. The Muslim mind has to recall this dimension in order to address the appropriate Islamic discourse to humanity and to understand and be aware of its own role in life.

Third, the triumph of Islamic universality, once articulated and enacted by responsible human agency, is inevitable. When Muslims start working toward that goal, they will do so in response to their duty to be Allah's vicegerents on Earth and to witness to humanity. This is a responsibility, not an indulgence. Carrying it out will determine the measure of their freedom as well as of their success in overcoming their own crisis. What they do for others will reflect on them, since the Almighty has ordained that they shall

carry His Message and witness to humanity. If they continue to fail in this task, they will not improve or progress beyond the present impasse. This is the special relationship of understanding and honor between them and Allah. Nevertheless, they should not give others the impression that they are above them or are doing them a favor when they carry His message to them. He is the One who bestows favors on His servants entrusted to elevate His word. In their turn, Muslims need to be utterly humble and self-effacing, for they must work to make His word the most supreme and Earth a better and safer place for everyone.

Western culture, its awesome global dominance notwithstanding, realizes, as its own thinkers and philosophers testify, that it cannot extricate itself from its present impasse. This is due to the following reasons:

- While western civilization seeks further technological advancement, following its two industrial revolutions, it suffers from the social, cultural, and moral deterioration for which it has found no adequate solutions. The conundrum persists. Cultural advancement, which is truly consistent in all domains, should move simultaneously and at all levels to enhance humanity in terms of values and ethics. However, we do not see this in western civilization. In fact, sciences progress while people decline, their values vanish, and their suffering, coercion, and calamities increase.
- All modern secular attempts to control human destiny have foundered, despite all the optimism before and after the two world wars. Hopes had been high, and yet those conflagrations erupted and saw the most appalling acts of barbarity. What can avert the recurrence of such horrors in the absence of a guided mechanism to control that destiny, except divine guidance? In fact, what is happening at present is merely a change in the tactics and instruments of conflict, for the conflict itself and the coercion of humanity continue relentlessly.
- All modern attempts to build civilizations, whether on a socialist or a capitalist ideology, have been punctuated by dissent and rebellion. Under materialistic dominance, people continue to search for their identity, retrogressing first into nationalism and eventually delving into questions concerning destiny, which leads them back to religion. This has recently, and most dramatically, happened in the former Soviet Union. Still, humanity cannot find solutions, within the context of western liberalism and positivism, for liberalism imparts only fragmented, selective thought. Within this context, humanity looks for its inner self and does not find

it; people focus on truncated details and become prey to depression and alienation, even from their own family roots. Western people's obsession with freedom is without content, for humanity exists without commitment to anything or anyone. It is a kind of freedom that verges on nihilism and self-destruction. Its major icons, Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Einstein, emphasized doctrines and areas of interest that were pursued but led to no real fulfillment.

- This order, which is based on conflict and survival of the fittest, is proving to be even more hostile to the real interests of average people not only in the West, but in the rest of the world as well, than previously thought. Such people find themselves coerced, under a barrage of advertisements and other devices of persuasion, to buy products and make decisions that they would not otherwise have bought or made. Large companies so dominate the consumer's psyche that they choose the educational model, food, and clothing to be used. Accordingly, people exist and behave under these pressures. But for how long?

DETERMINANTS OF THE CRISIS IN THE WESTERN MIND

Much has been written on this subject, thus offering ample evidence (and confirmation) of the problem. If we were to organize this evidence, we would discover the following determinants:

First, Christian theology, having been expropriated by the Greco-Roman heritage, can no longer give the western mind a universal view that transcends the concept of an embodied God. In this way, Christian theology has ended the purity of *tawhīd*, replaced it with polytheistic incarnation, and expunged the metaphysical concept that transcends nature and philosophy. Subsequently, human mental endeavor has been restricted to a narrow area, because the concept of the Godhead (the first basis of universality) has been reduced to the level of the natural object. Thus, Christian theology, which should have helped expand the western mind's horizons, has hindered it. Despite the sorry situation in which they find themselves, Muslims should still encourage people to enter, as they themselves should, more comprehensively into Islam.

The return to God, according to Christian theology, does not go beyond the narrow self. The concept of God's supremacy, which is philosophically absent in Christian theology, represents the purity and supreme sovereignty of the concepts of the divine and *tawhīd* and, *inter alia*, provides

a solution for the crises stemming from cultural prejudice and arrogance. That inference, contained within the proclamation of *tawhīd*, is of crucial importance. However, many people do not recognize this fact.

In the Christian worldview, God became embodied by taking the form of His creation, or by appearing to be similar to it or personified in it. This leads to the idea that God needs humanity to recognize Him, even if only to receive love and fealty. It also follows that humanity can embody itself in the divine form in order to gain God-like power. As such, humanity can do without the power of the embodied God, and thus become independent of Him and go beyond His teachings and codes to become self-sufficient unto himself, a tyrant. Thus, western civilization dismissed God the Omnipotent. When it rediscovered Him and attempted to find a new place for Him within its new fundamentalism, it wanted Him to come back on its own terms.

Given these facts, Christian theology lies at the root of this cultural and intellectual conundrum, which cannot be solved without introducing the concept of *Allāh Wāḥid – Allāhu Akbar* (God is One – God is most supreme) into western civilization. God, being greater than any natural event occurring in time or space, cannot be taken over by either of these elements, not even by the force of action at exceptional events (e.g., Jesus' miracles). In this way, we can distinguish between the methodology of divine creation and that of making things and determining their functions.

Since Christian theology does not recognize monotheism or believe in God as the most supreme, its concept of creation and the methodology of creation is confused. Thus, western thought has produced philosophies of natural sciences in an equally fragmented and arcane way, making them both limited and obscure. By negating or ignoring the element of the divine, they have lost much potential for expansion.

Second, there is the problem of the natural mind vis-à-vis the scientific mind. The natural mind emancipated itself from Christian theology and, supported by the scientific mind's principles and postulates, attempted to justify this action. The end result was a parting of the ways between science and theology, with culture either adopting this separation or remaining neutral. The Materialists exploited the situation to confirm or consolidate the neutralization of God, while the Positivists made the very concept of God archaic and irrelevant.

Third, there is the issue of deconstruction and the inability to reconstruct. After developing both the natural and scientific mentalities in confrontation with a narrow Christian theology, the scientific mentality, supported by the

powers of criticism and analysis, set out to thoroughly and deeply research and examine the “metaphysics” of everything. Thus, it referred all postulates to their basic components in keeping with the logic of industrial civilization. A considerable measure of success was achieved. However, the overriding problem now is reconstruction.

Reconstruction in the field of matter and power has been successful, though at a high ecological and human cost. Such repercussions impinge on reconstruction attempts, most significantly and crucially in the cultural order and the structure of historical and social development. The western cultural order, based on the Greco-Roman experience, has established itself on the linchpins of conflict and superiority. This order is exclusive and founded on the dominance of power and the logic of might in almost every field. Given this, the West finds it difficult to apply moral practices, except where they cannot produce effective and comprehensive reform. For example, you may pray to God however you wish, but you cannot act socially or economically or in a way that contravenes the interests of those in power or goes against their social philosophy or economic thought. It is because of this that world orders, old and new, have sought to eliminate (or subvert) all distinctive features of other nations and peoples.

Here the issue seems to be one of cultural order, rather than religion or morality as such. One may witness about Jesus in many forms, but working to implement his teachings in a comprehensive way may well be condemned as a political act that is both fundamentalist and extreme.

COURSE OF ACTION ♦

What should Muslims do to bring about a beneficial interaction between Islam’s universality and the West? The task is not easy, but it is possible.

It is not easy because the West is prone to resist vigorously any reformation, particularly if it emanates from religious (especially Islamic) thought, since the West has a long history of resisting religious dogma coupled with a collective memory of conflict with Islam. In fact, both Christian theology and Islamic doctrines are hardly distinguishable from a secularist perspective. In addition, the West’s cultural order rejects calls for any value system that is not commensurate with its own, particularly after the Soviet collapse. This event is seen to have given the western liberal system a clean bill of health and confirmed the righteousness of its stance.

Three approaches can be attempted. First, given the West’s chronic crisis in the aftermath of analytical deconstruction and the failure to recon-

struct, Muslims must arm themselves with the Qur'an's epistemological methodology and then form close relations with the West's analytical schools, regardless of their trends or directions. These schools, along with their philosophical, intellectual, and cultural bases, continue to expand and provide a salubrious entry into epistemological contact with the West for the benefit of humanity.

Second, Muslims should give all possible support to the Islamization of Knowledge, when it comes to guiding the natural sciences and reconstructing the human and social sciences. Developing these sciences in their universal unity will constitute an impetus for most westerners to open their minds to our methodology so that they may explore and use it.

Third, a dialogue can then take place within a scientific methodological framework to which Muslims can bring their awareness of the Qur'an coupled with the awareness of universal laws. Circumstances permitting, the new Islamic universality will be epistemological and methodological; it will operate more fairly and persuasively on a global scale. Throughout, Muslims should avoid raising (or being entrapped by) sensitive issues or those that activate the West's historical memory. Rather, they should resort to research and scientific studies that address contemporary issues, crises, and problems on the basis of the Qur'an's epistemological methodology and the Prophet's Sunnah.

But to what extent can contemporary Islamic movements understand (or undertake) this significant task?

DETERMINANTS OF THE CRISIS IN THE MUSLIM MIND

Islamic movements based on historical and cultural pretensions have bound their minds and visions to the Muslim past and thereby eschew present realities – especially in times of crisis and insecurity. Whenever they project the Islamic legacy onto their contemporary situation, they do so with a static mentality that pays little attention to the Qur'anic text's characteristics and its general and timeless pronouncements. Thus, they confine the Qur'an and the Sunnah to the limited framework prescribed by earlier generations of scholars who worked within defined methodological and epistemological constraints and even, at times, with poorly documented material. This approach does not try to analyze those constraints and imperfections in order to discern or calculate the enormous changes that may affect those limitations through human interaction, or the variables of time and place together with the laws of historical change. Such an analysis would provide an insight

into the value and volume of local and international interaction in a coherent, free-flowing context.

The West's crisis is the result of a deconstructive mode that cannot reconstruct, because it has excluded the concepts of God, transcendence, and revelation. The crisis in the Muslim world is manifested in the flawed methodology of dealing with a justifiably comprehensive heritage, one that is nevertheless always meets up with a static mentality when it comes to interpreting that heritage. This reality prevents it from coming to terms with the concepts and methodologies of a contemporary and vibrant world. Since Islamic movements fail to effect change through an Islamic epistemological methodology, they resort to the moral violence of branding others as "apostates"; cling to the more triumphant features of early Islamic history; and refer matters to the world of the Unseen and the Unknown, while neglecting Islam's methodology of interaction between that world, humanity, and the cosmos. Alternatively, they may gain political power in order to introduce change by setting up a cleric as a ruler under divine jurisdiction and to appease the Almighty by applying the Islamic penal code. Within the context of this oversimplification – indeed trivialization – of Islam, political programs are established to support the claim that they represent, express, and speak for Islam.

The world sees such Islamic movements as trying to change all forms of government and all regimes, even those within which they work, irrespective of whether or not their political legitimacy is derived from Islamic law. Even so, Islamic movements continue to squabble among themselves with each one claiming that it is the most legitimate. In the process, they try to embarrass and upstage all other movements and systems in terms of their conception and practice of Islam. Avowing their uncompromising opposition to liberal plurality, they strip other systems and regimes of their legitimacy, for only they possess or confer such a concept upon others. Accordingly, they become mesmerized by the dream of gaining power, and so ignore the concept of universality as well as the methodologies or tools to achieve them. Thus, they overlook a basic aspect of Islamic discourse. Their obsession with narrow political goals makes them identify any success in terms of political power achieved. Some hold this to be a springboard for universalism; but the logic of this argument, if raised at all, is quite fatuous and ignores the eternal laws of cause and effect.

Many Islamic movements have attained several Islamic objectives, but they have failed to build a paradigm that links these objectives with the laws and ways of social change. In consequence, they have resigned themselves

to recruiting new members and expanding horizontally, for their concept of change is linked to forming a numerically large *jamā'ah*. Addressing the laws of social and historical progress, the laws and norms of change, as well as the reality of cultural and intellectual development and their universal directions – all of this simply falls outside their sphere of interest, because many of these movements treat thought and science as beneath their dignity and classify them as contrary to belief.

Nevertheless, there have been numerous attempts to overcome this impasse and free the Muslim mind from these vicious circles. But these attempts still cannot provide the right impetus for overcoming the crisis. Various bids to reform *uṣūl al-fiqh* (sources of jurisprudence) or *fiqh* itself, or to revive and modernize such disciplines as *ʿilm al-kalām* (scholastic philosophy), cannot connect the definite statement in the sacred text and the actual world, which is subject to the laws of historical change and the peculiarities of time and place. Neither laxity nor the rigidity of custom-made fatwas can help in this context; it can only result in more confusion and fabrication.

When things reach this stage, the idea of assuming political power becomes an attractive solution for, or a way out of, a crisis that intellectual methodologies have failed to address. The idea becomes a goal toward which all efforts are focused and which, once achieved, all efforts are exerted to maintain. The underlying assumption is: Since thought has failed, why don't we use the stick?

The divine discourse addressed to humanity, even before the Muhammadan mission, is coherent, challenging, and cannot fall behind the historical development of human societies. If humanity is progressing rapidly toward universalism, then how can the discourse of the ultimate universal message retreat to a state of regionalism, nationalism, or narrow interest? This cannot happen; nor can the coveted goal of universal unity come about without an awareness of divine laws and patterns.

Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) reported in his *Tafsīr*, on the authority of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad Abū Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Marrūzī (d. 1027), that the jurists' division of the world into *Dār al-Islām* (Land of Islam), *Dār al-Ḥarb* (Land of War), and *Dār al-ʿAhd* (Land of Treaty) is no longer acceptable. According to him, it is preferable to divide the world into *Dār al-Islām* and *Dār al-Daʿwah* (Land of the Call for Islam). We may substitute the division of the world into a Muslim Ummah and non-Muslim nations by classifying humanity into *Ummat al-Ijābah* (a nation that upholds Islam) and *Ummat al-Daʿwah* (a nation to be invited to Islam).

Scholars like al-Rāzī, al-Qaffāl, and al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 1010) were more in tune with Islam's teachings and sources, as well as with the true concept of universalism, than are many contemporary leaders of Islamic movements, who ignore or are ignorant of Islam's universality and thus restrict it to their circumscribed geographical areas. Through the use of such labels as "East and West," they shut off a whole world of possibilities.

The absence of this universal dimension has inflicted untold intellectual damage on the Muslim mind. If Islamic movements had considered this missing dimension earlier, much puerile and uninformed thinking could have been averted. Meanwhile, secularists have been calling for universalism within the framework of the New World Order. This call, however, represents an abject surrender to the mentality of blind imitation and subordination, along with a readiness to submit to an all-out assimilation.

The more balanced Islamic universality will seek to invest in the recent fruits of human intelligence, including the information explosion and the more salubrious aspects of the evolving technology. Muslims must be a part of the steady movement toward globalism and the accompanying discussion so that they may discover the best way to implement it.

Modern technology is the product of a long historical process of development that human civilization has generated from ancient times as an expression of innate tendencies awaiting actualization. The universal disposition (and experience) in Islam has certainly provided an incentive for these innate tendencies' realization. This lies at the core of the Muslim contribution to human civilization.

With its historical credibility assured, Islamic universality has no fear of being overwhelmed by western centralism, since the latter is really no universalism at all. Rather, it is a centralism that cannot produce the state of integration necessary for uniting humanity equitably and organically.

Since the West has not extended the natural science's methodologies to their universal limits and philosophical ends, its crisis endures. Western civilization has released the genie of the natural sciences in a most spectacular manner, but has dealt with it only through limited, positivistic philosophies. Marxism tried to give western thought its philosophical ends; however, the scope of Marxism's crisis was larger than the solution it purported to offer. This is why it collapsed and why the crisis persisted on a much larger scale.

The West's present cultural order cannot move out of the maelstrom of its predicament. The capitalist West celebrated most joyfully when the Soviet Union collapsed and its death certificate was issued, for it saw the event as a

triumph for its thought and methodology, forgetting that had it not been for the West's own original crisis, Marxism would never have emerged. It did not realize that any positivistic approach that tries to neutralize Allah is doomed to the same end. Nor did it recognize that the human dialectic, which is in harmony with the universe and the divine will, is bound to end any system that does not respond to its historical development. This is true regardless of whether the nature of that system is a theological order that ignores the laws of the universe, or a selective positivistic system that changes humanity into a cog in its production machine.

In view of the interaction between the various crises of the world, universal solutions need to be sought. Any one crisis is rarely caused by local or regional factors alone. Economic, ecological, strategic, political, and cultural interaction produced by the information explosion has transformed the particular cultural orders into constitutive parts that intersect to make a universal, global structure. Whether this intersecting is produced by the people's will or aspirations or by the implacable logic of dialectic interaction, which does not allow for any territory or people to be isolated from what is going on around them, does not matter.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In his now famous "The Clash of Civilizations" article,¹² Samuel P. Huntington wrote about conflict among civilizations and postulated that the coming decades would witness the last stage in the emergence and development of conflict in the modern world. He also pointed out that some non-western nations, which were no more than targets for western imperial ambitions, have become a driving force alongside the West. In his projections, Huntington stated that the world of the future would be formed through the interaction of seven civilizations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Greek Orthodox, and Latin American, with the possible participation of the African. In his sub-classification of Islamic civilization, he cited the Arab, Turkish, and Malay dimensions, thereby ignoring the Persian, Indian, and other nations that come under the banner of Islamic civilization. He divided western civilization into European and American, emphasizing the essential differences between all civilizations. Among these, he held religious differences to be most conducive to conflict. He also discussed several significant cultural phenomena worthy of study.

His omissions, however, betray a certain naïveté and lack of understanding insofar as his view of Islam, its culture and civilization is concerned.

Sadly, this places Huntington in a conventional Orientalist context and deprives him of seeing those aspects of civilization and religion other than those adversarial and exotic elements that attract many Orientalists. One also feels that he read the historical map of some of these civilizations as though he were living in the sixteenth century. Not enough attention is given to the infinite possibilities for the good offered by modern (and future) information and other technology to humanity.

Huntington also fails to offer any deep analysis of economic and ecological factors or consider the significance of the Earth Summit, which was convened to discuss the common ecological problems facing our planet. He does not even consider the western paradigm's growing influence on the rest of the world. He simply (and unfairly) focuses on the conflict between Islam and the West, offering several pointers as to how the West can win the future battle against Islam and how to mobilize allies. Unfortunately, Huntington knows very little about Islam apart from the distorted image gleaned from Orientalist and media sources. Had these sources been treated with more critical reserve, this severely flawed analysis might have reached different conclusions. Huntington's projection may come true only if the world does not find the proper grounds for unity within the framework of an open civilization that stands as a pole of attraction, rather than as a monopoly, and whose values are broad and universally shared, instead of conditioned by commercial or racial interests.

The values of the Qur'an and Islam inspire people to do what is just and refrain from what is evil in order to pursue their innate goodness and capacity for good. They also allow people to enjoy that which is wholesome and pure and divert them from that which is bad and impure, while releasing them from idolatry's burdens and yokes. In this way, humanity becomes Allah's vicegerent on Earth, its blessed home, and all people are bound together by ties of fraternity and the vision of a common destiny.

Roger Garaudy, who studied Islam deeply and understood its characteristics, foresees a dialogue among civilizations, one that prepares the ground for universalism. In the introduction to his *Pour un dialogue des civilisations* (Dialogue of Civilizations),¹³ he stresses that what was conveniently termed the "West" was actually born in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt thousands of years ago. He criticizes the West for its ignorance of Islamic civilization's characteristics and properties in particular, and of other civilizations in general. In fact, he calls upon the West to discover for itself, as he did, the qualities of Islamic civilization. He candidly points out that his individual crisis before converting to Islam was (in microcosmic terms) akin to that of the

West and had largely been caused by it. It follows that discovering true Islam may serve as a prelude to solving the West's crises.

He also offers a vision (indeed a program) of a possible global cultural revolution, which he outlines as follows: Non-western civilizations should occupy a position in the curricula equal to that of western civilization at western universities and schools; philosophical thought should be reexamined, suggesting that theoretical and philosophical studies should not be under-rated in comparison with scientific and technological studies; attention should be given to aesthetics as a science; and more attention should be paid to futuristic studies, with constant reference to universal history.

It may be germane here to recall that al-Shāfi'ī wrote his *Al-Ḥujjah* in Baghdad and read it to such Baghdad scholars as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), Ibrāhīm ibn Khālīd Abū Thawr al-Kalbī (d. 854), and al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Yazīd al-Karābisī (d. 862). When he went to Cairo, he reconsidered his jurisprudence in its entirety and revised his views, except for thirteen *masā'il* (issues in fiqh). In other words, he produced two different versions of his fiqh. Such was the experience of a scholar who lived for a mere fifty years!

The cultural difference between Baghdad and Cairo at that time could not have been as pronounced as those between, say, China and America today. Nevertheless, today's fiqh scholars endeavor to make Muslims live according to a cultural order based on jurisprudence formulated in the schools of the Hijaz or Kufah in the second Islamic century. The resulting constraints stem from their insufficient understanding of Islam's universality and its capacity to enfold various cultural orders within the framework of truly perennial values, rather than ones shaped by whim or prejudice.

Islam's universality is too profound and important a concept to be used as a mere slogan. It is a significant, far-reaching methodological entry that will cause us to review our heritage in its entirety, in a very critical, exacting, and painstaking way; to read that heritage methodologically and epistemologically; discern its paradigms; and reclassify and judge it in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and their methodologies, and as both are projected onto the real world.

This task calls for thousands of intelligent, resourceful, and diligent minds that are enlightened by the Qur'an's epistemological methodology and the Sunnah's applied methodology, to work at or alongside hundreds of institutions and universities. That attained, Muslims will find that many aspects of their inherited sciences will have to be replaced, rectified, or

updated, and that this sound heritage can be built upon and extended to help them cope with present and future challenges.

Some will ask: “Why bother?” The simple answer will be: This is the Ummah’s destiny and responsibility, its *raison d’être* and ennobling mission to humanity. Since Muhammad was the Seal [and last] of all Prophets, and since the Almighty has vowed not to chastise anyone until He has sent a Messenger (17:15), this Ummah has become responsible for humanity. Like the ancient Hebrew prophets, its scholars and intellectuals have been entrusted with delivering Allah’s message to an unwary world. Conveying (and reinvigorating) this message is not an option, for Muslims must continually review the Islamic discourse and make it understandable to everyone. If they do not, the Ummah will be subject to what befalls a messenger who gives up his mission (see 7:175–77).

A man who “would have been elevated” by Allah’s grace but instead “inclined to the earth and followed his own vain desires” may become a symbol of a nation that had received the signs of Allah but has departed from them – a nation that has, by its preference for worldly benefits and material comfort, degraded itself instead of striving to be the world’s moral beacon and model.

Muslims would be well advised to be aware of the two divine laws of *istibdāl* (replacement of one people with another), as in: “If you turn back [from the path], He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you” (47:38) and *tidwāl* (turn-taking): “Such days [of varying fortunes] we give to people by turns” (3:140).

As the Qur’an recounts, the divine application of such laws has caused earlier nations to be replaced by the Ummah of Muhammad so that humanity would start to move toward universality. This began with the building of “the pivotal Ummah” and with the concept of “people” being replaced by the concept of a “world nation,” and by a Messenger sent “as a mercy for all humanity.” Along with this came the introduction of a system of legislation that was rational, broad, and tolerant enough to serve humanity in its various stages of development; direct divine chastisement was deferred until the Day of Judgment; and rule by Allah’s direct intervention was replaced by the Qur’an’s authority.

Instead of such miracles as sending manna from heaven and parting the Red Sea, which made an impression on humanity during a particular phase of its growing awareness, humanity was now placed at creation’s center as a rational being who was to rely on the Qur’an, as well as Prophet Muhammad’s Sunnah, to find its place and happiness within the universal

order as His vicegerent. Hence, humanity's rediscovery of the Qur'an and its correspondence to the whole universe is imperative, for the Qur'an contains an epistemological methodology similar to the norms that control the universe and its movement.

Humanity is the pivot of this pattern, and its effort is the basis for application. Humanity is both the reader of the Qur'an and the reader of the universe. Thus, our understanding of the Qur'an's supreme authority and its human application is vital. In this sense, a *mujtahid* is rewarded (by God) twice if he/she is correct in his/her judgment, and once if he/she is mistaken. Once again within Islam, humanity is ennobled by the task of vicegerency, in the course of which each person finds integration and peace with his/her fellow human beings. This dimension of humanity's role on Earth can be ignored only at humanity's own expense.

NOTES

1. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, tr. Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).
2. Zakah: The obligatory sharing of wealth with the poor and the community at the annual rate of 2.5 percent of appropriated wealth above a certain minimum. It also refers to general charity, which is strongly encouraged by divine injunctions.
3. Tāhā J. al-ʿAlwānī, *Al-Azmah al-Fikriyyah at Muʿāshirah: Tashkhiṣ wa Muqtaraḥāt ʿIlāḥ* [The Contemporary Intellectual Crisis: A Scrutiny of the Problem and Possible Solutions] (Herndon, VA., IIIT, 1989); *Iṣlāḥ al-Fikr al-Islāmī bayna al-Qudurāt wa al-ʿAqabāt: Waraqāt ʿAmal* [Reforming Islamic Intellectual Discourse: Capabilities and Obstacles: A Working Paper] (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1991).
4. *Fiṭrah*: An innate, Allah-oriented nature with which every person is born.
5. Muhammad Asad (tr.), *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980).
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. The hijrah refers to the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madinah in the twelfth year of his mission (622). This event marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.
10. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*.
11. Ibid.
12. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993): 22-49.
13. Paris: Denoël, 1977.