

## Evaluating the Muslim Response to Modernity

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**I**n the preceding chapters<sup>1</sup> we described the defining characteristics of modernity (the modern West) and the varying responses that the Muslims have articulated in response to its challenges. Whereas modernity is a project whose genesis can be traced back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic response to modernity (modern Islam) began only in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This nearly 150-year gap between the two itself suggests that the Muslims are lagging behind the West intellectually and have not articulated an effective response. In other words, due to certain historical factors there are serious shortcomings in the Islamic response to the challenges of modernity. There can be hardly any debate regarding the point that the Muslims have failed to adequately address the myriad of issues posed by the advent of modernity. The real debate lies in the diagnosis of the shortcomings. In this chapter we will discuss this particular issue. Before we proceed any further a reminder is in order. In the first chapter we noted that the impact of modernity has been so prodigious that even the oppositional movements that emerged to challenge it have been profoundly shaped by it. At that time we said that the real purpose of writing this work was to document the fact that modern Islam itself is no exception to this rule, the response articulated by modern Islam to modernity has itself been acutely shaped by the fundamental tenets of modernity. The evidence to support this argument will materialize during the course of our discussion in this chapter.

When one talks about the shortcomings of the Islamic response to the challenge of modernity, one can begin the discussion from a number of different angles. In our case we will take the relationship between modernist Islam and revivalist Islam as the starting point. The animosity and distrust between the revivalists and the modernists is a prominent feature of the contemporary Islamic intellectual landscape. Both groups see the other's vision of Islam as being gravely defective and a direct threat to Islam's future well being. It is no accident that the leading modernists are Muslim expatriates residing and working in the West – the opposition of the revivalists, among other factors, makes it virtually impossible for them

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to pursue their work in Muslim countries. But in spite of this mutual hostility and distrust, modernist and revivalist discourses display a remarkable degree of convergence on a number of key points. The views of these two camps regarding the West, the historical tradition of Islam, and the approach to the Islam/modernity debate bear striking resemblance. These points are central to the larger issue and the convergence is so striking that the differences between the two camps become far less significant than is generally recognized. In examining these points of convergence, the shortcomings of modern Islam's response to modernity begins to become apparent.

### **The Convergence of Revivalist Islam and Modernist Islam**

A One-Dimensional View of the West: The revivalist and modernist approach to the West is strictly one-dimensional and devoid of any dialectics. Vociferous elements in the revivalist camp view the West as the embodiment of decadence and corruption that should be shunned. As far as these revivalists are concerned the only thing worth borrowing from the West is the supposedly "value-neutral" modern science and technology. The modernists, in sharp contrast, see the West as the model that the Muslims must aspire to emulate. In both cases the lack of a dialectical view of the West poses serious problems for the internal dynamics of modern Islamic thought. In spite of loud condemnations of the West the revivalists have borrowed extensively from modern Western thought, especially in relation to modern Islamic "political" theory. The inability to recognize the fact that categories and concepts they have defined as being purely "Islamic" are actually rooted in the Western tradition has created serious contradictions and discontinuities in revivalist discourse. In the case of the modernists the issue of how much Islam can borrow from the West without becoming non-Islam remains dangerously vague. Modernist discourse is practically devoid of any red flags that would serve as warning signs to identify those Western categories and concepts that the Muslims must shun in order to maintain Islam's integrity. The end result of both approaches, the revivalists' categorical condemnation of the West and the modernists' uncritical acceptance, seriously compromises the ability of modern Islam to constructively engage with modernity.

The revivalists confidently assert that all that the Muslims need to cope with the challenges of modernity is contained within the teachings of Islam, therefore there is no need to borrow any ideas or concepts from the West. If the West is to be studied at all it is only to discover its shortcomings and failings, not to understand the roots of its strengths which the Muslims might appropriate for the reconstruction of their

society. The only thing that the Muslims can borrow from the West is science and technology but not ideas and concepts. By making the claim that Islam already contains all the ideas and concepts needed to cope with modernity, the revivalist fail to draw a distinction between two related but nonetheless distinct issues: a) Islam containing the intellectual resources that allows for the construction of the institutions and procedures suitable for modern society and b) the actual mobilization of these resources in order give birth to such institutions and procedures. The utter confusion between these two issues in revivalist discourse is best illustrated by their attitude towards the institution of constitutionalism. Foregoing the established Islamic institution of *bai'yah*, and formulating a constitutional theory of state presents one of the most stark examples of revivalist borrowing from the West.

The revivalist groups have invariably organized themselves around a constitutional structure. The powers of the group's leader (*amir*, *murshid-e-'aam* etc.), his responsibilities, and his relationship to the executive body (*shura*), are all defined by a constitution. And in the revivalist theory of state, the constitution is the key element that defines the relationship between the ruler and ruled, as well as the functions of the various branches of government. In spite of revivalist protestations to the contrary, constitutionalism is a totally western concept that they have borrowed and "Islamized". An argument could be made that Islam contains the resources upon which the concept of constitutionalism could be based. But this is not the same as saying that these resources have been utilized in order to actualize this concept. Since the time of the Prophet (SAW) and his immediate Successors (RAA) the relationship between the Muslims and the non-Muslims was governed by a set of constitutional principles upon which the respective parties had come to an agreement. The Covenant of Madinah, regulating the relationship between the Muslims, the Jews and the Arab tribes, is the earliest example of such a document. But when it came to determining the internal affairs of the Muslims no formally written constitution was ever drawn up. The internal affairs were decided according to an unwritten social contract and found its expression in the institution of *bai'yah*. The Muslims took a personal oath of allegiance on the hand of the leader, the *khaliifah* (Caliph), and committed themselves to obey him in all matters that were in accordance with Islamic teachings. If the leader could prove that his directive was in accordance with the Islamic teachings, the Muslims had to obey him even if an alternative Islamic option was favored by the majority. It was the personal prerogative of the leader to accept or reject the majority decision, and no written principles existed that restricted this practice. Whereas constitutional principles governed the relationship of the Muslims with the non-Muslims, constitutionalism was totally absent

from the internal affairs of the Muslims. The suggestion that Muslims formally adopt a constitution that would outline the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is a novel, modern development – a development directly influenced by modern Western political thought. And this proposal has been vociferously advocated by the very revivalists who argue that there is nothing that the Muslims can learn from the West.

Another case of extensive borrowing from the West is the concept of the separation of powers. In revivalist political theory the various branches of a modern Islamic state would be organized according to a system of checks and balances which would be outlined in the constitution of the state. Once again we find that such a separation of powers has never been formalized in Muslim society during the course of its history. The office of the chief executive, the *kehalifah*, has been virtually indistinguishable from that of the legislative and the judiciary. The personal integrity of the chief executive has proven to be the decisive factor that determined whether or not the legislative and judicial processes were allowed to function independently of the executive branch. No written principles existed that ensured that this integrity be maintained. And after the first Islamic century, examples of such integrity on the part of the chief executive are extremely rare. The credit for actually formalizing and implementing a system of checks and balances in the political system has to go entirely to Western political theory. If such a system does come into existence in a modern Islamic context it will most likely be based on preceding Western models.

Whereas the revivalists are unwilling to acknowledge the fact that there is much that Muslims can learn from the West, the modernist vision stakes the very survival of Islam upon uncritically accepting certain ideas, concepts, and/or methods from modern Western thought in order to make Islam compatible with modernity. The modernists advocate that Muslims use the tools offered by the modern social sciences in order to critically study the shortcomings of modern Islam, and then use various modern methodologies to construct an interpretation of Islam compatible with modernity. In other words Muslims "...require fresh analysis with new scientific equipment".<sup>2</sup> Even though the individual modernists differ regarding the specific "scientific equipment" that should be used to "fix" the "problem", (for example, Fazlur Rahman prefers using the historicist methodology but Arkoun opts for linguistic analysis) they agree that this "equipment" has to be imported from the West without any significant modifications.

But such high esteem for modern Western ideas, concepts, and/or methods is naively misplaced in the context of helping religion cope with

modernity. The severance between the religious ethos and the society at large is a defining feature of modernity. This severance has become such a prominent feature of the modern West that it has become acceptable, even among committed Christians, to refer to it as the "Post-Christian West". A skeptic is perfectly justified in asking the modernist Muslim intellectuals: If modern Western thought contains the resources, concepts, and/or methods that the Muslims must appropriate in order to cope with the challenges of modernity, to what degree have these elements of Western thought helped modern Christianity and Judaism cope with modernity? The facts on the ground suggest that modern Christianity and Judaism have not been helped to any considerable degree in coping with the challenges of modernity by the very elements that modernist Muslims suggest is indispensable for modern Islam's welfare. The modernists are aware of the fact that a healthy society (Muslim or otherwise) must maintain an organic link with the religious ethos, but they appear to be pathetically ignorant of the dynamics in the modern West that have led to the complete severance of this organic link.

This is best illustrated by the fact that the very methodologies which the modernist Muslims champion for the purposes of reinvigorating Islamic thought have themselves directly contributed to the marginalization of religion in modern Western society. Critics of logical positivism and literary theory have noted that both of these intellectual currents negate the transcendent, ideal and metaphysical elements of reality. In other words, they nullify the specifically "religious" aspect of religion, reducing the religious text, idea, and/or personality to being mere products of specific historical circumstances or some other deterministic process. Logical positivism is the forerunner of historicism (Rahman's favored methodology) and linguistic analysis (Arkoun's preferred "scientific equipment") is part of literary theory.

Gertrude Himmelfarb has argued (quite convincingly) that subjecting great literary texts and historical events to historicist or linguistic analysis reduces the grandeur, beauty and meaning of the text/event being considered. The lasting effect of the use of this "scientific equipment" in the analysis to demystify, normalize, structuralize and/or deconstruct the subject under study.<sup>3</sup> She goes on to argue that the end result of this process is to trivialize all that is meaningful and (we may add) to elevate all that is meaningless: "...[a] Superman [comic book] is as worthy of study as Shakespeare".<sup>4</sup> The debilitating effect of this "scientific equipment" on religious texts, events, and personalities is no less profound than on literary texts and historical events - randomly trivializing the meaningful while simultaneously elevating the trivial.

There can be hardly any argument that the Muslims need to demystify and structuralize many of their religious texts and historical events, as the modernists insist. But the “equipment” that the modernists offer for this purpose goes well beyond the intended target, in the end desacralizing and trivializing the subject beyond recovery. The deleterious effects of the use of this “scientific equipment” on the Western intellectual landscape are painfully evident for all to see. After a given sacred idea, text, event, personality etc. is subjected to analysis by this modern “scientific equipment” it is shorn of all spiritual, venerable and sacral qualities. In other words, nothing remains of the sacred realm other than rumors “...and not very reputable rumors at that.”<sup>5</sup> In the final analysis these modern methodologies will hardly address the issues that have to be addressed and they will end up dismantling whatever little still remains of the sacred tradition. The modernists are woefully unaware, or unwilling to accept the fact, that the methodologies they are proposing contain serious shortcomings. This is a direct result of their one-dimensional view of the West, a view devoid of any dialectics. This one-dimensional view of the West is characteristic of both revivalist thought and modernist thought. The blanket rejection of the revivalists and the uncritical acceptance of the modernists of Western ideas and institutions seriously contract the vision of both groups. The end result is that their intellectual integrity is seriously compromised.

Disregard for the Historical Tradition: Of far more serious consequences than the one-dimensional view of the West, is the virtual disregard for the Islamic historical tradition that characterizes revivalist and modernist discourse. This is appalling in light of the fact that the fundamental diagnosis of modern Islam’s malaise that has been offered by both the revivalists and the modernists is almost as old as Islam itself. Modern Islam finds pious and sincere Muslims in history who are worthy of praise and admiration, but it finds no constructive ideas in the historical tradition of Islam that might help Muslims formulate an effective response to the challenges of modernity. At the very most a selected reading of the works of an Ibn Tamiyya (RA), Al-Shatibi (RA), or Al-Ghazali (RA) may be offered, but no systematic and comprehensive consideration of these thinkers, to say nothing of the tradition as a whole, is present in modern Islam. Because of this disregard for the historical tradition of Islam much of the intellectual effort of 20th century Islam has been dedicated to reinventing the wheel.

For the revivalists the most dangerous threat to Islam in the modern period is the process of secularization, i.e. the removal of religious principles from all spheres of life except the specifically “religious” sphere. The focus of their efforts is to reestablish a connection between religious

principles and the social, political and, economic spheres of life. This is most clearly illustrated in their definition of *Deen* and *'Ibadah*. If we acknowledge the fact that this is indeed the chief malaise confronting modern Islam, then it is also a fact that secularism has been present in Muslim society since its very first century. (This is the case even according to a revivalist reading of history, because Islamic principles began to be disconnected from the political sphere after the Caliphate of Ali (RAA)). And with the passage of time the process of secularism only gained momentum in Muslim society, so much so that even prior to the colonial enterprise the only sphere in which Islamic principles exercised any meaningful influence was the private/personal sphere. Consequently, the crisis facing Islam is not entirely novel, and a multitude of individual thinkers and reform movements have emerged during the course of Muslim history to counter the effects of a disease that is called secularism today. Revivalist Islam is aware of the fact that various attempts at reform have been undertaken in the past but its own connection with these attempts, on the intellectual plane, are extremely tenuous. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the relationship between 20<sup>th</sup> century revivalist Islam and 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist Islam. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of reform movements in the Muslim world that are unprecedented in scope and breadth in Muslim history. Virtually every region of the Muslim world saw reformists emerge dedicated to internal reform of Islam and defense against the external aggression emanating from Europe. Prominent example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist trend are movements led by Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Osman Dan Fodio in Hausaland, Muhammad Abdullah in Somaliland, the Sanusiyya in North Africa, Shaykh Shumayl in the Caucasus, and Mahdi in Sudan. The reformist part of their efforts consisted of removing non-Islamic influences from the belief system and practices of the Muslims and to implement Islamic teachings in their totality in all spheres of life. But these reforms were not ends in themselves, in that afterwards the resources of the Muslims were to be mobilized in order to counter the hostile military aggression of emerging colonial powers. In spite of some very impressive early gains these movements eventually failed due to the weight of conservatism in Muslim society and the superior military strength of the West.

The reform aspect of the 19<sup>th</sup> century movements is virtually indistinguishable from the declared goals of 20<sup>th</sup> century revivalists. This can be easily illustrated by looking at the following (perceptive) description of the goals of revivalist Islam, a description that can be applied to 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist Islam (keeping in mind the historical differences between the two centuries):

In its emphasis to overcome the modern challenge, Islamic resurgence has emphasized, theoretically at least, the reconstruction of an Islamically based authority; of the Islamic nation, which is a gradual reconstitution of the Muslim *ummah*; and the building of a comprehensive system of Islamic law, government, education, and ethics in the modern world. The reconstitution of the *ummah* in the modern world is considered possible if there is a return to the original sources of Islam.<sup>6</sup>

In light of the historical proximity between the two as well as virtually identical reformist programs one expects that on a certain level the 20<sup>th</sup> century revivalists display some sort of influence of the reform attempts of the previous century, either in conceptual or methodological terms. But this is not the case. The revivalists have voiced (in some cases) admiration for the reformist attempts of the previous century, but show no evidence of conceptual or methodological continuity with 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist Islam.

The relationship between 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist Islam and 20<sup>th</sup> century revivalist Islam is only symptomatic of the relationship between 20<sup>th</sup> century revivalist Islam and the Islamic tradition as a whole. There is a clear sense of aloofness and distance between the two. One finds the revivalists (sometimes) admiring the works of the previous reformers. But on the whole there is virtually no reference to this tradition in the context of diagnosing and/or remedying the acknowledged disease. In spite of their tenuous links to the historical tradition of Islam, the revivalists are still in a relatively better position than the modernists regarding this issue. One can identify a period in Islamic history in which the prime cause of Muslim decline (according to the revivalist reading of history) is absent. But if we accept the assertion that the inability to distinguish between historical Islam and normative Islam is the main reason for Islam's ineffective response to modernity, as the modernists assert, then this is a problem that the Muslims have been dealing with since the very advent of Islam. A number of incidents during the life of the Prophet (SAW) illustrate this point well. In a hadith recorded in Sahih Muslim it is narrated that the Prophet (SAW) saw the Muslims of Madina artificially pollinating date palms in a certain manner. He inquired as to what they were doing. They replied that this was their customary way of pollinating the palms. In response the Prophet (SAW) suggested an alternative method, a method that the Muslims adopted. The ensuing result was that the date crop that year was less than normal. When the Companions (RAA) reported this to the Prophet (SAW) he replied that his suggested alternative method for pollination was merely a suggestion and not a binding (sic. normative) religious obligation.



Ibn Ishaq records another incident from the Prophet's (SAW) lifetime that shows the presence of the tension between normative religious commands and historically specific suggestions. It is related to the positioning of the troops prior to the battle of Badr. The Muslims arrived in the valley of Badr and the Prophet (SAW) positioned his troops as he saw fit. Ibn Ishaq records that one of the Prophet's (SAW) Companions (RAA), al-Hubab bin al-Mundhir (RAA), asked him:

Is this a place which Allah (SWT) has ordered you to occupy, so that we can neither retreat nor withdraw from it, or is it a matter of opinion and military tactics? When he [the Prophet (SAW)] replied that it was the latter he [al-Hubab] pointed out that it was not the place to stop but that they should go on to the water nearest to the enemy and halt there, stop up the wells beyond it, and construct a cistern that they would have plenty of water; then they could fight their enemy who would have nothing to drink. The [Prophet (SAW)] agreed that this was an excellent plan and it was immediately carried out ....<sup>7</sup>

These incidents clearly show that even during the Prophet's (SAW) lifetime the Muslim community was grappling with the problem of distinguishing between normatively binding religious commands and historically expedient suggestions and recommendations. During this period of history the resolution of the problem was elementary, simply ask the Prophet (SAW). But after the Prophet (SAW) this issue became progressively more complex and has occupied the Muslim community ever since. The problem of having to distinguish between normative and historical Islam is not a novel challenge facing modern Islam, but has been with the Muslim community since its very birth. It naturally follows that during the course of history a great deal of time and effort has been dedicated to the resolution of this problem by Muslim intellectuals. By extension the historical tradition contains valuable resources that can be utilized by modern Islam to confront the challenge of modernity.

But when one studies the works of Muslim modernists, their condescending attitude towards this historical tradition cannot escape one's notice. They see mass chaos and confusion as being the defining characteristics of Islam's intellectual tradition. For the modernist, the intellectual history of Islam reads like a dark comedy. According to this reading we find sincere Muslims trying to understand the real teachings of Islam but invariably failing miserably. According to this reading the Muslims have tirelessly attempted to formulate a comprehensive system of Islamic law, theology and/or ethics according to certain principles and criteria that they developed. But invariably all of these attempts in the course of Muslim history produced results contrary to the intended purpose – all of these attempts further removed the Muslim community

from the spirit of Islamic teaching. According to Fazlur Rahman, the juridical principles of Al-Shafi (RA), the theological system of Al-Ashari (RA), and the spiritual insights of Al-Ghazali (RA) have only served to obscure the Muslims' understanding of the *elan* of the Qur'an<sup>8</sup> instead of facilitating its comprehension. Rahman is being generous in his critique of the Islamic intellectual tradition in comparison to Arkoun. For Rahman the primary objection is that this tradition has invariably failed to comprehend and systematize the essential Qur'anic teaching, in effect it has become the primary obstacle to the comprehension and systematization of the Qur'anic teaching. For Arkoun the problem is even more basic. According to him the Muslims have failed to accurately appreciate the true nature of the Qur'an itself because of "...a series of confusions characteristic of the operation of the religious imaginary".<sup>9</sup> Since all of the intellectual output of traditional Islam is the product of a religious imaginary, which is by Arkoun's definition characterized by "a series of confusions", it contains nothing of value for the modernist. If the modernists are to be believed then the only individuals in the history of Islam who have authentically understood the message of Islam are the Prophet (SAW), a few of his close Companions (RAA), and the modernist himself (aided by his modern "scientific instruments"). This attitude is not all that different from that of the revivalist Muslim. The only difference is that the revivalist would add Ibn Taymiyya (RA), Abdul Wahhab (RA), or some other scholar to the list of those who have authentically understood the message of Islam.

It is worth mentioning, for the sake of clarity, that nowhere has it been suggested that modern Islam should accept all the intellectual and conceptual formulations developed during Islam's long and eclectic intellectual tradition as binding. This is neither possible nor desirable. The argument has been that modern Islam's cursory dismissal of this tradition as being irrelevant to the contemporary encounter between Islam and modernity is not only unwarranted, it is also gravely injurious to the present and future well-being of Islam. This intellectual tradition contains a vast wealth of resources that, if tapped, can spare modern Islam a great deal of unnecessary labor. The failure to constructively engage with this tradition has led to the emergence of oxymoronic fields of study in modern Islam. For example it makes no sense whatsoever to engage in "historical criticism" of the Qur'an, along the same lines as "biblical criticism". If one draws a parallel between Islam and Christianity, the Qur'an (the literal word of God) corresponds to the person of Christ (the word of God become flesh) and the hadith (the witness of the believers to the record of the revelation of the word of God) corresponds to the Bible. As a modern Christian scholar has noted: "To look for historical criticism of the Qur'an is rather like looking for a psychoanalysis of Jesus".<sup>10</sup> (The value of

Rahman's and Arkoun's efforts, centered as they are around the concept of "Qur'anic criticism", should be viewed in light of this observation). In modern times the value of a given field of study is not based on its practicality and usefulness (how practical and worthwhile is it to do a psychoanalysis of Jesus?) but on its novelty (however absurd it may be). But the absurdity of the attempt is hidden from the modern scholar by the absolute confidence that he/she has in the modern "scientific equipment" that can undoubtedly solve all the riddles that face the scholar.

Another example of this absurdity is the emergence of a field of study called "Qur'anic hermeneutics". Using the "scientific equipment" of modern literary theory the modernists attempt to extrapolate the do's and don'ts from the text of the Qur'an, and define the specific conditions in which these commandments become operative. A Muslim familiar with his/her tradition immediately recognizes that this specific endeavor (determining the precise commandments of the Qur'an and identifying the precise pre-conditions necessary to make the commands operative) is the prime concern of a sub-field of the traditional field of study known as *usul-ul-fiqh*. One can only guess how much of the efforts of modern Muslims laboring to study and establish the parameters of this novel field of study (Qur'anic hermeneutics) is merely an exercise in reinventing the wheel. The deleterious effects of disregarding the intellectual tradition of Islam are a prominent characteristic of modern Muslim thought. The narrowing of vision that results from a one-dimensional view of the West is further confined by a narrow view of the intellectual tradition of Islam, on the part of the revivalists and the modernists alike. Consequently the intellectual integrity of their endeavors is further compromised.

A One-Dimensional Approach to the Qur'an: If one takes into consideration the varied body of literature produced by 20<sup>th</sup> century Islam as a whole, modern Islam's narrow view of the Holy Book cannot escape one's attention. For the revivalist, the Qur'an is primarily a book of Islamic law and ethics. For the modernist, it is even less than that, it is primarily a book of Islamic ethics. Out of the more than 6000 *ayaat* in the Qur'an less than 600 can be categorized as containing explicit juridical injunctions. But we find that it is precisely these 600 or so *ayaat* that dominate the contemporary debate between the revivalists and the modernists. The bulk of the revivalist intellectual endeavors has been dedicated to justifying the implementation of the juridical imperatives contained in these *ayaat* in contemporary Muslim society. The revivalists argue that if these injunctions are not implemented in their totality, contemporary Muslim society cannot claim to be "Islamic". In effect, the implementation of the commands contained in these *ayaat* is the litmus test that determines the Islamicity of Muslim society. The modernists for their part argue that the

implementation of many of the juridical commands in these *ayaat* is not only unnecessary in contemporary Muslim society, but in many cases such implementation will reduce the Islamicity of the Muslim society. The preponderance of modernist intellectual endeavor has been dedicated to the articulation of arguments to justify this attitude vis-a-vis the juridical commands contained in the Qur'an.

It was noted in the previous chapter that articulating a vision of Islam that incorporates the social, economic, and political spheres of life into a unified whole and links them to a religious ethos is the individuating characteristic of revivalist discourse. Consequently we find that the particular *ayaat* which are related to these spheres are repeated with great frequency in revivalist literature. For example, in the social sphere the *ayaat* related to the status of women in Muslim society (Al-Nisa 4:19-22,34-5; Al-Nur 24:4-5,31), inheritance (Al-Nisa 4:11-2; Al-Ma'idah 5:105-8), and general good behavior (Al-Nur 24:58-61, Al-Hujurat 49:6,11) are mentioned frequently in revivalist literature. In the political sphere, the *ayaat* regarding *shura* – mutual consultation – (Al-Shura 42:38), universal brotherhood of the Muslim community (Al-Anbiya 21:92), and hostility of the non-Muslims towards Islam (Al-Baqarah 2:109,120; Al-Anfal 8:60-1) are to be found in almost every revivalist tract dealing with the subject. And in the economic sphere, the *ayaat* dealing with interest (Al-Baqarah 2:275-6,278-80; Ale-Imran 3:130) dominate the revivalists' discussions on the subject. It is not surprising to find the revivalists stressing those portions of the Qur'an that are related to juridical and legal imperatives, because it is the absence of these imperatives that is identified as the chief cause of Muslim decline. It is quite uncommon to find revivalist literature addressing the spiritual and metaphysical dimension of Qur'anic teachings, the emphasis being almost exclusively on the ethical, legal and juridical components of the Divine Revelation. Both the quantity and the quality of revivalist literature dedicated to Islamic spirituality and metaphysics is practically insignificant when compared to the literature produced by the same group dealing with Islamic law, ethics, and political/economic systems.

It is worth noting here that the vast bulk of the Qur'an contains hardly any juridical imperatives. As mentioned earlier, less than 600 out of more than 6000 *ayaat* of the Qur'an are related to legislation. The portion of the Qur'an revealed in Makkah, more than 2/3 of the total, contains virtually no legislative decrees. Most of the legislative decrees in the Qur'an were revealed in Medina, and even those in the latter half of the Prophetic period in Medina. In light of these facts the logic of revivalist thought, which attaches importance to the Qur'an primarily as a legislative text, explicitly demonstrates the narrowness of the revivalist vision of Qur'an.

As for the modernists, they do not take the Qur'anic juridical imperatives as seriously as the revivalists. For them the Qur'an is basically a book of ethics. Modernist discourse emphasizes this dimension of the Qur'an while totally neglecting the spiritual/metaphysical dimension. Fazlur Rahman argues that the Qur'an "...for the most part gives solutions to and rulings upon specific and concrete historical issues...."<sup>11</sup> He goes on to argue that the Qur'an also "...either explicitly or implicitly [provides] the rationales behind these solutions and rulings...."<sup>12</sup> It is the task of the Muslims to study these specifics and rationales and then derive the general ethical principles towards which the Qur'an is pointing. As far as spirituality is concerned, Rahman argues that it "...seems indisputable that no spiritualism per se has been positively conducive to the establishment of any moral-social order"<sup>13</sup> Since the primary objective of contemporary Islam, if it is to remain faithful to the Prophet's (SAW) original mission, is to establish a just moral-social order, spirituality of any kind can only be a hindrance. Rahman is very blunt in his assessment of the relationship between spirituality and socio-moral ethics. He forthrightly states that in "...'spiritual' waters, there are hardly ever to be found any 'social pearls'"<sup>14</sup> As far as metaphysics is concerned, Rahman acknowledges that of all the fields of intellectual endeavor "... man enjoys the least freedom from metaphysics"<sup>15</sup> This is because metaphysics is "...consciously or unconsciously the source of all values and of the meaning we attach to life itself"<sup>16</sup> In spite of his acknowledgement of the importance of metaphysics, Rahman cannot deal with the subject seriously because for him metaphysics "...is the area of human intellectual endeavor that is perhaps the remotest from factual objectivity"<sup>17</sup> In light of these attitudes regarding spirituality and metaphysics, it is not surprising to find Rahman totally neglect the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of the Qur'an in favor of its soci-ethical import.

Arkoun for his part claims that the Qur'an contains five different types of discourse: the "...prophetic, legislative, narrative, sapiential, and hymnal (poetic)"<sup>18</sup> In the context of our present discussion it is relevant to note what is missing from Arkoun's list – he does not identify spiritual or metaphysical discourses as constituting "...contents of the Qur'an". But such disregard for spiritual and metaphysical discourse by Arkoun could hardly be otherwise. He is forced to disregard this dimension of the Qur'an due to the internal logic of the very methodology he uses to analyze it, i.e. linguistic analysis. Himmelfarb notes that modern literary theory, of which linguistic analysis is a part, is based on the assumptions that "...what passes as metaphysics is really linguistics [and] that morality is a form of aesthetics"<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Arkoun is incapable of recognizing the metaphysical and spiritual dimension of the Qur'an because the

fundamental premises of his analytical methodology forestall this possibility.

There can be hardly arguing the fact that the socio-moral imperative of the Qur'anic narrative is both pronounced and profound. But to isolate this dimension of the narrative from the spiritual/metaphysical narrative of the Qur'an, as the modernists do, is to basically render it meaningless. The Qur'an emphasizes again and again that the reward/punishment for following/disregarding its ethical imperative is ultimately to be meted out in the hereafter, and this a fundamental and profound metaphysical reality. Moreover, the Qur'an describes itself as "a reminder" of certain spiritual-metaphysical realities that human beings tend to forget and neglect during his earthly life – these primarily being that Allah (SWT) is the Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer of all the worlds and that after the human being dies he/she will be resurrected to stand before the Supreme Judge on the Day of Judgement. The "...prophetic, legislative, narrative, sapiential, and hymnal (poetic)" discourses that Arkoun identifies as constituting "...the contents of the Qur'an," point towards a spiritual/metaphysical reality. And this reality is something that is far beyond the ability of any "scientific instrument" to detect – whether that "scientific instrument" is Arkoun's linguistic analysis, Rahman's historicist approach or any other modern gadget. Because their respective "scientific equipment" cannot account for the metaphysical and spiritual realities the modernists are forced to disregard them.

Even this brief survey reveals the aversion of the revivalists and the modernists towards the spiritual and metaphysical dimension of the Qur'anic narrative. The specific reasons why these two groups neglect the spiritual and metaphysical contents of the Qur'an are quite different – the revivalists because of the logic of their thought and the modernists because of the logic of their methodology. In the first chapter we argued that the defining characteristic of modernity is the relegation of all metaphysics, spirituality and transcendentalism to the realm of "obscurationist thought". The foregoing discussion shows that the relegation of metaphysics and spirituality to the realm of "obscurationist thought", so characteristic of Western modernity, is closely paralleled by trends in modern Muslim thought.

Thus far we have illustrated the narrow approach of modern Muslim thought towards the West, the Islamic tradition and the study of the Qur'an. This narrow and reductive approach is symptomatic of a larger malaise that affects modern thought – the inability to take the metaphysical and spiritual dimension seriously. The primary object of the foregoing discussion has been to illustrate the narrowness of modern Islamic thought, and towards the end the issue of its skeptical attitude towards metaphysics

and spirituality emerged – which is in fact the root cause of the narrowed vision. In order to provide further evidence of modern Islam's skepticism towards metaphysics and spirituality we will explore the traditional attitude towards the *shari'ah* and *tariqah*, and how the attitude towards these two complimentary, yet distinct, aspects of Islam has undergone radical transformation in modern times. This brief survey of modern Islam's treatment of the exoteric (*shari'*) dimension of Islam and the esoteric (*tariqah*) dimension, will further illustrate the divergence of modern Islam from the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of Islam.

In a sense the *shari'ah* can be called the "science of Law". It is the embodiment of the Divine Will according to which the individual and collective life of the Muslims should be governed. The laws governing the method of *salat* (prayer), the payment of *zakat* (charity), the performance of *hajj* (pilgrimage), marriage, divorce, inheritance, conducting diplomacy, conduct in war, negotiating peace, regulating business practice, etc. are to be found in the *shari'ah*. Only that individual or society can claim to be Muslim, and be considered by others as such, which has consciously decided to live according to the *shari'ah*. The primary sources of the laws contained in the *shari'ah* are the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In short, the *shari'ah* contains the laws that allow the human being to bring his/her external/visible life in line with the Divine Will. But bringing the externalities in line with the Divine Will is insufficient for the attainment of salvation.

In addition to molding the external/visible life according to the *shari'ah*, the Muslim has to strive to purify his/her heart from such characteristics as arrogance, pride, hypocrisy, greed, miserliness, anger and other negative traits. These negative traits have to be replaced by positive traits such as humility, sincerity, charity, love and fear of Allah (SWT), love for all of His creation, and other positive characteristics. The main goal of *tariqah* is to emphasize the need for spiritual purification and suggest means and methods to achieve it. Like the *shari'ah*, its primary sources are also rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. *Tariqah* has been aptly called "...the custodian of Islamic spirituality,"<sup>20</sup> which stresses the need to internalize the teachings of Islam by bringing the heart of a Muslim in harmony with his/her external appearance – the external appearance that has been attained by following the *shari'ah*.

The indispensability of following the *shari'ah* in one's external appearance and simultaneously striving for spiritual purification, as stressed by *tariqah*, is illustrated by an authentic hadith. The Prophet (SAW) said that the people in the lowest depths of the Hellfire will be the hypocrites. During their earthly life these individuals were Muslims in their external appearance, and claimed to be so by virtue of their strict adherence to the

*shari'ah*. Furthermore, they were categorized as Muslims by the laws of the *shari'ah*. But their hearts were full of hypocrisy, arrogance, and false pride – in reality their hearts were devoid of faith. In other words, their interior being was not in harmony with their external appearance. These individuals had totally neglected the wisdom contained in the teachings of *tariqah*, and consequently denied themselves the opportunity of being worthy of Allah's (SWT) Grace. In order to attain this Grace, the Islamization of the exterior by following the commands of the *shari'ah* must be complemented by the Islamization of the interior by internalizing the wisdom contained in *tariqah*.

The complementary, yet distinct, roles which the *shari'ah* and *tariqah* play in Islam is lucidly expressed by the great hadith scholar and mujtahid, Imam Malik (RA), in the following words:

He who learns jurisprudence [the *shari'ah*] and neglects sufism [*tariqah*] becomes a reprobate; he who learns sufism [*tariqah*] and neglects jurisprudence [the *shari'ah*] becomes an apostate; and he who combines both attains the realization of the Truth.<sup>21</sup>

The great reformer of late classical Islam, Ibn Taymiyya (RA), echoes these sentiments in the following words:

...a person possessing only the law [the *shari'ah*] without the inner truth [the wisdom of *tariqah*] , cannot be called truly a man of faith, a person possessed of bare 'truth' [the alleged wisdom of *tariqah*] which is in disagreement with the *shari'ah*...cannot be even a Muslim....<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the course of its history, generally speaking, Muslim society has been able to maintain an equilibrium between the demands of the exoteric aspects of Islamic teachings (the domain of *shari'ah*), and the esoteric wisdom (the domain of *tariqah*). A great deal of the intellectual genius, cultural flowering, and socio-moral integrity that Muslim society has produced have been directly dependent on keeping this equilibrium intact. But at certain junctures in Muslim history this equilibrium has been broken in favor of either the esoteric expression of Islamic teachings or the exoteric aspect. Some have maintained that the totality of Islamic teachings are contained in the *shari'ah*, and that the advocates of *tariqah* are dangerous deviants who are guilty of introducing foreign ideas into Islam. On the other extreme, it has been claimed that it is possible to neglect the restrictions of the Law, and still attain spiritual purification – the stated goal of *tariqah*. On the whole the Muslim community has managed to stay clear of these two extremes, but when either of the two extremes has come to hold sway, the community has witnessed the ossification of intellectual activity and the socio-moral degeneration of society.



The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries represent the period during which the pendulum swung most decisively in favor of the extremists who advocated the exclusion of the *shari'ah*, in favor of the esoteric dimension. Divorced from the disciplining standards of the *shari'ah*, the esoteric dimension of Islam degenerated into popular occult practices characterized by saint and grave worship, visiting of holy shrines, belief in the potency of amulets and other such deviant practices. Among the masses, belief in and practice of such deviancy virtually replaced belief and practice of the standard *shari'* norms as the most genuine expressions of religiosity. The deviant beliefs and practices became so widespread among the Muslims during this time period that the popular folk religion threatened to irretrievably disfigure the very definition of Islam. While this alarming situation resulted from a *tariqah* freed from the disciplining standards of the *shari'ah*, it is also a fact of history that it was the adherents of authentic *tariqah* themselves who spearheaded the efforts to reform the deviant practices and beliefs which had emerged. The most prominent role in this reform process was played by the Naqshbandi *tariqah* that received its reformative impetus from the teachings and ideas of Ahmad Sirhindi. The reform efforts of this brotherhood to re-establish the equilibrium between the *shari'ah* and *tariqah* began in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, spread throughout Central Asia, and into the Ottoman Empire.

Whereas the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries represent the phase of Muslim history during which the traditional equilibrium between the exoteric and esoteric manifestations of Islam was broken decisively in favor of the esoteric aspect, the current century represents the time period in which the balance has shifted most radically in the opposite direction. In no period of Muslim history has the role of *tariqah* in Islam been so neglected and ridiculed as in the present century. The certainty and virtual unanimity with which it is asserted today that the *shari'ah* contains the totality of Islamic teachings is unprecedented in Muslim history. The danger posed to the future well being of Islam by the current emphasis on the exoteric dimension of Islamic teachings and the reckless neglect of the esoteric dimension is no less serious than that encountered in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The previous danger manifested itself in the threat of popular occult practices disfiguring the contents of Islamic teachings and beliefs. The current danger is manifesting itself in the threat of the definition of Islam being reduced to a mere socio-political system, that differs from other socio-political systems such as socialism, liberalism, fascism, only in the sense that it is more just and equitable than the others. Such a reductive definition of Islam is the logical resultant of a thought process that limits reality of Islam to its exoteric dimension manifested in the *shari'ah*, and neglects the esoteric dimension contained in *tariqah*.

The emphasis on the *shari'ah* and the neglect of *tariqah* can be partly explained as being a reaction to the extremism of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the opposite direction. But the present extremism cannot be fully understood without taking into account the influence of modern Western thought. This is especially so in light of the developments of the intervening 19<sup>th</sup> century, a century that witnessed attempts to reform Muslim society by re-establishing the lost equilibrium between the *shari'ah* and *tariqah*, reform efforts that were spearheaded by the Sufi brotherhoods. In order to get clearer insight into the impact of modern Western thought on contemporary Islam we will reproduce the table from chapter one that contrasted the shift of emphasis from the metaphysical and spiritual concerns of pre-modernity to the physical and materialist concerns of modernity. Then we will juxtapose this table with a similar table dealing with the same issues in a Islamic context.

<b>The Shift from Pre-Modernity to Modernity</b>		
<u>Pre-modernity</u>	→	<u>Modernity</u>
The Creator of the Universe	→	The Created Universe
The Human Soul	→	The Human Body
Life Here-After	→	Life Here-and-Now
Metaphysics & Spirituality	→	Physics & Materialism

Making some minor modifications to the above table and diagramming the same points (in the Islamic context) we notice a remarkable similarity.

<b>The Shift in Modern Islamic Thought from the <i>Tariqi</i>/Spiritual Dimension to the <i>Shari'</i>/Legal Dimension of Islam</b>		
<u>Spiritual/Metaphysical Dimension</u>	→	<u>Legal/Material Dimension</u>
The Immanence of Allah (SWT)	→	The Transcendence of Allah (SWT)
The Human Soul	→	The Human Body
Life Here-After	→	Life Here-and-Now
<i>Domain of Spiritual/Tariqi Teachings</i>	→	<i>Domain of Legal/Shari' Teachings</i>

Ideally, a balance should be maintained between the esoteric aspect of Islamic teaching (*tariqah*), and the exoteric aspect (the *shari'ah*). But we find the same shift of emphasis in modern Islamic thought that is characteristic of modern Western thought. Modern Western thought has given such emphasis on the study of the created world, the human body, and the life here and now that the complimentary elements of these three categories (the Creator, the soul, and life hereafter) have basically died a natural death. Similarly, modern Islamic thought has placed such emphasis

on transcendent attributes of Allah (SWT) that His immanent attributes are virtually forgotten; produced a great deal of literature on *fiqh* and *'uqeedah* dealing with the externalities of Islamic teachings but hardly anything related to the spiritual teachings of Islam; and being so concerned with the establishment of an Islamic order here and now that the Hereafter is often lost sight of.

In the Qur'an the transcendence of Allah (SWT) is stated in such an emphatic tone that the possibility of any personal relationship between the believer and the Creator seems to be an impossibility. It is stated in absolute terms that Allah (SWT) is beyond any category, concept, or description that can be imagined by the human mind – to even suggest otherwise is to risk falling into grave error. But this seemingly insurmountable transcendence, which is emphasized by the *shari'ah*, is punctured by the attributes of love, subtlety, and mercy of Allah (SWT) and He comes so close to the individual that He Himself states: “We are nearer to him than his own jugular vein” (Qaf 50:16). And in even more moving, intimate words, Allah (SWT) states emphatically in the Qur'an:

And if My servants ask you about Me – behold, I am near; I respond to the call of him who calls, whenever he calls unto Me: let them, then, respond unto Me, and believe in Me, so that they may follow the right way. (Al-Baqarah 2:186)

The immanent attributes of Allah (SWT) are emphasized by *tariqah*. By breaking the seemingly insurmountable transcendence of God through making a personal relationship between the believer and the Creator possible, Islam preserves the dynamic tension that is the foundation of religious life. In twentieth century Islamic thought we see that this dynamic tension was radically broken in favor of the attributes stressing the otherness of Allah (SWT). In modern Islam, Allah (SWT) is almost exclusively viewed as the Creator who created this world in the distant past, and as the Judge who will eventually meet out judgement in the distant future. As for those attributes of Allah (SWT) that establish His relationship with the present events, and more importantly with the immediate religious experience of the believer, these attributes have been pushed far into the background. It would not be an exaggeration to

suggest that the concept of God articulated by modern Islam is not too far removed from a vague theism bordering on deism.

The situation regarding the complimentary elements of the human body and human soul is not much different. The Islamic teachings regarding bringing human actions in line with the Divine commands are given almost exclusive attention in modern Islamic thought. This attention to the body of man is so pronounced that the very existence of the human soul is viewed with suspicion – and at times even denied. The following discussion is quite representative of the attitude of modern Islam towards the relationship between the human soul and human body. In it the questioner asks Dr. M. Hamidullah, one of the most prominent modern Muslim thinkers, to express his views regarding the relationship between matter and spirit.

Question: Does Islam treat matter and spirit in equal measure or is spirit more important than matter? Can the existence of spirit be proven through rational argument?

Answer: A man consists of body and spirit, we need to take notice of both. We eat, drink, rest, and sleep for the sake of the body. We need to do something for the spirit as well in order to maintain a balance. The Qur'an and the Prophet (SAW), therefore, commanded us to pray, fast, give charity and perform pilgrimage. Both aspects – the body and the soul – have been taken care of. I don't know the proportion between the two. All that I know is that in twenty-four hours we are asked to spend at least twenty-four minutes on five prayers for the sake of our spirit. The rest of the time is at our disposal. We can do whatever we like to do with it. We can concentrate on the body, or the spirit, or both. This is our personal choice. No rules have been laid down by the *Shari'ah*. Only five daily prayers have been prescribed [for the spirit], and the rest is for ourselves to decide.<sup>23</sup>

This question and reply illustrate two major characteristics of modern Islamic thought that have been mentioned previously. Firstly, a theoretical assertion is made that Islam stands for keeping a balance between the matter and spirit, but the practical emphasis on the material is so pronounced that any talk of a balance between matter and spirit is rendered meaningless. In the above quote, Mr. Hamidullah states that we should keep a balance between the matter and spirit and then immediately states that only the five daily prayers have been prescribed “...for the sake of our spirit” and “the rest of the time is at our disposal” to use as we see fit. A perfectly valid question is: How balanced will a person be, who spends only 24 minutes out of a 24 hour day caring for the soul?

The second characteristic of modern Islamic thought that is highlighted by the above cited quote, is the limiting of all Islamic teaching firmly within the limits of the *shari'ah*. Hamidullah notes that “[no] rules have been laid down in the *Shari'ah*” that will help us precisely determine how much of our time should be devoted to taking care of the body and how much for the spirit. This is essentially a correct statement. In fact, the *shari'ah* contains hardly any guidance at all for matters related to spiritual purification, but this does not mean that Islam contains no such guidance. Matters dealing with spiritual purification, the necessity of maintaining a balance between the body and the soul, and the means and methods to attain this balance are dealt with in the wisdom contained in *tariqah*. Maintaining a balance between the matter and spirit, which is considered as being the core component of the Islamic ethos by virtually all Muslims, cannot be achieved by solely adhering to the *shari'ah*, the adherence to the *shari'ah* has to be complemented by the wisdom of *tariqah*. The *de facto* marginalization of the spirit and the soul in modern Islamic thought is dangerously close to the *de jure* denial of its existence all together. This *de jure* denial has in fact been voiced in some extreme quarters of the revivalist camp. The following passage is taken from an official communiqué of one such group, Hizb-ut-Tahrir:

As for Man being composed of matter and spirit, it is absolutely false because Man and his actions are only matter. Spirituality is the cognizance that he is created by the Creator and this awareness is outside the body of Man. Spirituality occurs by understanding our relationship with Allah (SWT) when performing any action. Such a comprehension is not part of Man's physical makeup... Based upon this understanding of Spirituality in Islam, there is no such concept that Man is composed of two contravening elements in which Spirit is related the heaven and matter to the Earth. Man is composed of matter alone and performs his actions based on the orders of Allah (SWT). This is the only correct meaning of spirituality.<sup>24</sup>

This definition of Man and spirituality could have just as well been written by Marx, Freud, Feurbach, or any of the other zealous Western materialists. The fact that a group presenting itself as being on the vanguard of a religious revival produces a definition of man and spirituality that is virtually indistinguishable from a standard materialists definition indicates the distance that divides this particular revivalist group from its traditional religious sources and its ability to properly interpret the ideas and concepts contained therein. But this malaise is not restricted to the one particular group that has produced the above quoted materialist definition of man and spirituality. This malaise is representative of the general deficiency characteristic of modern Islamic thought.

The ultimate goal of any believer is to be forgiven all his/her sins, saved from the Hellfire, and be admitted into Paradise – in short to be blessed by the Grace of Allah (SWT). All of the believer's earthly endeavors are merely a means for the achievement of this ultimate end – this includes the efforts to establish an Islamic order in this world. But the relationship between the efforts to establish an Islamic order in this world and the attainment of Grace in the Hereafter has become increasingly vague and confused in contemporary revivalist thought. The reason for this is, once again, limiting all Islamic teachings strictly within the parameters of the *shari'ah*. The establishment of a just Islamic order is the ultimate goal of a believer according to the teachings of the *shari'ah*, it is virtually totally silent regarding matters related to the Hereafter. While no Muslim, pre-modern or modern, would deny the Resurrection and the Final Judgement of the Hereafter, the emphasis of modern Islam on the establishment of a worldly Islamic order is so pronounced that matters concerning the Hereafter have been pushed far into the background. This is most clearly illustrated in the focus of activities of the revivalist groups. The amount of material and human resources allocated to political activity by these groups is vastly disproportionate to the amount allocated for the personal and intellectual growth, in terms of their attachment to Islam, of its individual members.

By stressing the *shari'* dimension of the Islamic vision and neglecting the *tariqi* dimension, modern Islam has confined the Reality of the Islamic Vision to external forms alone. This limiting of Reality to external forms follows in the footsteps of the development in modern Western thought. In the Western context the sum total of Reality is considered to be contained in the visible world, the human body, and the life here and now, the complimentary elements to these categories, God, the human soul, and the life Hereafter have been banished to the realm of irrelevancy. Limiting Truth and Reality to external forms has the immediate effect of confining the human Vision and one of the very first casualties is intellectual integrity. The one-dimensional approach to the West, the Islamic tradition, and study of the Qur'an adopted by modern Islam, as described earlier, should be understood in this context. (The compromising of intellectual integrity as a result of confined vision in the Western context will be detailed in the next chapter.) Furthermore, the confining of Vision has produced an incomplete definition of key Islamic concepts, a biased view of Islamic history, and a distorted picture of the contemporary context in which the future history of Islam is unfolding. We have briefly touched on each of these three negative resultants in our foregoing discussion. Even though we cannot go into a detailed discussion of all of them presently, it would be beneficial to discuss further how the confining of vision has produced an incomplete definition and/or description of key Islamic concepts and ideas by modern Islam.

We begin with the term *Islam* itself. It is often described as a *Deen* (a complete way of life) as opposed to a religion. As far as the *shari'* definition of the term is concerned, defining *Islam* as a *Deen* is perfectly in keeping with the teachings of the *shari'ah*. It is in fact not possible to expand this description of *Islam* within the limits of the Law. This *shari'* description in itself is not problematic, but it is incomplete. The *tariqi* definition of *Islam* is "peace within, and peace without". As far as *tariqah* is concerned the life of an individual Muslim and the collective life of the community should be characterized by peace and serenity. The achievement of this peace and serenity is the most significant indicator that the Muslim is not only following the letter of the Law, but has also internalized its spirit. When the *shari'* description of *Islam* is complemented by the *tariqi* description, the Muslim has a litmus test readily available for the purpose of self evaluation. It is only through constant self-critique and self-evaluation that a believer can progressively bring more and more of his/her life in conformity with the Divine Will. In the absence of such self-evaluation, moral and spiritual progress is virtually impossible. Modern *Islam* is vaguely aware of the theoretical description of *Islam* as signifying peace and serenity. But it is virtually oblivious of the organic link between this *tariqi* description, the *shari'* description, the process of self-evaluation, and progressive moral and spiritual development.

The description of *Iman* by modern *Islam* suffers from a similar confinement of vision. Its meaning is limited to a verbal expression of belief in Allah (SWT), His Messengers, the Divine Books, the Angels, the Resurrection, and *Qadar*. As far as the *shari'ah* is concerned, when a person has verbally attested to belief in these six articles of faith his/her obligation regarding this portion of his/her *Deen* is complete. In effect, the *shari'* description of *Iman* is limited to the verbal attestation of dogmatic assertions. But the *tariqi* description of *Iman* has a much deeper and more significant meaning. This description considers *Iman* to be an inner experiential reality that the believer must strive to experience in the depths of his/her soul – an experience in the depths of one's soul that confirms the absolute reality of the dogmatic assertions that have been merely expressed by one's tongue. Until and unless such an experience occurs, the verbal attestation of belief remains incomplete. The importance of *Iman* becoming an inner experiential reality is stressed in the Qur'an on numerous occasions, and it is also stated that the attainment of this stage comes about only after many hardships and trials.

The primary method for a Muslim to express his/her commitment to *Islam* is through *'ibadah*. This term has been defined by modern *Islam* as meaning "obedience" to Allah (SWT). Once again the definition is not wrong, it is incomplete. The wisdom of *tariqah* stresses that mechanical

obedience to the commands of Allah (SWT) will in no way facilitate *Islam* becoming “peace within and peace without”, nor will mechanical obedience lead to the experiencing of *Iman* as an “inner experiential reality”. According to the *tariqi* description of *'ibadah*, obedience of Allah (SWT) must be combined with an intense love for the One who is being obeyed. The Divine commands should not be seen as burdens that have to be disposed of, but as gifts that have to be gratefully accepted. If the element of love is absent from one's *'ibadah*, one will never be able to taste the sweetness of genuine *Iman*.

In light of the foregoing discussion it is very easy to notice that modern Islamic thought has appropriated only a portion of the meanings of Islam, *Iman* and *'ibadah*. Modern Islamic thought is quite aware of and very comfortable with that portion of the meanings that are directly related to the *shari'ah*. As for that portion which is emphasized by *tariqah*, it is only vaguely aware of this portion. And if it is somewhat more than vaguely aware, the themes of the *tariqi* portion are not very well developed by it. In other words, modern Islamic thought has very poorly developed themes related to Islamic spirituality and metaphysics in contrast to ideas and concepts related to Islamic law and ethics.

### Endnotes

1. See *The Qur'anic Horizons*, Vol. 4: Nos. 1,2 and 3.
2. Akoun, M., *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* trans. By Robert D. Lee (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994) p.34.
3. Himmelfarb, G., *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) p.25.
4. Ibid, p.8.
5. Berger, P., *A Rumor of Angels* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970) p.95.
6. Abu-Rabi, I., *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996) p.56.
7. Guillaume, A., *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990) p.296-7.
8. Rahman, F., *Islam and Modernity: The Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984) p.24-28 passim.
9. Arkoun, p.37.
10. Smith, W.C., *Islam in Modern History* (New York: Mentor Books, 1957) p.25-6 ff.
11. Rahman, op cit., p.20.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid, p.128.
14. Ibid.



15. Ibid, p. 132.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Arkoun, p.38.
19. Himmelfarb, p.25.
20. Nasr, S.H., *The Ideals and Realities of Islam* (San Francisco: Aquarian Press, 1994) p.121.
21. Quoted by Nasr in *ibid*, p.126.
22. Quoted by F. Rahman in *Islam* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1979) p.112.
23. Hamidullah, M., *The Emergence of Islam* trans. and ed. by Afzal Iqbal (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1993) p.112.
24. A communiqué was issued by Hizb-ut-Tahrir to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1953, outlining the positions of this group on a number of issues. This communiqué formed the basis of an article in which the quoted passage appeared. The passage is taken from an official publication of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, *Khalifornia* March/April 1995, v. 4 no. 2, p.10.

Salman Al-Farisi (RAA) reported that the Messenger (SAW) of Allah (SWT) addressed us on the last day of Sha‘ban and said: “O people, a great and blessed month is near at hand. The month in which comes a night better than a thousand months. Allah (SWT) has ordained fasts for you and prescribed supererogatory prayer at night. He who drew close to Allah (SWT) by any noble deed in the month of Ramadan is just like the person who performed an obligatory act in other months. And he, who performed an obligatory act in the month of Ramadan is just like the person who performed seventy obligatory acts in other months. It is the month of endurance and the reward of endurance is Paradise. It is the month of consolation. It is the month in which the livelihood of a believer is increased. And he who provided (eatable) to one fasting (for breaking the fast) he is entitled to forgiveness of his sins and safeguard from the Hell-fire and is entitled to the reward equal to that of fasting without any decrease in his reward. It is the month that its first term (ten days) is the period of mercy, its second term is the period of forgiveness and its last term is the period of safety from the Hell-fire.” (*Shu‘ab Al-Iman Al-Baiyhaqi*)