

## **Islam and Post-Modern Possibilities (Part II)**

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### **Human History, Human Destiny, and Perfection of the Light of *Tawhid***

For Iqbal the march of history is not the occurrence of blind and random events. Just as the world of nature and the innermost “self” of the human being contain the *ayaat* (signs, evidences) of Allah (SWT), the march of history is a similar manifestation of the power, wisdom, and glory of Allah (SWT). In other words, the march of history takes place according to a specific internal logic. While human reason can discern certain patterns of this logic through an “objective” study of the subject, Divine Revelation sheds light on this matter and leads to an understanding that would probably escape one’s notice otherwise. The Qur’an considers events in history to be *ayyam Allah* (the Days of Allah). A contemporary Muslim scholar describes significance of the “Days of Allah” in these words:

...the Qur’an narrates the “Days of Allah” in order to teach us how to understand and interpret correctly, first, the world in which we live, and second, the age in which we exist. Whether they be the *ayyam* (Days) of Allah (SWT) or His *ayaat* (Signs) in the world, they must be studied, absorbed, digested, and become the eyes with which we see when we attempt to understand the world around us.<sup>60</sup>

Along with giving Prophet Musa (AS) numerous miracles with which to prove the verity of his call to Pharaoh as well as to the Israelites,

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Allah (SWT) commands Prophet Musa (AS) to “...remind them of the Days of Allah” (Ibrahim 14:5). It is implicit in this Divine command that the movement of history is as much a testimony to the Divine Truth as the miracles that have been granted to the prophets. But due to the very same human haughtiness that causes human beings to be heedless to the miracles, human beings also remain oblivious to the messages contained in the march of history. From the Qur'anic point of view:

The “Days of Allah” are the historical landmarks which reveal the movement of the Truth in history. Time and again, in the historical process, Truth triumphs over its rivals and.... the direction of the movement of history is thus restored time and again, to the *Sirat Al-Mustaqeem* (the Straight Path).<sup>61</sup>

The following *ayah* summarizes the dynamics and the goal of the historical process:

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ  
وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

They aim to extinguish the Light of Allah by blowing with their mouths, but Allah has willed to perfect His light in all its fullness, however hateful this may be to those who deny the truth. (Al-Saff 61:8)

The “Days of Allah,” therefore, are the milestones in history that mark the major events in the historical process of the perfection of the “light of Allah.” This light cannot be separated from the principle of *Tawhid*. *Tawhid* refers to Unitary Monotheism in theological language and the Unity of Being in philosophical language — it is the fundamental theological principle of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, the three monotheistic religions. This seemingly simple theological principle is in fact the most powerful life-giving force on the intellectual and spiritual level. Unfortunately, during the centuries of decline and neglect, the custodians of this principle have forgotten its nobility and power and have reduced it to a matter of mere theological dogmatics. Iqbal sums up the fate of this noble concept in a couplet:

زندہ قوت تھی جہاں میں یہی توحید کبھی  
آج کیا ہے؟ فقط اک مسئلہ علم کلام!

This very *Tawhid* was a life giving force in past history,  
What is it today? Merely an issue of theological dogmatics!

The hyper-compartmentalization of knowledge in the modern period is a practical manifestation of the fact that *Tawhid* is no longer a life-giving force in modern time. But an overview of the development of knowledge in the post-Enlightenment era clearly shows that in spite of intense efforts to keep it compartmentalized, acquired knowledge is actually moving towards a holistic and unitary state. This is something that Iqbal was keenly aware of at the very beginning of this century. Since the days of Iqbal this process has only increased in intensity. If one looks at the development of science during the course of the twentieth century, it becomes obvious that “science” is gradually coming to resemble higher mysticism. Recent developments in the fields of physics, psychology, and mathematics are breaking down the exclusivist dichotomies that are so characteristic of the modern, secular view of reality. For example, the new physics has proven that the division between matter and energy is an artificial division — matter is merely energy trapped in a specific part of space-time. New research in the field of neuro-science and psychology has revealed that the division between rationality and emotions is an artificial division — individuals whose emotional hemisphere in the brain is damaged become incapable of rational thought. This means that a healthy emotional life is absolutely necessary for productive rational thought. Groundbreaking research in mathematics and computer programming has revealed that there is no such thing as a random event (cf., Chaos theory), at the same time it has been proven that absolutely reliable predictability is impossible (cf., Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle). In this last example the implications for the debate between free will and pre-destination are intriguing indeed. All of these examples illustrate that ideas and concepts that have been traditionally viewed as being polar opposites are in fact differing manifestations of a single, unitary phenomenon. In other words, all (acquired) higher knowledge points towards the same True Reality. However, in order to actually make the connection between the different fields of acquired knowledge the human being requires the aid of revelatory knowledge.

Iqbal argues that to actually appreciate the significance of these findings and to incorporate them into our thought patterns, we need to be infused by a living and vibrant *Tawhidic* spirit. This spirit is not to be found in the secular academia, the compartmentalization and specialization of knowledge has reached preposterous proportions there — and it is doubtful that modernist, secular thought can find the antidote to this intellectual morass. Among the monotheistic traditions, *Tawhid* exists only as a matter of lifeless theological dogmatics, practically divorced from the intellectual and spiritual life of the believer. The inability or unwillingness of the believers to be infused with the life-giving ethos of *Tawhid* is a horrendous betrayal of Divine Revelation. The phenomenon at Mount Sinai, in the

person of Isa (AS), and in the Qur'anic revelation are all part of a process to remind humanity of this noble principle — so that this principle becomes a liberating force for humanity and saves it from servitude to all false idols. The fact that the potentially life-giving *Tawhidic* principle exists only as a dogmatic theological principle is the most telling sign that the moderns (including the adherent of “monotheistic” religion) are steeped in depths of idol worship, regardless of their formal dogmatic assertions to the contrary. Iqbal's attempts to reconstruct religious thought in Islam and to reconstruct the Muslim personhood in light of Islamic teachings are all geared towards freeing the moderns from idol worship and re-introducing the concept of *Tawhid* as a living force in the intellectual and spiritual life of the believers. It is a fact that the process of revelation has reached its vertical climax in the form of Qur'anic revelation; that is to say, Qur'anic revelation represents the confirmation and culmination of all previous revelations. But the horizontal climax has yet to be achieved, and this is the task that still awaits completion. This task requires that the principle of *Tawhid* be realized and implemented in all facets of human life — both the individual and the collective — and every single false idol be smashed to bits. Iqbal sums up the dynamics of future history in these words:

وقت فرصت ہے کہاں کام ابھی باقی ہے  
نور توحید کا اتمام ابھی باقی ہے

Where is the time for rest and leisure?

The mission is still incomplete.

The process of perfecting the *Tawhidic* Light,

this process is still incomplete.

### **The Cycle of History and the History of Islam: A Sociological Analysis by Malek Bennabi**

Iqbal's entire scholarly and poetic endeavor was aimed at setting the foundations that would make it plausible to make *Tawhid* a living force in the intellectual and spiritual life of the moderns. Throughout the course of his work, he continuously warns about the dangers inherent in falling short of this goal. When WWI broke out, with its accompanying horrors, Iqbal was himself surprised at the fact that the dangers that he and others had been pointing towards had materialized so soon. It remains an open question if even a visionary like Iqbal could have foreseen the horrors that were about to be unleashed soon after he passed away in 1938 — horrors that were witnessed by the Algerian thinker Malek Bennabi (1903-73). Writing in 1949, at the conclusion of WWII, Bennabi wrote: “A new page commences in history under the heading: Humanity must be one or cease

to exist.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, making the *Tawhidic* ethos a living reality is not just a matter of intellectual niceties or concern for salvation in the Hereafter, it is a matter of the very survival of humanity into the post-modern era. These sentiments were expressed by an individual who was an engineer by training but whose reading and understanding of history, philosophy, and sociology was so vast and deep that he must be considered one of the leading social philosophers of Islam after Ibn Khaldun.<sup>63</sup> Looking at the development of history, Bennabi notes that it is the march of history itself that has brought the moderns to this threshold: “Become one, or perish.”

Bennabi notes that the “cycle of civilization” is an important notion that must be understood in order to appreciate the significance of historical phenomena — but this is something that has been pointedly neglected by many thinkers. Thucydides, author of *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, argued that “...no important event was produced in the universe” prior to the particular epoch in which he was living. Along the same lines, Henry Kissinger has commented that throughout the entire course of human history, no event of any significance has taken place outside the North Atlantic-Western European axis. This truncated and mutilated view of history is essential in order to justify and maintain a “culture of empire,” because it creates and entails “...the myths of the dominant race and the civilizing mission of colonialism.”<sup>64</sup> In contrast to this truncated and mutilated vision of history, Bennabi, drawing upon the earlier work of Ibn Khaldun and Iqbal, offers a “cycle of civilization” hypothesis that sees human history as being the progression of Civilization through different eras and among different peoples and towards a just end. For Bennabi, the cycle as a whole is composed of numerous smaller cycles that have been left behind by history because these cycles have entered the phase of decadence. In the phase of decadence “...man, soil and time [are] no longer the factors of civilization, but inert objects without creative intercourse with one another.”<sup>65</sup> Commenting on the dynamics of the “cycle of civilization,” Bennabi notes:

A cycle born in certain psycho-temporal conditions develops therefrom, and when the human civilization has outstripped them, it is the end of a cycle. Another commences in new conditions that would, in their turn, be bypassed by. It is this law that traces across the millennium of history, this “path mounting in gentle ascent” that humanity slowly scales. The finality of history mingles with that of man.<sup>66</sup>

On a macro-level the dynamic interaction of the individual, soil, and time produces the psycho-temporal conditions for the birth and evolution of each cycle. Since the cycle of civilization cannot be separated

from the human beings who are simultaneously the actors and witnesses to this drama, the psycho-temporal conditions determining the characteristic of civilization cannot be separated from the psycho-temporal needs of the human being. Bennabi describes the involvement of the individual in the social life in these words:

Man is involved in the social life as a psycho-temporal factor. He acts not only in terms of his temporality, of his material needs, but also in terms of his psychism, of his spirituality. Therein lies the complete reality of man which must be taken into account for seizing it in its totality. One could not determine the conditions of his transformation, if one of the two aspects, moral or temporal, was abstracted.<sup>67</sup>

Consequently, it is the “...equilibrium between the spiritual and the temporal”<sup>68</sup> factors that is responsible for the birth, growth, decline, and death of each cycle of civilization. As long as this equilibrium is maintained, Civilization will continue to be vibrant and healthy; once the equilibrium has been disrupted that particular cycle of civilization begins to decay and the center of Civilization begins to shift to another place where the synthesis of man, soil, and time is more fecund.

Bennabi notes that Islamic history begins with the establishment of a just and balanced order in Madinah where the spiritual and the temporal, the moral and the material, the spirit and reason, are all kept in balance and harmony in accordance with the Qur'anic ethos. In Madinah, the Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RAA) created a Community where “...in principle [this equilibrium was] established for a long time, perhaps for evermore.”<sup>69</sup> But this equilibrium was disrupted at the Battle of Siffin in the 37th year of *Hijrah*. Commenting on this “rupture” at Siffin, Bennabi states:

...even if the Muslim could live fundamentally attached to a spiritual order contained within his believing soul, the Muslim world did, nevertheless, lose its first equilibrium. Yet, it is evident that we owe to this deviated civilization that flourished at Damascus under the Umayyads, the discovery of the decimal system, application of the experimental method, notably in medicine and the introduction of the mathematical notion of time, which would form the first landmarks of technical thought.... However, from a bio-historical point of view that concerns us, all this brilliant civilization was but a denaturalization of the original synthesis realized by the Qur'an and founded on the equilibrium of spirit and reason, on the two-fold moral and material base, necessary for all durable social edifice.<sup>70</sup>

In the post-Siffin period, Muslim society continued to manifest flashes of this lost equilibrium in the life-history of noble individuals who

refused to let power, greed, and status corrupt their spiritual being. Individuals like the soldier Uqbah, the statesman Umar bin Abdul Aziz and the scholar Imam Malik “...incarnated under different titles, the simple and great virtues of Islam,” and the Muslim world continued to flourish in the aftermath of the rupture at Siffin because “...of what remained in it of the impulsion and living force of the Qur’an.”<sup>71</sup> But the cycle of civilization eventually caught up with the Muslim world and it ceased to be a productive fusion of man, soil, and time. Bennabi identifies the fall of the Al-Muwahhid dynasty in 1369 C.E. as the fateful moment that is “...the point of inflexion — that mark[s] the reversion of Muslim values into non-values.”<sup>72</sup> Bennabi notes that the rupture at Siffin can be viewed as a purely political schism that changed the institutional framework of Muslim society and produced a framework that was a significant departure from the Prophetic model. This particular rupture was followed by many others and each crisis ended with the adjustment of the existing structures (or personalities) to the needs of the time. But with the continued progression of history:

...a moment arrives when there is no longer any person to guard or seize power and to adapt it to new institutions. Then the scepter itself falls, broken into a thousand pieces, to be picked up by a thousand petty princes.<sup>73</sup>

In the Muslim world this point was reached in the middle of the fourteenth century and the Arabo-Muslim world produced Ibn Khaldun to witness and chronicle this fateful period. Bennabi emphasizes that this moment does not simply mean that the institutions of civilization have become dysfunctional; the disease is far more serious than that. He notes:

This moment marks a point of inflexion in the historical evolution, the reversal of values of a civilization. It is no longer the question of a change in the political framework: it is the man himself, the civilized man, who loses his “civilizing élan”: and is thus unable to assimilate and create. It is no longer a question of institutions but of the human factor: these are the men themselves who no longer know how to apply their genius to their soil and time. It is the fundamental synthesis itself that disintegrates and with it the social life that gives place to the vegetative life.<sup>74</sup>

The “vegetative life” of a decaying and decayed civilization is marked by inertia, fatalism, and a disconnection between the religious ethos and social life. In short, this stage marks the end of religion as a social force in society and its retreat into the individual, subjective life of the human being. Commenting on the role of religion as the catalyst for social values and the degeneration of social life into vegetative life, Bennabi notes:

Religion is ... the cataly [st] of social values, but in its nascent, dynamic and expansive state, when it expresses a collective thought. The moment faith becomes centripetal and without radiation, that is to say, individualistic, its historical mission on earth comes to an end, where it is no longer fit to promote a civilization. It thus becomes the faith of the devotees who withdraw themselves from life, fleeing from their duties and responsibilities like all those who, since Ibn Khaldun, have taken refuge in marabutism.

History commences with the integral man, constantly adapting his effort to his ideal and needs, and accomplishing in society his double mission of actor and witness. But history ends with the disintegrated man, the corpuscle deprived of the center of gravitation, the individual living in a dissolved society that no longer furnishes his existence with either moral or material base. It is then the escape into marabutism, or no matter what other Nirvana, that are but the subjective form of ... social escapism.<sup>75</sup>

Passivity, social escapism, individualistic faith and related characteristics came to be the defining traits of the “post Al-Muwahhid man” or the “disintegrated man” who emerged on the stage of Muslim history at the end of the classical age of Islam. These traits made the Muslim susceptible to colonization by a younger and more dynamic civilization, should such a civilization emerge. Bennabi points out that just as the Muslim world was entering the post Al-Muwahhid period, a new synthesis between man, soil, and time was taking place in Europe. The organic relationship of the earliest Europeans to the soil and deriving nourishment therefrom was later complemented by Christianity and Cartesianism which “...came to complete the physiognomy of this society, profoundly, perhaps excessively, penetrated with the sense of utility.”<sup>76</sup> Christianity infused the static agrarian impulses of Europe with a “...sense of the universal, and through it the dynamism that its static temperament lacked,” whereas Cartesianism “...tailored its fundamental activities for efficiently integrating them in the industrial vitality that was going to surge from its evolution.”<sup>77</sup> Commenting further on this transformation of Europe, Bennabi notes:

In this society of centripetal virtues that practiced mutual aid, but did not know hospitability, Christianity also deposited the ferment of moral expansionism that would serve as the justification for the Crusades and the colonial enterprise.<sup>78</sup>

While a dynamic impulse was fermenting in Europe, the Muslim world was already on its way to reverting to “...a tribal, nomadic state” that the European would find when he encountered this world in the eighteenth century. Bennabi notes that the process of colonization by the Europeans



cannot be understood in isolation from the characteristic of colonizability of the Muslim. The Muslim world had become colonizable because “...this civilization had long finished the cycle of its civilization, and the individual found himself once again in the conditions of life offered by an atomized society of abolished activities, save for certain enclaves such as Fez, Qayruwan and Damascus....”<sup>79</sup> Just as the colonial enterprise cannot be appreciated in isolation from the characteristics of colonizability of the Muslim world, the re-awakening of the Muslim world cannot be appreciated in isolation from this European enterprise. Bennabi notes:

By causing the social order, wherein the post Al-Muwahhid man peaceably vegetated, crack on all sides, the activism of the European would give him a new revelation of his social worth. The man from Europe unknowingly played the role of the dynamite that explodes in a camp of silence and contemplation. The post Al-Muwahhid man, like the Buddhist of China and the Brahman of India, felt himself jolted and finally awoken.<sup>80</sup>

For Bennabi, this is the historical context in which the modern encounter between Islam and the West is taking place and it is in this context that humanity has to answer the call: “Become one or perish.” In other words, it is the very “cycle of Civilization” that has brought humanity to this juncture. While the need of the hour is obvious enough for Bennabi, he also realizes that serious obstacles remain in both the modern Western world and in the modern Muslim world that preclude the possibility of “...humanity becoming one.” He notes that in spite of proclamations advocating “respect for the human person” and “declaration of human rights,” the modern West lacked the ability to realize these ideals because the common denominator in Western thought is “...a materialist culture that could promote an empire or imperialism but not a civilization.”<sup>81</sup> The promotion of human civilization requires that the noblest ideals of one social group be communicated to and shared with other social groups. But looking at the encounter of the modern West with the non-Western world, it is all too obvious that the real interest of the West was not the promotion of any ideals but the creation, maintenance, and promotion of empire. In other words, the materialist interests of the modern West over-rode the ideals. This materialism has an acerbic effect on all higher ideals because wherever materialist interests come into conflict with higher ideals, it is the ideals that must be sacrificed, not the interests.

This emphasis on materialism in the modern West is the product of Cartesian logic that only deals with quantity, rationality, and causality. Issues related to quality, aesthetics, and finality are not a part of the Cartesian universe; for these issues to invade the Cartesian universe is to make it

functionally inoperable. Bennabi describes the salient feature of a consciousness that is beholden to Cartesian logic in these words:

The rationalist Europe that has created the machine, finds itself incapable of posing the human problems. All non-measurable relationships escape [its] consciousness. One knows how to fashion the matter but does not know how to render it useful to man. The process of production in Europe does not define the object by its relation to man, but defines the utility of man with regard to the fabricated product.

Europe has become a technician but has ceased to be moral, no longer able to discover human perspectives beyond the numbers, the quantity, beyond the limits of a world solely defined in material terms.<sup>82</sup>

Bennabi notes that quantity, number, rationality, and logic are not negative entities in and of themselves; in fact, they are indispensable for human well being in this world. Consequently, the real problem is not the utilization of these entities; instead, the real problem is the fact that these entities have become totally detached from their spiritual and metaphysical complements. For Bennabi, the modern West in the middle of the twentieth century is the mirror opposite of the decrepit Muslim world that it encountered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While the modern West is obsessed with matter and number, the static world of Islam had become immured in occult metaphysics and spirituality. The following observation contrasts and compares the condition of the West and the Muslim world in modern times, illustrating how opposites converge to produce an almost identical predicament:

A civilization finds its equilibrium between the spiritual and the quantitative, between finality and causality. As soon as this equilibrium breaks down in one direction or the other, there comes the vertical fall. The Muslim civilization lost its equilibrium the moment it ceased to observe the just relation between science and conscience, between the material factors and the spiritual order, thus foundering in pure metaphysical anarchy and maraboutic chaos that have formed its decadence. We are witnessing today, another disequilibrium — the Western civilization that has lost the sense of the spiritual, finds itself, in its turn, on the brink of the abyss.<sup>83</sup>

It is the loss of this “equilibrium...between science and conscience, between the material factors and the spiritual order” that is the chief obstacle to the progress of human civilization. In the West all the emphasis is on science and material factors; in the Muslim world conscience and spirituality (having been divorced from science and material factors) have taken the shape of occultism.

The inability of modern Muslim thought to constructively fill the void that exists between science and conscience, spirit and matter, and finality and causality reflects a failure to properly appreciate the modern challenge. The reform efforts in the Muslim world have made significant progress in shedding a number of the most debilitating traits of the post Al-Muwahhid period. The fact that Muslims have rid themselves of the shackles of colonialism reflects the fact that they have at least partially freed themselves of the traits that made it possible for them to be colonized in the first place. But Bennabi notes that both the liberal modernists and the religious reformers have not adequately come to grips with the real challenges facing modern Islam. The liberal modernist, according to Bennabi,

...engages himself in the life of his country only on the political plane. For him the primary question is not the regeneration of the Muslim world, but of pulling it out of its present embarrassment. It is a borrowed notion of that does not, in fact, envisage the Muslim problem of the man, but the European problem of the institution.<sup>84</sup>

Having identified the major challenge facing the Muslim world in terms of institutions, the modernist agenda aims to import the “modern” institutions of the West to the Muslim world so that it may properly “modernize” itself along the lines of the blueprints received from the West. This modernist agenda will lead the Muslim

...to be a client or imitator without originality, of an alien civilization that more readily opens the doors of its shops than of its schools, where the students could perhaps learn to utilize their personal genius for their own benefit.<sup>85</sup>

The religious reformers have been much closer to identifying the real nature of the challenge. Tracing its lineage back to the indomitable spirit of Jamaluddin Afghani, the reform movement realized that it is the very soul of the individual that needs to be reformed before any genuine reform can take place in Muslim society at large. Afghani took the following ayah to be the rallying slogan for his efforts:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

...Verily, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own souls.... (Al-Ra'd 13:11)

And Bennabi credits Afghani for having the courage to speak about “...the social functions of the prophets” in the socially atomized milieu of the post Al-Muwahhid setting. Though this was an important and

indispensable step towards reinvigorating the Muslim personality and the Muslim collectivity, the reform movement fell short of its goal because it came to view the issue in merely intellectual terms and not in spiritual terms. The religious reformers attempted to reinvigorate the Muslim soul by appealing to logic and rationality, by reconstructing Muslim theology. But, Bennabi notes:

...theology touches the problem of the *soul* only in the realm of credo, or dogma. Now the Muslim, even the post Al-Muwahhid Muslim, had never abandoned his credo. He had remained a believer or more exactly a devotee....

Consequently it was not a question of teaching him a faith that he already possessed but of restoring to this faith its efficacy. In a word, it was less a question of "proving" God to him than of "manifesting" Him to his consciousness, filling his soul with it as with a source of energy. Transforming the soul is to make it surpass its ordinary bounds. This task did not lie in the domain of theology, but in that of a mysticism.<sup>86</sup>

The unwillingness to deal with the mystical/spiritual dimension of the issue, and being content with engaging in theological dogmatics; is clearly manifest in the history of the most prominent reform movement, the Ikhwan Al-Muslimeen. Bennabi identifies the Ikhwan of Egypt as being the most dynamic and authentic expression of the reform movement to emerge in the modern Muslim world. Tracing its intellectual heritage back to Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida, it was Hasan Al-Banna who came to embody the spirit and dynamism of this movement. Prior to this movement, Bennabi notes: "For centuries the Muslim spirit [had] been incapable of delving beneath the surface of the phenomena; the Muslim no longer understood but only learnt the Qur'an."<sup>87</sup> But in the person of Hasan Al-Banna, something dramatic and revolutionary happens:

If Hasan Al-Banna overwhelms his audience, it is precisely because he does not interpret the Qur'an but *reveals* it to the consciousness that he overwhelms. On his lips the Qur'an is no longer a cold document, a written word, but the gushing forth of a living verb, a light that comes directly from heavens, that illuminates and guides, a source of energy that galvanizes the wills. It is not the theological and rational God that he manifests, but the acting, immanent God whose breath the Muslims physically felt at Badr and at Hynayn, the Qur'anic verity, here, directly verifies itself by its direct effect on the consciousness and by its action on men and things.<sup>88</sup>

It is clear that the spiritual dimension was alive and vibrant in the person and life of Al-Banna, and the soul of the Muslim was being spurred to action not due to the rationality of theological arguments but because of

the fact that the soul is simultaneously the witness and actor in a drama in which “...the Qur’anic verity...directly manifests itself by its direct effect on the consciousness...” This was a promising beginning indeed to the first organized, concerted, and collective effort in modern times to “...the reconstruction of Muslim society” with reference to “...the plan of its first architect — Muhammad.”<sup>89</sup>

But this project could not maintain its integrity for long after the departure of its moving spirit. Bennabi visited Egypt in 1954, five years after the assassination of Al-Banna. As a result of his observations, he added this footnote to the subsequent edition of his work to clarify the remarks that he had made about Ikhwan and Al-Banna in the first edition:

The various considerations recorded above remain valid as far as the personal experience of the founder, Hasan Al-Banna, is concerned. However, following a very recent visit to the East, the author feels obliged to modify his judgment on the movement itself. The latter, under the direction of its new leaders, seems to have become rather a political instrument, despoiled of the civilizing character that one would have, above all, wised to see therein. In its new phase, the movement even appears to utilize religion merely for achieving certain immediate practical ends. (1954).<sup>90</sup>

This observation and insight by Bennabi offers noble testimony to his sharp intellect and piercing insight. Apart from a few individuals like Iqbal, Al-Banna and Sheikh Ben Badis of Algeria, reformist thought in the Muslim world

...has directed its appeal mainly to reason, thus restoring the problem to the “intellectual phase” of civilization. As a result it burnt up an essential stage of the evolution, the spiritual, that corresponds precisely with the transformation of the individual and the primary transformation of social values. ...in general, the reformist movement does not seem to retain the spiritual breath, the mystical élan, that marked its debut. It subsists, as seen, only in the form of an instruction more concerned with the formation of followers than of apostles.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, modern Muslim reform efforts have been unable to tackle the issue of reform from the spiritual and mystical perspective, thereby failing to reach those roots that alone are capable of nourishing a genuine and authentic religious life. Disregard for the spiritual dimension is also directly responsible for the intellectual paucity that is also characteristic of reformist Muslim thought and the resultant outcome of “...movement without direction.” Bennabi notes:

Intelligence is constantly a function of the spirit: when the latter

no longer possesses its purity, the former no longer has its depth. The Islahist [reformist] did impress the soul with a certain dynamism, but [the soul] has remained sterile for want of a systematic orientation. It is the drama of a movement that wishes to liberate itself from apathy, of the spirit struggling against its incoherence, of the man who has been awakened but does not know what he must do.<sup>92</sup>

Amidst this awakening that still does not have a clear direction, the revival of the "...spiritual breath and the mystical élan" is a fundamental prerequisite for giving the soul of the modern Muslim "...a systematic orientation." Bennabi says that Muslims living in the latter half of the twentieth century already have a valuable resource from the earlier part of the century in order to fulfill this prerequisite. In order to make headway against the impasse that it is facing, modern Muslim thought will have to "...cede place to a tendency more in conformation with the wishes of Iqbal."<sup>93</sup> More than any other modern thinker, Muslim or otherwise, it is Iqbal who most clearly recognized the following fact:

Humanity needs three things today — a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis.<sup>94</sup>

While Iqbal recognized this fact more clearly than others, there are others who have perceived this need somewhat less cogently than him. But when it comes to actually articulate a philosophical position that aims to meet this need, Iqbal simply has no peer, Muslim or otherwise. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that whereas Bennabi identifies Syed Amir Ali (author of *The Spirit of Islam*) as modern Islam's first apologist, he identifies Iqbal as modern Islam's first thinker.<sup>95</sup> Bennabi is particularly impressed by Iqbal's ability to rise above atomistic particularities and immediate utilitarian motives and view the problem of the modern Muslim world from a higher metaphysical and spiritual point of view — a point of view that still remains incomprehensible to the vast majority of Muslims. Bennabi notes:

...while tracing the path of its spiritual renaissance, Iqbal had called for the Muslim world a turn of mind capable of considering things and institutions "not from the standpoint of social advantages or disadvantages to this or that country, but from the point of view of the larger purpose which is being worked out in the life of mankind as a whole...." This metaphysics of Iqbal could undoubtedly shock minds warped by a rationalism to which all that escapes the known dimensions seems irrational; but the question is worth posing since it governs the attitude of man in the new world and the future of

civilization.<sup>96</sup>

As the Muslim world looks forward to the challenges and opportunities that await it in the history of tomorrow, there are certain factors that will have a direct bearing in the manner that it responds. For Bennabi, the historical movement of Islam cannot be separated from the destiny of humanity as a whole. There is no doubt that modern Islamic history has been infused with the characteristic of dynamism in response to the colonizability and colonization dialectic that it faced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — the option of returning to the post Al-Muwahhid vegetative state is no longer viable. While Muslim history has been infused with dynamism, Bennabi is self-critically aware of the fact that the Muslim world is still not “...clearly conscious of its spiritual destiny.”<sup>97</sup> The emergence of Ikhwan and latter the Jama‘at-e-Islami was evidence of the fact that modern Islam was trying to make a “...serious effort to respond to a vocation”<sup>98</sup>. This vocation is a response not only to the internal developments of modern Islam but also of the modern global need of the hour: “Become one, or perish.” For Bennabi no genuine “Islamic” movement or thought can remain detached from the conditions that face the human collectivity as a whole.

The internal physiognomy of modern Islam is determined by the reformist and modernist schools of thought. They have imparted the definable characteristics to Muslim society and Muslim thought in the modern era and they must be considered as the evolutionary response of Islam to changing conditions. This is the internal tendency that has and will continue to be a part of the Islamic dynamics in the modern world. The other tendency, even though it is related to the aforementioned internal tendency

...presents itself...under quite a different form and stems... from the great phenomena of the transfer of civilization on a planetary scale: it relates to the transfer of the center of Islamic gravity from the Mediterranean to Asia.<sup>99</sup>

Bennabi notes that the two great wars have ended the Mediterranean phase of Muslim civilization and Cairo and Damascus would not have the same attraction in the coming phase of Muslim civilization that they had historically enjoyed. In its Asiatic phase, Muslim civilization would come to be inspired by developments in Pakistan and Indonesia more than other places. The reason that Bennabi gives for choosing these two countries is the following:

...[these are] new and young countries where thought and action must [of necessity] surpass the tradition of a closed science, and where Islam is called upon to renovate and activate itself and to

learn again to live. The structure of its new social climate is, in fact, not hierarchical but broadly popular. On the other hand, it must adapt itself, therein, to the genius of agrarian peoples and their innate sense of work — thence the promise of a new synthesis of man, soil and time and consequently of a new civilization. Finally, it would be obliged to adapt itself to a new spiritual climate in the neighborhood of this complex India where the thought of Vedas still radiates.<sup>100</sup>

For Bennabi, the radically differing conditions of the contact between the Muslim and the non-Muslim in the Mediterranean and Asian regions are of crucial significance in the future development of Muslim thought. In the Mediterranean region the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim (Christian) thought took place in the context of the colonial enterprise. This context of contact gravely distorted

...Christian thought in the eyes of the Muslim who could easily feel himself superior to such and such rapacious colonist, presumably Christian but installed in injustice and exploitation. Thus he suffered no inferiority complex on this plane, that is to say, no provocation to recapture and re-think his faith.<sup>101</sup>

In the Mediterranean region the Muslim was the majority that faced a non-Muslim minority and in spite of being conquered by the non-Muslim minority, the Muslim could still maintain a sense of “...complacent pride and self-sufficiency concerning their religion” when confronted by a “...colonialist brand of Christianity.”<sup>102</sup> It must also be added here that the Christian thought that was encountered by the Mediterranean Muslim was largely of the Protestant type and if the Muslim did feel the need to respond to this challenge it was largely in terms of theology, rationality, and dogmatics. In other words, the Christianity that the Mediterranean Muslim encountered was almost totally shorn of any spiritual and mystical dimension.

In stark contrast, the Muslim contact with the non-Muslim in India is radically different both in terms of the conditions in which the contact took place and in terms of the character of the non-Muslim religion that was encountered. In the Indian context it is the Muslim who is the minority that is surrounded by a sea of Brahmanism and Buddhism. In spite of being the conquering minority, the Muslim was confronted by a mass of non-Muslims (mostly Hindus) who are deeply religious and the fact that they have been conquered by others does not in any significant manner affect their religiosity. The historical and social setting of the Muslims in India is such that they daily “...witness there the extraordinary life of these beings [the Hindus] who are undoubtedly among the most religious of the world.”<sup>103</sup> Consequently, being faced by a majority whose religious



conviction is unshaken in spite of being conquered, the Indian Muslims could not possibly develop the same type of “...complacent pride and self-sufficiency concerning their religion” as their Mediterranean co-religionists.

In addition to the radically different historical and social conditions in which Indian Islam comes into contact with the non-Muslim, the type of non-Muslim that the Indian Muslim has to deal with is just as radically different from the type of non-Muslim that the Mediterranean Muslim has to deal with. The religion of the Hindu is mystical by its very nature, and the religiosity of the Hindus in India created an environment where the Muslims “...live in an atmosphere aflame with mysticism.”<sup>104</sup> It is not possible for the Indian Muslims to disregard this mystical flame either in their own religious endeavors or in their contact with non-Muslims. For Bennabi, the socio-historical setting as well as the very nature of the non-Islamic environment in India creates a potential for Indian Islam that is radically different from Mediterranean Islam. The minority status of Muslims in the sub-continent and the mystical characteristics of the non-Muslim environment are tremendous assets for the Muslim. Speaking of the implications and potential of Indian Islam, Bennabi posits:

Therein lies the source of a profound revolution. It is before this spectacle and in this atmosphere that has ripened the consciousness of an Iqbal, that has acquired, in this great thinker and poet, the rich subjectivity of a consciousness endowed at the same time, with reason and affectivity, with the faculty to understand and to vibrate. This dialogue between the heart and thought which the post Al-Muwahhid man lacked and which still does not seem to have revived in him on the Mediterranean littoral, is not the least lesson that Islam could draw from its transfer towards the Asian sphere.<sup>105</sup>

Contrasting Islam in Java and Pakistan, Bennabi notes that the main distinction is the fact that the Muslims in Pakistan are the inheritors of “...a certain intellectual hard core of undeniable quality”<sup>106</sup> that is not present in Indonesia. The Dutch occupation was of such a magnitude and type that the tiny Muslim elite in these islands simply did not get the opportunity to develop the intellectual wherewithal of the same caliber as the Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent.

This is the “...new path that lies before Islam,” as modern humanity in general and modern Islam in particular struggle to find a balance between science and conscience, the spiritual and the quantitative, finality and causality, the moral and the utilitarian. Speaking of the possible Islamic contribution, Bennabi is very confident that the movement of history is itself leading in a direction that will result in Islam fulfilling its historical

mission and the aforementioned factors will play a crucial role in this regard. But he ends his discussion with the following reservation:

One must also take into account the international conjunctures which could offer very variable and often unexpected conditions for the realization of the perspective that we have underlined, not to speak of the hypothesis of a world war, whereby all the known aspects of human existence would risk being, at the least, transformed.<sup>107</sup>

### **Humanity Between Modern Humanism and Traditional Religion: The Life and Ideas of Ali Shariati**

The ideas of Iqbal and Bennabi, like all other thinkers, cannot be separated from the particular phase of history in which each of them lived. Iqbal spent his entire life living under the British Raj. While Bennabi spent most of his life as an *indigene* living under the French yoke, he was fortunate enough to see Algeria gain independence. Ali Shariati (1933-1977) spent his most of his adult life living as a citizen of an “independent” Muslim country. One would expect that in comparison to Iqbal and Bennabi, Shariati’s life would be the one that is most orderly, free of conflict, and purely devoted to intellectual and spiritual pursuits. But the reality is the exact opposite. In spite of being the citizen of an “independent” Muslim country, Shariati had to endure savage brutality. After returning to Iran from Paris upon the completion of his studies in 1964, he was arrested immediately upon setting foot on Iranian soil and detained for six months. The detainment was no ordinary incarceration, but a brutal attempt to break his spirit by subjecting him to various forms of torture. Upon his release, Shariati attempted to get a job teaching at a university but his double PhD in sociology and the history of religion from Sorbonne was apparently not good enough in the eyes of the powers that be to grant him a teaching position at a university. He had to settle for teaching at a high school in Mashhad, but began giving evening lectures at the University of Mashhad and soon became so popular among the students and faculty alike that the students were successful in getting him appointed to a teaching position. Soon thereafter the authorities intervened and forced Shariati to retire from teaching — before the age of 35. Undeterred, Shariati moved to Tehran and established an educational institution, the Husseineh Ershad. By this time the vision of Islam and the analysis of the modern setting which confronted Islam that was being articulated by Shariati was beginning to find immense popularity among the Iranian youth. This can be measured from the fact that each printing of his lectures and writings numbered at least 100,000 — this in a country where “...no previous new publication numbered more than 5,000 [copies].”<sup>108</sup>

Just what was it in Shariati's teachings that was attracting the bright young minds of his day and that was terrifying the political regime in power? Shariati was attempting to articulate a vision of Islam that made Islam a living historical phenomenon, at the same time that it exposed the vulgarity, hollowness, and inanity of the attempts by the political and cultural elite of Iran to uncritically import secular, Western culture into their society. The fact that he appealed to such a large segment of the Iranian population and earned the wrath of the elite evidences that he more than succeeded in this attempt.

Shariati notes that modern, Western culture has adopted the religion of humanism in the place of traditional religion. Humanism as understood and defined by modern thought celebrates the originality and affirms the irreducibility of the individual human being. The adoption of this modern religion is a natural reaction against traditional religion that had come to view the human being as a witless and hapless (fallen) being who is at the mercy of God (or gods) for his happiness and salvation. Referring to this topic, Shariati notes:

Today's civilization has based its religion upon humanism; that is the originality and worship of man. It is assumed that various religions in the past shattered man's personality, and forced him to sacrifice himself for his gods, admit his powerlessness, and forced him to ask favors from them through prayer, supplication and begging.<sup>109</sup>

The modern, secular notion of humanism categorically rejects the notion of theism as being a necessary prerequisite for the human being's fulfillment of his or her humanity. Shariati notes that the roots of modern, secular humanism can be traced back to classical Greek thought and medieval Christian thought — in both cases humanism is set in contradistinction to theism. In Greek mythology, Prometheus steals the "...divine secret" (the fire) from the gods, in order to give the human beings the means with which they could master the forces of nature. He is severely punished for this transgression and the stage is set for the eternal struggle between the heavens (the domain of the gods) and the earth (the human world). The one domain (the heavens) attempt to reassert their lost authority, while the other domain (the earth) stubbornly refuses to concede its new found autonomy. Commenting on the type of humanism that would emerge from such a world-view, Shariati notes:

...in the mythic world-view of ancient Greece, it is natural and logical that a humanism should develop in opposition to rule by, and worship of, the gods — the archetypes of nature — and that there should exist an opposition between humanism and theism (or, in this instance, polytheism).<sup>110</sup>

The peculiar history of Christianity in Europe further exacerbated the "...opposition between humanism and theism." In contrast to the Greek outlook where the humans struggle against the heavens in order to affirm their humanity, in the medieval Christian outlook the human struggles against the earth and ascend to the heavens to attain spiritual bliss. In Christian thought the human being is depicted as being "...helplessly condemned because of divine displeasure to an inferior world, and declared... to be an abject, reprehensible, and weak sinner."<sup>111</sup> The only salvation for the individual lay in blindly following and imitating a special class in human society, the clergy, and through membership "...in the institution by means of which the officially recognized manifestation of God on earth were administered."<sup>112</sup> This radical dichotomy between the temporal world of the masses of humanity and the celestial spiritual realm created a situation where the realization of spiritual realities and divine rule necessitated that humanism be sacrificed. Shariati notes:

In science and culture, in life and morals, even in art and aesthetics of the Middle Ages, confidence ceases to be reposed in humanity. All of the artistic and aesthetic manifestations of the Middle Ages are depictions of the supematural and superhuman: the Holy Spirit, the Savior, the angels, various miracles. If the human figure appears, it is only in the persons of the apostles and saints, and even then, their human forms are enshrouded head to toe in long, loose-fitting garments and, generally speaking, their faces are veiled or obscured by a halo of celestial light.<sup>113</sup>

While the Greek view necessitates the rejection of theism to assert the principles of humanism, medieval Christian thought requires the sacrifice of humanism in order to apprehend the reality of theism. The final outcome of these two divergent streams is the "coming together of opposites." The radical materialism that is characteristic of modern, Western society is the direct outcome of both of these tendencies. If modern thought has rejected the heavenly realm in order to assert the principle of humanism, it is the logical reaction to the medieval view that humanism had to be rejected in order to reach the heavenly realm. Consequently, in its own peculiar way, medieval Christian thought paved the way for the re-discovery and re-assertion of the classical Greek idea that equated humanism with rebellion against theism; this drama played itself out during the course of the Renaissance. The repercussions of the rediscovery and reassertion of classical Greek thought during the late medieval period reverberate to this very day. Shariati notes:

...Greek humanism, through denial of the gods, disbelief in their rule, and severance of the bond between man and heaven, struggled to arrive at an anthropocentric universe — to make

man the touchstone of truth and falsity, to take the human form as the criterion of beauty, and to assign importance to the components of life that enhance human power and pleasure.

Inasmuch as this anthropocentricity took the form of opposition to the heavenly, it became earthly and tended toward materialism. Thus humanism in the Western perspective — from ancient Greece to present-day Europe — has been drawn into materialism, and it has undergone a similar fate in the liberalism of the encyclopedists, in Western bourgeois culture and in Marxism.<sup>113</sup>

Shariati posits that the Islamic concept of humanism differs radically from the modern, Western concept and by extension from the classical Greek concept. While the Western concept of humanism requires the negation of theism, the Islamic concept firmly weds the concept of humanism to the concept of theism. In other words, the Islamic concept of humanism contains a spiritual dimension that is absent from the materialistic Western view. In explicating the Islamic concept of humanism, Shariati turns to the creation narrative in the Qur'an and expounds on the significance of the rich and varied symbolism that this narrative contains. Just like Iqbal, Shariati notes that it is exceedingly important to appreciate the significance of the very first words that Allah (SWT) uses when He announces His intention to bring a new creature (the human being) into existence. The Qur'an records the expression of this intention in these words: "And recall when your Lord said to the angels, 'Verily, I am about to place on earth one who will be [My] vicegerent.'" From the very outset, the nobility and dignity of the human being is asserted and the purpose of human existence on earth is established as being the fulfillment of "...God's creative work in the universe."<sup>114</sup> It is worth pointing out that this mission, and the accompanying nobility, is endowed upon the human being even before the human being comes into existence; what happens upon the creation of the human being further enhances the status of the human being in relation to all other creation.

When Allah (SWT) begins the process of creating the human being, He chooses the most mundane and earthly of all material, variously described as "...sounding clay, like unto pottery" and "mud" in the Qur'an.<sup>115</sup> Then Allah (SWT) infuses this base and earthly material with something that is most noble, exalted, and astral — His very Own Spirit. And at this stage, when the first human being comes into existence, an event of great import and symbolic significance takes place: the angels are commanded by Allah (SAW) to prostrate themselves in front of this new creation. This event is recorded in the Qur'an in these words where Allah (SAW) addresses the angels:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَلٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ  
 ﴿٢٨﴾ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

Lo! I am creating a mortal out of potter's clay, of altered dark mud. So, when I have fashioned him and have breathed into him of My spirit, all of you fall down, prostrating yourselves [before him]. (Al-Hijr 15:28-9)

Even though the human being's physical body is composed of base earthly material, the human being carries something within his or her spiritual being that is not to be found anywhere else in the created universe — a spark of the Divine Spirit itself. This Divine Spark is something that even the angels do not possess. The very physical-spiritual composition of the human being only adds to the nobility and majesty already possessed by the human race by virtue of being Allah's vicegerents in relation to other created beings.

Shariati goes on to note that subsequent events immediately after the creation of the human being further exalt the status of the human over even the angels. After Allah (SWT) created Adam (AS), He taught him “the names of all things.” While it is not clear just what “the names” refers to, “...every commentator has said something that leaves no doubt that God was talking about education and instruction.”<sup>116</sup> The angels for their part were asked to identify “the names” but they could not because they only knew what Allah (SWT) had taught them, and “the names” were not among the things about which Allah (SWT) had given them knowledge. At this point the superiority of the human being over the angels is further accentuated by the fact that the human being possesses certain knowledge that the angels do not possess. This event is recorded in the Qur'an in following words:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ  
 هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا  
 إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَ يَتَّبِعُكُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ  
 بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ  
 مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: “Tell Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true.” They replied:

“Limitless are You in Your glory! No knowledge do we have except that which You have taught us. Verily, You alone are All-Knowing, Truly Wise.” He [Allah] said: “O Adam, inform them of the names of these [things].” And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed unto them their names, [Allah] said: “Did I not tell you, ‘Verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal?’” (Al-Baqarah 2:31-33)

Shariati notes that everything that has been said about “man” in the Qur’an also applies to “woman” because, from the Qur’anic point of view, both are created from exactly the same nature and each is equally liable to be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for his or her deeds. Commenting on the popular misconception that the woman is created “...from the rib of the man,” Shariati notes that in Hebrew and Arabic one word means both “rib” and “nature.” During the process of translation, the word “rib” has been used more often with reference to the relationship of the creation of the woman in relation to man. But the following *ayah* of the Qur’an makes it clear that the woman is created from the same nature as man:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا

And Allah made for you mates, of your own nature. (Al-Nahl 16:72)

In addition to being the vicegerent of Allah (SWT) on earth, having had the angels prostrate, and possessing knowledge that even the angels do not have, the human being is exalted over all other creation in one more respect. The human being willingly accepted a “trust” that no other being in all of creation dared to accept, the trust of having a “will” and the accompanying “responsibility” that comes with having a will. The acceptance of this trust is recorded in the Qur’an in the following words:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

Verily We did offer the trust [of reason and volition] to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up — for, verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most unjust. (Al-Ahzab 33:72)

In spite of all of his or her weakness and frailties, the human being did dare to take up this trust and thereby accept the mission of fulfilling

Allah's creative work in the universe. In summary, humanism in the Qur'an rests upon four points:

- The human being is the vicegerent of Allah (SWT) on earth.
- The human being carries a "Divine Spark" within, and the angels had to prostrate themselves in front of Adam (AS) on this account.
- The human being possesses knowledge that even the angels do not possess.
- The human being is a trustee, having accepted the trust of volition and will.

After mentioning the very first point, Shariati notes: "Pay attention to the worth of man in Islam. Even the Post-Renaissance European humanism has not been able to bestow such an exalting sanctity upon man."<sup>117</sup> After noting the third point, when the angels are ordered to prostrate in front of the first human being, Shariati says: "This is what humanism is all about. Do you see the extent of man's grandeur? So lofty is his position that the angels, in spite of their natural and racial superiority (light vs. mud), adored Adam."<sup>118</sup>

After presenting the Islamic position on human nature and humanism, Shariati notes: "At this point I must refer to a great tragedy in history. Man has not been recognized as a two-dimensional being."<sup>119</sup> He contrasts the Manichean tendencies of other religions with the principled monotheism of Islam in the following words:

Unlike other religions in which God and Satan are in a state of constant war in nature, in Islam there is only one power in nature — the Divine Power. However, with man being the battlefield, God and Satan are at war with each other... Nature has a single deity and is under the dominance of only one God. This is why in Islam Satan is not standing against God but against the divine-half of man. And since man is a two-dimensional creature who is kneaded of mud and [the Spirit of] God, he is in need of both. His ideology, religion, life, and civilization must all be capable of satisfying both of these dimensions. The tragedy is that history does not bear witness to this fact.<sup>120</sup>

Satan does not have any authority or power whatsoever over the person of the human being, other than the ability to "whisper into the ear," and to "seduce" and "beguile." The main point to note is that the human being is a "two-dimensional" being and during the course of history this is a point that has largely escaped human attention. Shariati notes that whether we look at the human being from the modern, secular point of view or from the traditional, religious point of view, a one-dimensional view of the



human being emerges. Modern secular thought sees the human being as a strictly worldly, material creature whose needs and requirements can be totally fulfilled by remaining on the worldly plane. Traditional religion sees the human being as a fallen creature who is a stranger in a strange world during his worldly existence. For traditional religion, the human being needs to strive for salvation, deliverance, and escape from his earthly existence because bliss and serenity are to be found somewhere else. This one-dimensional view of the human being has led to, or been the result of, a dichotomous view of the world of nature. The natural, worldly domain has been viewed as the battleground on which God and Satan carry out their perpetual and unceasing struggle for domination. The history of religious development in human society reflects a constant shift in the pendulum from one extreme to the other in the human search for the middle way. In a given epoch we find a given society embracing materialistic worldliness, and then, as a reaction to the imbalance that this inevitably creates, renouncing worldliness altogether and adopting asceticism. Shariati notes:

History shows that all societies in the past chose either asceticism or worldliness. Chinese civilization was worldly at first. The lifestyle of her aristocracy gave primacy to pleasures, beauties and the maximum use of the natural resources. In such an atmosphere Lao-Tzu emerged with an ascetic religion that called attention to the spiritual side of man and consequently society was driven towards monasticism, theosophy, and Sufism. Later, Confucius appeared and China swung back towards worldliness.<sup>121</sup>

The history of European civilization exhibits a similar shift between worldliness and asceticism. Prior to the advent of Christianity, Rome was the epitome of sensual, worldly pleasures. This center of worldly pleasures "...turned into the territory of monasticism and seclusion" after the introduction of Christianity and this remained the case until the "...Renaissance was born and the pendulum was then swung back to worldliness."<sup>122</sup> This trend towards worldliness in the modern setting has reached such intensity that Shariati quotes Professor Chandel as stating:

Today's world has dedicated itself to producing only life's amenities. This shows the asininity of man's philosophy today. It signifies the aimless direction of technology and the ideal-less civilization. That is, humanity has deviated so drastically that it needs another Jesus.<sup>123</sup>

Shariati confidently posits that it is Islam alone that can offer the humanity the middle way between the world denying asceticism of traditional religion and the crass materialism of modern humanism. This is only natural because it is Islam alone that has recognized and asserted the

two-dimensional nature of the human being. Consequently, Islam caters to both the worldly needs of human existence on earth and the heavenly aspirations of the human spirit. Concluding his discussion on Islamic humanism and its two-dimensional view of human nature, Shariati states:

In Islam man is not subjugated by God, since he is the Lord's associate, friend, trustee and kinsman on earth. God taught man and all the angels prostrated themselves before him. Thus, such a two-dimensional being needs a religion which can protect him from swinging to either asceticism or worldliness, and continually keep him at an equilibrium. Only a two-dimensional religion is able to give reality to man's great responsibility.<sup>124</sup>

### **Islam in Modern Times: Mysticism, Equality, and Freedom**

Shariati notes that a great ferment in ideas had begun to take shape in the early part of the twentieth century, a ferment that marks the beginning of a protest against the materialistic worldliness of modern Western society. He describes this ferment in the following words:

Today, in philosophy, Heidegger does not speak in the terms of Hegel or Feuerbach. In science, Max Planck, the outstanding exponent of the new physics, opposes the ideas of Claude Bernard. Heidegger is searching for Christ in humanity, and Planck is searching for God in the world of physics. Modern literature and art, expressing alarm at the futility of modern life, review the deformation of modern man and the dark and deadly loneliness that has enveloped him. Eliot, Strindberg, Guenon, Pasternak, Toynbee, Erich Fromm, Senghor, Uzghan, Omar Mawlud — all are in some way searching for light.<sup>125</sup>

This ferment is of such a nature that even the atheism that is being expressed in its wake differs significantly from the atheism of the nineteenth century. Shariati notes:

Today, in contrast to Marx, who felt human liberation depended upon the denial of God, and Nietzsche, who boasted, "God is dead," even an atheistic philosopher like Sartre speaks of God's absence from the universe "with painful regret," seeing in this a source of the futility of man and existence, the loss of values.<sup>126</sup>

This agitation of the human mind is a reflection of the unease of the human spirit, a spirit that is struggling to liberate itself from the materialist cage that has enveloped modern humanity. This cage symbolizes the definition and limitations that have been outlined by liberal, bourgeois society. Somewhat hyperbolically, but nonetheless accurately, Shariati identifies these definitions and limitations in the following words:

...let us look at the gatekeeper of this paradise: capitalism, but capitalism armed with science and technology — a new magician bewitching humanity into new captivity amid the massive pitiless wheels of mechanism and techno-bureaucracies. And man? An economic animal whose only duty is to graze in this paradise. The philosophy of “consume, consume, consume”!

And the watchwords? Liberalism! — that is, apathy. Democracy! — that is, “Elect those who have already chosen your lot for you.” Life? Material existence. Morals? Opportunism and egoism. The goal? Consumption. The philosophy of life? Satiation of the natural appetites. The ultimate aim? A life of leisure and enjoyment. Faith? Ideals? Love? The meaning of existence? The meaning of man? Forget it!<sup>127</sup>

The four decades or so that have passed since Shariati uttered these words have only confirmed his concluding statement regarding the consumerist paradise created on earth by modern capitalism: “But Adam rebelled, even on this paradise on earth.”<sup>128</sup> The rebellion has taken a variety of forms and if one were to catalogue this variety it may well be an impossible task. Being the perceptive mind that he is, Shariati notes that three different ideals have underpinned the rebellion in the capitalist paradise. These ideals are love, justice, and freedom. Each of these ideals has manifested itself in three different movements that claim to embody the respective ideal — mysticism follows the path of love, socialism strives for justice, and existentialism asserts the freedom of the individual.

Shariati notes that each of these currents offers valuable insights into the defects of the dominant liberal bourgeois culture, insofar as each identifies a key component that this culture lacks. In their own individual and unique way the mystics, the socialists, and the existentialist lay bare a specific dimension of the problem that is stunting the growth of humanity in modern times. Each of these trends helps the modern mind perceive significant shortcomings of the modern order more clearly and sharply, and thereby contributes to human development. But because each of the three trends view the modern predicament from their own particular point of view, without seriously engaging the other two perspectives, each of the three viewpoints becomes narrow and limited. Commenting on the three trends, Shariati notes:

Each of these currents is a factor in both human development and human aberration. That is, insofar as they concentrate on one dimension and neglect the others, they constitute a defective kind of guidance.<sup>129</sup>

This observation by Shariati evidences the fact that he is aware of both the value and limitations of each of these three trends in the attempts

of the moderns to overcome their alienation, so prevalent in modern capitalist society.

Mysticism enables the human being to become spiritually sensitive and develop the aptitude to sense and appreciate "...sublime psychological and spiritual values, which foster his existence and spirit."<sup>130</sup> Reaching this heightened spiritual consciousness is necessary for realizing (and manifesting) the traits of faith, love, and compassion — traits that every genuine human being should possess. At the same time that mysticism plays the crucial role of making the individual aware of inner and higher spiritual realities, it also plays the negative role of making the individual oblivious of the concrete social reality in which he or she lives. The emphasis in the mystical path is on individual self-purification and self-enlightenment and this process is practically divorced from the historical and social reality in which one lives. The mystic is oblivious to the hunger, poverty, oppression, ignorance, and injustice that exist outside the walls of his monastery or retreat. The total divorce between the mystic and the society at large is best illustrated by the fact that the conditions of human society do not change in the least irrespective of the heights that the mystic reaches in his or her spiritual quest. The quest is merely an intensely individual and private quest that is unrelated to anyone or anything else. Commenting on the virtues and shortcomings of mysticism, Shariati notes that we must be careful not to judge this phenomenon from only one angle. He states that an individual who judges mysticism from a detached and one-dimensional perspective "...will regard mysticism as stemming from a senseless and stupefying superstition..."<sup>131</sup> But it is the duty of a perceptive student to examine the issue from within as well as from without — in other words, from a multi-dimensional perspective. Shariati describes mysticism from two standpoints. From the positive standpoint mysticism has helped individuals reach sublime heights of self-awareness and self-control the likes of which have not been produced by any other school of thought. But in spite of the fact that mysticism has produced such results on the individual plane, its grand failure is rooted in the fact that such individuals remain detached from the concrete social and historical reality in which they live. The end result is that the spiritual enlightenment of the mystics does nothing to challenge the oppressors of their age. Shariati notes: "The tyrants of history have always been indebted to such people because they never stick their noses into other people's business."<sup>132</sup>

The personality produced by the socialist movement, a personality defined by the quest for equality in society, is not very different from the mystical personality in that it is also a one-dimensional personality. The socialist personality is consumed by issues of economic relations and the relations between different classes in society. Socialism plays the

constructive role of making the individual sensitive to his or her social and historical environment and the various deformities that cry out for rectification. While it makes the individual conscious of the deformities in the environment and awakens within the individual the sense of social responsibility, it gives him or her a skewed vision of these deformities. The notion that human beings have other existential needs besides housing, bread, and health-care and an environment has to be created where these other needs can also be satisfied — this notion is entirely foreign to the socialist mind-set. The life-history and the life-works of the most sublime and enlightened personalities in human history are unknown to, or totally disregarded by, the socialist. The socialist is easily moved and inspired by the slogans of modern politician but the words from the likes of a Rumi find no resonance in his or her being. In short, the socialist is willingly to sacrifice all that is human, all dimensions of the human personality, for the sake of a single noble idea, the idea of economic equality. Comparing the single-mindedness of the socialist with the individualistic mystical pursuit, Shariati notes:

We see that socialism removes from man all his limbs and branches except one, but it so encourages that one to spread out that it outgrows root and trunk. Thus, it makes man one-dimensional, however lofty and sublime that one dimension. It really is not so different from the case of mysticism. They are both tiny peep-holes, with the difference being that one open onto social responsibility, and the other onto a universal and existential sensibility.<sup>133</sup>

Shariati identifies existentialism as the third trend that evidences and articulates a protest against the modern liberal, bourgeois culture. Existentialism is the protest of the individual whose identity has been grossly contorted by modern consumer culture. This individual has come to define himself or herself in terms of the material trinkets that he or she possesses or consumes — the individual does not have any identity apart from these trinkets. In the face of the consumerist assault on human personality and human identity, the human being has become alienated from himself or herself, and existentialism is the modern clarion call for the individual to reassert his or her own “...existential primacy.” Shariati describes the “...greatest service existentialism” has rendered to the moderns in these words:

Existentialism has revived the issues of the primacy of existence, of human freedom, of growth of the inner man, of the sublime “I” of man. It centers itself on these things and increases people’s awareness of them. This constitutes a kind of return to the human self-awareness that was totally lost for centuries.<sup>134</sup>

But the great failure of modern existentialism is the fact that it leaves the individual in a lurch regarding the issue of what to do after freeing oneself from the clutches of modern consumer culture. Freedom without direction, purpose, and responsibility can easily become not only a liability but also a very real existential danger. Shariati notes:

If freedom has no purpose and touchstone, it is vagrancy; next it will turn into futility, and after that it will take the form of Western existentialism, whose goal it is to go looking for hashish in Nepal or the Khyber Pass.<sup>135</sup>

Shariati posits that love and mysticism, the quest for equality and justice, and the affirmation of individual identity are the manifestations of “...three essential currents, real and actual, [that] exist in the depths of the human temperament and produce the most basic needs of human existence...” Taken together they serve “...as a means of escape from the systems that deny man, and as a means for a return to man.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, these three currents are the means by which the individual and social collective assert their respective claims to freedom and dignity in the face of civilization’s attempts to disregard these claims. Writing in the 1960’s, Shariati was already able to discern the beginnings of a post-Communist and post-Capitalist society but he was careful enough to note that: “This future, which begins with the discarding of capitalism and Marxism, is neither predestined nor prefabricated. Instead it remains to be built.”<sup>137</sup> The fact that neither capitalism nor Marxism contains the resources to adequately balance the human needs of love, justice, and freedom make it inevitable that these systems will be superceded by something else in future history — by what they will be superceded remains to be seen. But the shift from Hegel and Feuerbach to Heidegger, from Claude Bernard to Max Plank, from the triumphant atheism of the nineteenth century to the existentially anguished atheism of the twentieth century — all of these shifts create an opportunity for Islam to play a central role in the building of the post-capitalist and post-Marxist future. Shariati cautions that if Islam is to play a central role in constructing the future, it will have to free itself of “...centuries of stagnation, superstition, and contamination” and present itself as “...a living ideology.”<sup>138</sup> And all of this requires the reinvigoration and fresh understanding of the concept of *Tawhid* in the contemporary setting.

Shariati notes that during the course of history, Islam lost its internal dynamism due to the fact that its teachings became fragmented and disconnected. In turn, this had the direct result of producing a partial and limited view of the core concept of Islamic teachings — *Tawhid*. By the beginning of the modern era, this concept had come to be limited to being nothing more than theological dogma. The implications of *Tawhidic*

teachings became practically disconnected from key, fundamental issues that shape human life — such as the internal experience of the human being, the collective social well-being, the relationship between the self and the other, the human quest for knowledge, etc. Shariati identifies Iqbal as being the one thinker in the modern era who reformulated the holistic vision of Islam on the intellectual level. In other words, Iqbal took the concept of *Tawhid* out of its theological cold storage and expressed its teaching in a manner that established its as being the pre-eminent life-giving force in the life of the individual and the social collectivity. The principle of *Tawhid* requires the integration of the mind, heart, and soul — the coming together of Isa (AS), Plato, and Caesar in one personality.<sup>139</sup> Historically speaking, the ultimate expression of this integration is the person of Muhammad (SAW). In subsequent history, he becomes the ultimate model for the rest of humanity to follow. Shariati notes that Iqbal's penetrating vision was able to discern the fact that the emergence of such an integrated personality in the modern setting is indispensable for Islam, if Islam is to play a role in shaping the post-Marxist, post-capitalist future. Only such an integrated personality is capable of recognizing the heavenly decree, shaping human initiative accordingly and as a result charting human destiny in a direction that simultaneously fulfills human aspirations and Divine commands. In his own personal struggle to understand the comprehensive and holistic implications of *Tawhidic* ethos, Shariati notes that he finds the answers to all of his questions in the work of Iqbal.<sup>140</sup> But it must be noted that due to his training in the field of sociology and his personal biography in the post-Colonial era of Muslim history, Shariati's own work is characterized by its unique worth, originality, and individuality.

### **Towards a Synthesis: Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century and the Work of Israr Ahmad**

Having looked at the general outlines of the thought of Iqbal, Bennabi, and Shariati as examples of the most articulate, sophisticated, and authentic Muslim response to the challenge of modernity, the discussion now turns to the work of Israr Ahmad. It is a peculiar turn indeed, because Israr Ahmad cannot be categorized as a “thinker” in the same way as Iqbal, Bennabi, and Shariati are “thinkers.” The latter three received formal training in Western higher academia and learned about the modern West through first-hand, practical experience. Ahmad, on the other hand, received all of his higher education in Pakistan and from his student days was more of an activist than a thinker. In the early 1950's he was one of the closest protégés of Abul A'ala Maududi, the founder of Jama'at-e-Islami. While he was engaged in his medical studies at King Edward Medical College, Israr Ahmad also undertook the extremely difficult task of laying

the foundations of the student wing of Jama'at-e-Islami. His efforts bore fruit in 1952, and he became the first Nazim-e-A'la (Chief Organizer) of the Islami Jami'yat-e-Talaba. Upon completing his studies, he joined Jama'at-e-Islami in 1954 and remained with this group until 1957. He left the Jama'at in 1957 due to the fact that it had become a mere political party, one among many other political parties, engaged in the power struggle of electoral politics. From Ahmad's point of view this involvement in the political arena could never produce the results that the Jama'at hoped for — gaining political power — while at the same time this involvement would only lead to a watering down of the Islamic character of the Jama'at and its increased secularization. He put his misgivings in writing and presented them in front of a fully packed annual convention of the Jama'at in 1956. At the tender age of 24, he detailed his arguments in a 250-page tract, which he read in front of the senior leadership of the Jama'at as well as the rank-and-file members, warning them of the futility, danger, and pitfalls of engaging in Pakistani power-politics.<sup>141</sup> Even though he was sneered at and jeered by the vast majority of the audience that he was trying to address, history has only vindicated the soundness of his position. Forty years after he warned of the futility of the path chosen by the Jama'at, the party remains lost in the political wilderness of Pakistan — being more popular, respected, and admired outside of Pakistan than inside the country.

After leaving the Jama'at, Israr Ahmad devoted most of his efforts on essentially the same activist pursuits that characterized his days with Jama'at-e-Islami; his ultimate goal was always to bring about an Islamic movement in Pakistan that was faithful to the original vision, mission, and methodology of Jama'at-e-Islami. These efforts bore fruit in 1975, and almost two decades after his separation from the Jama'at the Tanzeem-e-Islami came into existence as a result of his efforts. Ahmad had already given up his medical practice in 1971 in order to devote himself full-time to Islamic work. At that point in his life this meant the study, teaching, and propagation of the Qur'anic message. This personal history puts Ahmad squarely in the category of the “revivalists” that was described earlier in chapter two. Against this background of activism, it is peculiar that his name would be placed alongside Bennabi and Shariati as being among the thinkers who have grasped and furthered the vision of Iqbal. But as the following paragraphs will show, this identification is more than justified — Israr Ahmad is a revivalist who manifests an intellectual depth that is not to be found in the dominant revivalist discourse. The primary reason for placing Ahmad's name alongside Bennabi and Shariati is the fact that he has consciously striven to synthesize the thought of the leading Muslim thinkers in the twentieth century. In effect, this is a furthering of the process of reformulating the holistic vision of Islam in modern times that was started by Iqbal. In this regard, Ahmad identifies eight Muslim thinkers, belonging



to four categories, from whom he has benefited and whose ideas he has attempted to synthesize. The fact that Ahmad comes from a part of the world, Pakistan, which Bennabi identified as containing an “...intellectual hard core of undeniable quality,” leads one to believe that the ideas that Israr Ahmad has had access to in his project of synthesis have indeed been among the most developed and sophisticated in the Muslim world.

In an unusual display of intellectual honesty and humility, Israr Ahmad has personally identified the thinkers who have influenced him the most. Consequently, that which follows is merely a summary of his own words, not the result of study, inference, and thesis formation by the present writer. Ahmad offers a detailed account of the influence exercised by others on his thought, his personal relations to these thinkers (where applicable), and his sense of gratitude to each one of them in his book title *Da'wat Rujū' ilal-Qur'an ka Manzār-o-Pasmanzār*. While the book begins with the recognition of the most profound influence that has shaped Ahmad's thought —the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal — and there are intermittent references to others throughout the book, a detailed and systematic discussion of the topic takes place in the beginning of chapter four.

Iqbal has made the deepest imprint on Israr Ahmad's thought. The Qur'anic thought of Iqbal, and Iqbal's translation of this thought into high poetry, resonates throughout Ahmad's lectures and sermons. It is only natural that this should happen, given the central place that the Qur'an plays in Ahmad's mission to revive Muslim thought and consciousness in modern times. He notes that Muslim society, like other human societies, follows the lead of its elite. The fact that the elite have become disillusioned with religion makes it inevitable that the link between the society as a whole and religion will also weaken with the march of history. Whereas it is sufficient to appeal to tradition and exhortation to faith in order to keep religion attractive for the masses, the loyalty of the elite towards religion requires something much more than that. Since the elite has been exposed to modern secular thought and the modern critique of religion, appeals to tradition and exhortation to faith are simply not enough to make religion a viable alternative for them. Ahmad notes that the “...knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Qur'an” has to be propagated “...on a vast scale and on the highest intellectual level” in order to initiate the process of bringing Muslim society back to Islam. The elite require an intelligent, sophisticated, and attractive presentation of religious teachings in order for them to take Islam seriously in modern times. Until and unless the Islamic movement is able to articulate such a sophisticated and attractive vision of Islam that appeals to at least a significant portion of the elite, Muslim society as a whole will continue to move away from Islam.

During the late classical period of Islam it was Rumi who translated the wisdom of the Qur'an into poetic verse so that it could be easily accessible to the non-Arabic speaking masses. In the modern period, Iqbal has played the role of Rumi and has earned the title *Rumi-e-Thani* (the Second Rumi). Israr Ahmad has taken this particular dimension of Iqbal's thought and merged it with the philosophy of Dr. Muhammad Rafiuddin to produce an even more penetrating insight into the wisdom of the Qur'an. Iqbal's philosophy of *khudi* deals with the individual's quest for fulfillment. Building upon Iqbal's work, Rafiuddin analyzes human society and its march through history. He notes that the behavior of the individual is primarily determined by the pursuit of ideals, and the development of society is the collective pursuit of certain ideals that the collectivity in question has set before itself. Rafiuddin's philosophy has been called the philosophy of "urge for ideals." This internal urge to love and serve an ideal is so strong within the human being that he or she can endure physical pain, bodily deprivation, economic loss, social ostracism, etc., in the pursuit of an ideal. In the introduction to his most famous work, *Ideology of the Future*, Rafiuddin notes that the modern theories of human behavior proposed by Freud, Marx, Adler and others are sorely wanting as shown by an objective analysis of human conditions. When presented with an ideal that captures human imagination, individuals willingly sacrifice their libidinal desire, economic interests, and biological needs only for the sake of attaining and capturing this ideal.

Rafiuddin notes that, from a Qur'anic point of view, this human urge for ideals is actually a manifestation of the inborn desire of the human being to love and serve Allah (SWT), a longing that is born anew with the coming of every new human being into this world. He identifies this internal urge as having two facets: a) it is the determining factor in human behavior, and b) it has the potential of being misdirected and misplaced. Because this urge is inborn and irresistible, the results are disastrous when it is misplaced or misdirected. Commenting on this, Rafiuddin notes:

When a man lacks a personal feeling of the beauty and perfection of God's qualities and cannot love God as a consequence, he is forced to love a substitute ideal and make it the motivating force of his activities, like an obstructed river which flows into a different channel.<sup>142</sup>

All misery and suffering that takes place in the life of the individual is the result of a focusing of his or her attention away from the One True Ideal and in the direction of a false and defective ideal. Rafiuddin notes that the same dynamic of seeking an ideal is the determining factor in the development of human society. During its initial stages of growth, the dynamism and vigor of a given society can be directly traced to its belief in

a particular ideal and its active pursuit of that ideal. But with the passage of time it gradually becomes clear that the ideal that the society had chosen for itself was sorely wanting and quite defective. At this stage the society experiences a “...loss of nerve” and the process of implosion begins. For Rafiuddin, societies collapse not due to external threats and attacks but due to internal weakness and numbness that results from the realization that its ideals are sorely lacking.

For Rafiuddin, Allah (SWT) is the Supreme Ideal, the Perfect Ideal that does not contain the least amount of defect — this is the very meaning of *Tawhid*. The relationship between the human being and Allah (SWT) is based on the feeling of love. The human being is nothing other than the desire to love Allah (SAW), and Allah (SWT) has created the human being in order to perfect the latter so that he or she can become worthy of Divine Love and Grace. The contrasting and misplacing of the love for the True Ideal for another ideal is described by the Qur’an in these words:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ  
ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

And yet there are people who [choose to] believe in beings that [allegedly] rival Allah, loving them as [only] Allah should be loved: whereas those who have attained to faith love Allah more than all else. (Al-Baqarah 2:165)

In order for this love to be expressed and fulfilled, it is required that the laws and dictates of Allah (SWT) be established on the face of this earth. It is only as a result of this that the obstacles of competing false ideals that human beings have created for themselves can be removed and that the human being can genuinely dedicate himself or herself to the One True Ideal. Besides redirecting attention towards the One True Ideal, the primary mission of the Prophet (SWT) is to bring a society into existence that manifests this love and loyalty to the One True Ideal on the collective level. After the Prophet (SAW) it is the duty of his followers to continue this mission. The march of history is a process of the heightening of self-consciousness and self-awareness that brings in its wake a growing respect for the “other” and the decline of misunderstanding and conflict with the “other.” When these two streams in human history merge — the Prophetic mission and the continued evolution of human consciousness — the results that are produced are described by Rafiuddin in the following words:

As time will go on, we shall understand our nature more and more and hence our unity will grow more and more and our disunity will become less and less. When the Right Ideology will establish itself as the only political power in the world, it will not

only unite the human race under one government but will also create conditions in which their love for the Right Ideal and, therefore, their self-knowledge and their real unity will increase to the highest limits. It is difficult to imagine the immense powers, mental, material, and moral which the human race (united as a single individual) will command at this time.<sup>144</sup>

Rafiuddin is stating in his own words the message that history is conveying to humanity, a message that Bennabi summarized as being “Become one, or perish.” Rafiuddin’s reading of the Qur’an leads to the inescapable conclusion that “becoming one” is indeed the destiny of humanity. The following *ayah* expresses this fact, an *ayah* that is repeated three times in the Qur’an:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ  
وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

It is He [Allah] who has sent forth His Messenger with the Guidance and the True *Deen* to the end that he makes it prevail over all [false] religion, however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught but Allah. (Al-Saff 61:9)

Israr Ahmad has taken the Qur’anic thought of Iqbal and his philosophy of *khudi* along with the Qur’anic thought of Rafiuddin and his philosophy of “urge for ideals” and synthesized the two to gain a penetrating insight into the wisdom of the Qur’an. “The wisdom of the Qur’an” in the present context refers to the philosophical and intellectual understanding of the teachings of the Qur’an as they relate to and (more importantly) respond to the plethora of ideas and philosophies that have emerged in modern times to explain the phenomena of the human being, human society, and human history. As was clear in the discussion on Iqbal, the Qur’an contains its own world-view, its own view of human nature, and its own view of the development of world history — these views are only partially captured by the secular philosophies that are in vogue at any given time. Being a Revealed Book, it is only natural that the Qur’anic view is more comprehensive than anything produced by the human mind, and an understanding of the Qur’anic view gives a far clearer picture of reality than is otherwise possible. Iqbal and Rafiuddin are the first of four pairs of scholars that have directly influenced Israr Ahmad’s thought.

While Ahmad has learned the wisdom of the Qur’an from Iqbal and Rafiuddin, he has learned the commands of the Qur’an from Shaykh-ul-Hind Mahmood Hasan and Shaykh-ul-Islam Shabbir Ahmad Usmani. Iqbal and Rafiuddin were intellectuals trained in a Western setting, individuals with sharp intellects, philosophical minds and passionate souls.

Their primary concern was the study of the Qur'an at the philosophical and intellectual level. The two Shaykhs, on the other hand, were classically trained Muslim scholars, *Ulama* in the traditional sense of the word, whose specialty was understanding the legalistic (and to some extent spiritual and mystical) dimension of Qur'anic teachings. The distinguishing feature of these two Shaykhs, as compared to other traditionally trained Muslim scholars, is the fact that both were acutely aware of the collective dimension of the legal injunctions of the Qur'an. For most of the traditional scholars, on the other hand, the legal injunctions of the Qur'an do not extend beyond personal, individual duties. This is best reflected by the comments of a famous Indian scholar that were made when the Muslims in British India were beginning to agitate for independence. He stated that since the Muslims enjoy total religious freedom in India, there was no reason whatsoever to annoy their British rulers. Coming from one of the pre-eminent scholars of the time, this statement expressed and reflected the general attitude of traditional Muslim scholars. In response to this position, Iqbal rejoined with the now famous couplet:

ملا کو جو ہے ہند میں سجدے کی اجازت  
ناداں یہ سمجھتا ہے کہ اسلام ہے آزاد

The *Mulla* in India is allowed to prostrate,  
He thinks in his simplicity that Islam too is free!

The overwhelming majority of the traditionally trained Muslim scholars equated the permission to engage in ritualistic practices enjoined by Islam with the freedom to practice the whole of Islam in British India. In stark contrast, Mahmood Hasan led an active campaign against British rule because his understanding of Islamic law made it clear to him that it is not possible to practice an entire dimension of Islamic teachings (the collective dimension) while living under non-Muslim rule. As a result of his anti-Colonial activities, an arrest warrant was issued. He was arrested by Sharif Hussain during a visit to Mecca in 1916 and turned over to the British. The British imprisoned him on the island of Malta and through willful negligence deprived him of any medical care. He developed tuberculosis in prison and was released only when the disease had reached its third (and terminal) stage. He was released in 1920 and died shortly thereafter in 1921. Among all the traditionally trained *Ulama*, Mahmood Hasan is the one who most actively struggled against British occupation in twentieth century India. The four years that he spent in prison gave him the time and solitude to reflect over the sorry condition of the Muslim world in the quite of his prison cell. Upon his release and return to India he addressed the *Ulama* of Deoband and summarized his reflections in these words:

Upon reflecting in the solitude of the prison on the factors that are responsible for the worldly and religious deterioration of the Muslim world, I came to the conclusion that there are two major reasons. First is abandonment of the Qur'an by the Muslims, and the second is their internal division and mutual rivalries. Consequently, I have returned with the mission that whatever time is left in my worldly existence, I will dedicate it to the propagation of the literal words as well as the meaning of the Qur'an. This means the setting up of recital schools for children in every community, the arrangement for regular public lectures on the Qur'an for the adults so that they can become aware of the teachings of the Qur'an and become inspired and willing to abide by its teachings. At the same time, the internal antagonisms among the Muslims should not be tolerated at any cost.<sup>145</sup>

Israr Ahmad's great respect and close affinity to Mahmood Hasan is further demonstrated by the fact that he considers this famed "Prisoner of Malta" to be the great Muslim reformer or *Mujaddid* of the fourteenth century *Hijrah*. Mahmood Hasan's emphasis on the centrality of the Qur'an in the uplift of the Muslims and his emphasis on the collective dimension of the legal obligations enjoined by Islam reverberate throughout the thought and works of Israr Ahmad.

After Pakistan gained its independence in 1947, it was Shaykh-ul-Islam Shabbir Ahmad Usmani — one of the many outstanding disciples of Shaykh-ul-Islam — who represented the most forceful traditional *Ulama* voice in the public domain. For most of those engaged in the independence movement, the fact that the Muslims had gained an independent country of their own was the crowning achievement of the struggle, an achievement upon which nothing further needed to be built. For them, a country with a Muslim majority that is ruled by Muslims was the definition of an "Islamic" country. Consequently, in the process of formulating the first Constitution of Pakistan there was no reference to Islam whatsoever. Being a member of the Muslim League and aware of the direction in which the elite were taking Pakistan (a purely secular, Muslim nation-state), Usmani raised a strong voice of protest. Matters came to a head regarding the inclusion of the Objectives Resolution in the Constitution of Pakistan. The Objectives Resolution was a preamble to the Constitution and its inclusion was resolutely opposed by the secular elite. A look at the opening paragraphs of this Resolution reveals the reason for the opposition:

Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust; And whereas it is the will of the people of Pakistan to establish an order wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality,

tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed; wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah....

With Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani and Maulana Zafar Ahmad Ansari working from within the ranks of the Muslim League, and Abul A'la Maududi and Jama'at-e-Islami working from outside of the government, enough pressure was brought to bear on the political elite to get the Objectives Resolution adopted by the legislative assembly. The inclusion of these words in the Constitution of a modern nation-state is nothing less than an historical milestone in modern history. It marks the first time that a modern nation-state has acknowledged the fact that legislative sovereignty does not rest with any individual or organ of the government; it rests with One Who is far above all of this. In the closing decade of the twentieth century, as Pakistan completes its first 50 years in existence, Israr Ahmad has taken up the mission that was started by Shabbir Ahmad Usmani in 1947 — the Islamization of the Pakistani Constitution. While the Objectives Resolution was incorporated into the Constitution first as a preamble and later as an operative clause, a number of loopholes were also included in the Constitution from time to time so as to undercut the import of the Objectives Resolution in the legislative process. Israr Ahmad has spent a great deal of time and effort, from 1997 onwards, trying to convince the legislators to close these loopholes and strengthen the Islamic character of the Constitution by means of specific amendments.

Israr Ahmad's close affinity with Shaykh-ul-Hind Mahmood Hasan and Shaykh-ul-Islam Shabbir Ahmad Usmani establishes his link with the time honored tradition of classical Islamic scholarship. Ahmad notes that the fourteen centuries of Muslim history have seen many ups and downs and in the arena of politics there have been more downs than ups. There has been a great deal of instability from a political point of view; numerous dynasties have come and gone and a great deal of Islamic idealism has been compromised for the sake of political expediency. In spite of this political turmoil, Muslim society has been able to maintain a cultural cohesiveness due to the efforts of the great traditional/classical scholars of Islam. In modern times, the legal interpretation of Islam that could become the basis of societal cohesiveness would be the one produced by these scholars. The interpretation offered by modernist Muslim thinkers is repulsive to the temperament of the ordinary Muslim due to the fact that this interpretation is totally divorced from the spirit of Islam and totally disconnected from the tradition of Islamic scholarship. Commenting on this issue, Israr Ahmad notes:

In spite of the fact that the contemporary Muslim, due to external pressures or internal weakness, may not be practicing Islam as it has been presented to him by the traditional scholars of Islam, in the depths of his heart the Muslim is only attracted to this interpretation of Islam. And this is an occurrence of only the fourteenth century (*Hijrah*) that the political leadership of the Muslims has passed into the hands of individuals who do not have a deep attachment to Islam. But at the same time it is also an undeniable fact that such political leadership gains acceptance among the masses only after demonstrating that it has the support of leading Muslim scholars.<sup>146</sup>

There are two other traditional scholars who have made a significant impact on the thought of Israr Ahmad — Maulana Hameeduddin Farahi and Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi. Whereas the specialty of Mehmood Hasan and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani was the legal dimension of Qur'anic teachings, the specialty of Farahi and Islahi was the internal organization of the Qur'an. Even a cursory glance of the Qur'an reveals that it is neither a work of prose nor a work of poetry. Consequently, the internal organization of the Qur'an follows neither the rules of prose nor poetry.

Farahi examined the Qur'an and began to uncover the rules and logic according to which the *Surahs* and *ayaat* of the Qur'an are organized. Being Divine Revelation, the organization of the *Surahs* and the placement of the *ayaat* cannot but be according to some wisdom and logic, a wisdom and logic that must be uncovered using all the resources that are available to the seeker. During his lifetime, Farahi did not publish any of his work, he merely recorded his reflections and then stored them away. The task of completing the work that he had started and then publicizing this work to the world at large was left up to his student Amin Ahsan Islahi. Islahi took the work of Farahi, completed it and then set about writing an entire *tafseer* of the Qur'an in light of the findings of Farahi and his own work. Beginning in 1967, Ahmad started publishing the various volumes of this work, which was titled *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, as Islahi completed each volume. It would be difficult to summarize the work of Farahi and Islahi at this point, but it should be noted that this has been done by Mustansir in a book titled *Coherence in the Qur'an*. Suffice it to say that Israr Ahmad considers Farahi and Islahi to be the teachers from whom he learned the principles on which the internal organization of the Qur'an is based. Islahi and Farahi, therefore, are the third of four pairs of scholars who have directly influenced Israr Ahmad's thought.

The last pair of scholars is composed of Abul Kalam Azad and Abul A'la Maududi. The aforementioned six Muslim thinkers fit the mould of the scholar, intellectual, and *alim*. Generally speaking, the bulk of their



efforts was dedicated to the clarification of ideas, concepts, and thought. The legacy that Iqbal and Rafiuddin, Mahmood Hasan and Usmani, Farahi and Islahi have bequeathed to posterity is primarily an intellectual legacy that focuses on certain crucial aspects of Qur'anic wisdom. Azad and Maududi, on the other hand, represent the two Muslim thinkers in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent who practically responded to the Qur'anic call to action. It is no accident that Azad was a close protégé of Mahmood Hasan, and that Maududi moved from Hyderabad to Lahore at the invitation of Iqbal. The urge to undertake concrete and organized action to change the miserable condition of the Muslim community made the souls of Mahmood Hasan and Iqbal restless, and this restlessness resounded in the persons of Azad and Maududi.

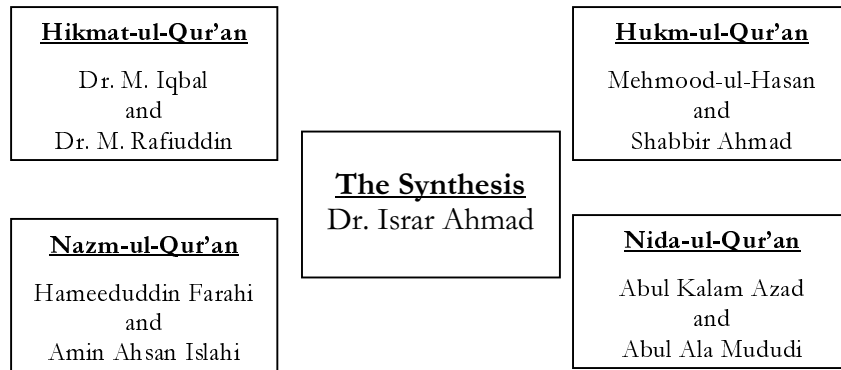
In 1912 a journal titled *Al-Hilal* made its debut in India and became an instant sensation. Both its style and its contents bore the mark of genius, and as subsequent events were to show Azad was indeed a genius. As its editor, he sounded the clarion call for the Muslims to take stock of themselves in light of the teachings of Islam, recognize how far removed they were from these teachings and reform themselves accordingly. The “reform” part demanded active engagement with political matters and political issues. The first issue of *Al-Hilal* prompted a letter to the editor. The author of the letter argued that political issues should remain independent of religious teachings. Azad replied:

We have learned all our political concepts from Islam itself, and we cannot separate them from it. According to our creed any idea or concept which is derived from any intellectual source other than the Qur'an is *kufir*.... Islam has come with a complete and comprehensive Law for humanity, and there is no facet of human activity for which it does not contain a command. Whether to speak of the Muslims' ethical code or practical conduct, their political or social life, their religious or worldly affairs, their status as ruler or ruled, Islam contains within it a comprehensive law which covers all these aspects. If such was not the case then Islam would not have been the final and universal revelation. It is the voice of God...<sup>147</sup>

In 1913 Azad founded an Islamic group, named Hizbullah, dedicated to the struggle to establish Islam in its totality. This struggle was two fold, against the British occupation and against the ignorance and backwardness of the Muslim community in India. In 1915, Azad gave his pledge of allegiance to Mahmood Hasan and accepted him as the leader of this struggle. With the outbreak of WWI, Azad's publication was shut down and shortly thereafter he began to publish a new journal titled, *Al-Balagh*. Given his anti-British activities, this journal was also shut down by the authorities and he was arrested and jailed around the same time that

Mahmood Hasan was arrested in Mecca by Sharif Hussain and turned over to the British. When both of them were released, Mahmood Hasan urged the *Ulama* to give their pledge of allegiance to Azad and accept him as their leader in the struggle to establish Islam in its totality as a complete socio-political and economic system. But the *Ulama* could not bring themselves to accept the authority of someone who was not a graduate of one of the traditional institutions of Islamic learning. By 1921, Azad became very disheartened, distanced himself from the group of Deonbandi *Ulama* and eventually detached himself completely from this circle. He went on to play a critical role in the independence movement of India as a leader of the Indian National Congress. Even though Azad died in 1957, Maududi declared the Azad of *Al-Hilal* and Hizbullah days to be dead decades earlier, he himself picked up the torch that Azad had dropped in 1920-21. The history and ultimate goal of Jama'at-e-Islami is well known and need not be detailed here. But as has been mentioned above, Israr Ahmad considers the Jama'at to have significantly deviated from its original methodology and by extension its original goal by becoming involved in the political scene of Pakistan. Nonetheless, he remains intellectually and even emotionally beholden to both Azad and Maududi<sup>148</sup> for having given practical shape to the Qur'anic call for an organized and disciplined struggle to establish Islam in its totality as a socio-historic reality.

Iqbal and Rafiuddin (the Wisdom of the Qur'an), Mahmood Hasan and Usmani (the Law of the Qur'an), Farahi and Islahi (the Organization of the Qur'an) and Azad and Maududi (the Call of the Qur'an) — these eight thinkers and four categories make up the dimensions of Israr Ahmad's thought on which his activities are based. It is not difficult to see why Ahmad's thought and activity can be described as a "synthesis" of twentieth century Muslim thought, as summarized below.



The synthesis of the work of the aforementioned eight thinkers has given Israr Ahmad the ability to develop a comprehensive view of Islam's position in the modern world. He outlined his ideas regarding this issue in a small booklet titled *Islamic Renaissance: The Real Task Ahead*, originally published in June 1967 in the Urdu journal *Meesaq*. In this booklet, he identifies the shift of emphasis from the metaphysical/spiritual dimension to the physical/material dimension as being the defining characteristic of the modern world. He goes on to note that even modern Muslim thought is characterized by this shift. Ahmad identifies the departure from the holistic teachings of the Qur'an as being the root cause of this shift, in addition to the irresistible force of the ideas emanating from the West. Departing from the holistic teachings that maintain a balance between the spiritual and physical, the metaphysical and material, modern Muslim thought has reduced the Divine Word to being merely a collection of laws and ethics. The end result has been a shallow intellect because the spiritual dimension has been stunted. Commenting on this shift and the resultant intellectual output, Ahmad notes:

The essence of the Holy Book lies in the particular gnosis which is called *Iman* or faith. No doubt the Qur'anic laws and precepts about the practical aspects of life are of immense importance in their own right. But compared with the essence which is constituted by its teachings regarding *Iman*, the legal aspects of the Qur'an are of secondary significance. Without the prior acquisition of this inner faith, deliberation upon the Qur'anic laws is of hardly any value.<sup>149</sup>

Ahmad notes that the spiritual/metaphysical dimension of Qur'anic teachings must be appreciated and appropriated in order to move beyond mere dogmatic, verbal attestations to the Islamic creed and actually experiencing this creed as a living and life-giving reality in the depth of one's soul. In other words "...*Iman* must be transformed from mere verbal attestation (*qaal*) to an inward existential faith (*haal*)."<sup>150</sup> Referring to the revivalist movements, Ahmad notes that they have played an indispensable role in the liberation movements in the Muslim world and, in spite of great obstacles, they have revived the concept of Islam as a "complete way of life" and the concept of "Social Justice in Islam." But in the final analysis, the work done by the revivalists should "...only be considered as an appreciably good start in the right direction."<sup>151</sup> Looking at the literature produced by the revivalists and the ideas expressed therein, Ahmad notes that:

They are devoid of the spiritual message that is the heart of the Qur'anic revelation. They fail to appreciate Islam as a spiritual and metaphysical tradition. But since Islam is essentially based on inward faith known in Arabic as *Iman*, its renaissance can

never be brought about without first reviving and indeed revitalizing the faith of a large part of the Muslim community.<sup>152</sup>

Lacking the intellectual depth that spiritual vibrancy naturally gives birth to, modern Islamic thought has not been able to constructively engage with modern Western thought and offer a philosophical exposition of Islamic teachings that is attractive to the modern educated mind. Consequently, it is no surprise to find that the social, political, and intellectual elite in the Muslim world hardly differ from their Western counterparts in terms of tastes, habits, ideas, and religious beliefs.

Ahmad notes that Iqbal's work set a precedence of formulating a new philosophical exposition of Islamic teachings. This work took the "...facts discovered in the domains of mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology, and psychology" along with other physical and social sciences and explained these findings in light of Islamic teachings while at the same time expositing Islamic teachings in light of these findings. Iqbal's contribution in this area is catalogued in the prominent work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Ahmad notes that while the real purpose of Iqbal in this pioneering work was to lay the foundations for the "...reconstruction of the philosophical theology of Islam,"<sup>153</sup> his own disciples for the most part did not endeavor to further and advance his legacy in this particular direction.

Ahmad notes that it is the need of the day to focus on the religious and philosophical aspects of Iqbal's work. The simple reason for this is the fact that:

Until and unless a considerable amount of really good quality work is available in the field of Islamic theology or *kalam*, the hope of instilling in the intelligentsia a deeply religious point of view can never be realized."<sup>154</sup>

In other words, there can be no genuine revitalization of *Iman* among the elite in Muslim society until and unless individuals already possessing this *Iman* are able to present the teachings of Islam in light of the advancement of knowledge that has taken place in the past four centuries. As long as the elite in Muslim society is not intellectually attracted to Islamic teachings, its adherence to Islam will remain a matter of dogmatics and/or cultural imperatives. As the experience of religion in the West has shown, when this stage is reached it is only a matter of time when society at large loses its organic relation to religious teachings. Like Iqbal, it is both implicit and explicit in Israr Ahmad's work that no genuine revitalization of religious faith, and by extension of the religious world-view, can take place without the aid of the Divine Word. The wisdom of the Divine Word has to be used to interpret and understand the specifics describing the dynamics

of the Divine Work (which is none other than “scientific” knowledge gathered in recent centuries). For those living in the present, the resources of both have to be brought to the fore in order to make religious teachings apprehendable and appreciable by the modern mind. The way out of the conundrum caused by modernity’s disregard for the spiritual/metaphysical dimension is not the negation of the scientific knowledge accumulated during the modern period in history, or its superficial and purely utilitarian appropriation. Rather, it is the appropriation of this knowledge and its appreciation in light of the Revealed Word that is the need of the time. Ahmad’s advocacy of this appropriation and appreciation highlights the process by which the seeming “contradictions” between the Divine Word (detailed in Revelation) and the Divine Work (detailed in the findings of modern science) can be reconciled by an in-depth and penetrating engagement with Qur’anic Wisdom. As the discussion on Iqbal’s project to “reconstruct” Islamic thought in modern times illustrates, the reconciliation of these apparent “contradictions” is not just a theoretical possibility, but it is actually something that the Qur’anic narrative itself points towards and at certain junctures actually demands. *Jihad-bil-Qur’an* is an essential (and probably the only) process that leads to the reconciliation of “contradictions” between the spiritual and material domains — contradictions that are equally emphasized by both modernist thought and pre-modern, traditional religious thought. It is only after a proper relationship between these two domains has been established on the intellectual plane — with the help of Qur’anic Wisdom — that a genuine process of the “renewal of faith” on the part of the educated class can take place.

The importance of refocusing attention on the spiritual and metaphysical dimension of Islamic teachings and bringing them into harmony with the knowledge gained about the “material” domain of reality in the modern period can be illustrated by considering the fact that modernity represents a “spiritual” and “metaphysical” challenge to the religious world-view. It was noted in the very first chapter that the fundamental principles on which modernity is based are not scientific truths (even though they are often represented that way) but they are in reality “statements of faith.” For all the “scientific” argumentation that has been presented in favor of scientism, secularism, and capitalism the fact remains that their “scientific” validity is dubious at the very best; the evidence presented in chapter four points in this very direction. When looking at the post-modern possibility of Islam, the vision of the four thinkers whose ideas have been outlined in this chapter can be summarized in the following manner.

***Iman bil-Lah as Epistemology, not Scientism:*** Belief in Allah (SWT) as the root of all epistemology. Allah (SWT) has revealed Himself and His Will not only in the Divine Word but also in the world of nature, in the depths of the human soul, and in the unfolding of history. This allows — nay, requires — that science be treated as one source of knowledge among others, but not as the only and exclusive source of knowledge. Qur'anic epistemology embraces science as a source of knowledge while scientism rejects the Revealed word and inner human experience as acceptable sources of knowledge.

***Iman bil-Risalah as Sociology, not Secularism:*** Belief in the institution of Prophethood as the source of all sociology. The principles of human fraternity, social justice, and mutual toleration that have been taught by the prophets over the course of human history represent the highest social ideals that human beings can aspire to. These ideals are to be found nowhere in pagan philosophy, whether it is of the Western (Greek) variety or the Eastern (Hindu/Buddhist) philosophy. The personal experience of the individual and the collective experience of human society can only confirm the nobility of the Prophetic Model, it can never improve upon it. And it is only the Prophetic Model that allows for the genuine freedom of faith — and even the lack of faith. As long as an individual follows certain moral and ethical norms in the public, his or her faith is a personal matter that is of no concern to anyone else. While the Prophetic Model allows for the existence of different faith traditions in one society, secularism only promotes non-faith and agnosticism among all traditions.

***Iman bil-Akhirah as Ideology, not Capitalism:*** Belief in the life hereafter as the ultimate justification of one's behavior to oneself and one's community — not selfish economic interest. On a collective level, no ideology can produce the type of moral and ethical behavior that a deep rooted and genuine faith in the life hereafter can produce. Struggling to better one's position in the hereafter does not require the abandonment of worldly good and worldly pleasure. In stark contrast, struggling to better one's lot in the context of a capitalist system will ultimately require one to “..sell the life of the hereafter for the fleeting pleasures of this world.”

An individual who has internalized these beliefs, and for whom these beliefs have become an internal experiential reality, reaches a state of nobility that is beyond the angelic realm. On an individual level this state is reached in its perfection in the person of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who, along with his noble Companions (RAA), laid the groundwork for the emergence of this state on a collective and societal level. In the view of the aforementioned thinkers, the culmination of history will witness the emergence of a universal brotherhood that is shaped and defined by these spiritual/metaphysical beliefs. If and when this ever comes to pass it will

mark the point in human history where the human beings on earth collectively transcend the nobility of the angels in heaven — having established the Kingdom and Will of God on earth as it is in the Heavens. The humans will outstrip the angels because they would establish the Kingdom and Will of God on earth in spite of countless obstacles that exist only on the earth and are not found in the heavens. Keeping in mind the projections offered by Francis Fukuyama, we notice an interesting contrast in the projected futures of human destiny. As a reminder, this is the future projected by Fukuyama, in his own words:

The end of history would mean the end of wars and bloody revolutions. Agreeing on ends, men would have no large causes for which to fight. They would satisfy their needs through economic activity, but they would no longer have to risk their life in battle. They would, in other words, become animals again, as they were before the bloody battle that began history.<sup>155</sup>

The best that secular thought has to offer humanity is a return to the state of animality where the life of each individual would come to resemble that of a well fed dog — a dog that is content to sleep in the sun all day long as long as his material needs are adequately met and he is not harassed by the state authorities. In stark contrast, Islam calls the human being towards a state where this weak, frail, and often failing creature transcends the nobility of even the angels and regains the noble state that he occupied before the beginning of history when even the angels prostrated themselves in front of Adam (AS). From this perspective, the end of history would also mean the end of wars and bloody revolutions, but not because humans beings have debased themselves to the level of animal, but rather because they have transcended the level of the angels.

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### Endnotes

60. Hosein, Imran. N., “The Continuity of Iqbal’s Qur’anic Thought” in “The Qur’anic Horizons,” Vol 2: No 4 (October-December 1997), p. 53.
61. Ibid., p. 52.
62. Bennabi, M., *Islam in History and Society*, Trans. by Asma Rashid (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1988) p. 91.
63. This is the opinion of Asma Rashid, which she expresses in her introduction to the fore-cited book, p. [2].
64. Ibid, p. 7.
65. Ibid, p. 10
66. Ibid, p. 97.
67. Ibid, p. 82.
68. Ibid, p. 8.
69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid, p. 12
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid, p. 12-13.
75. Ibid, p. 10.
76. Ibid, p. 15.
77. Ibid, p. 16.
78. Ibid, p. 16.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid, p. 20.
81. Ibid, p. 92.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid, p. 35.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., p. 24
87. Ibid, p. 31.
88. Ibid, p. 85.
89. Ibid, p. 86.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p. 83
92. Ibid, p. 43f.
93. Ibid., p. 83
94. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 142.
95. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, op. cit., p. 101f.
96. Ibid, p. 94.
97. Ibid, p. 100.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., p. 101
101. Ibid, p. 102.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid, p. 102.
108. All the biographical information in this section has been taken from the preface written by Dr. Fatollah Marjani in his translation of Dr. Ali Shariati's *Man and Islam* (Houston, Texas: Free Islamic Lit. Inc., 1981) p. xii.
109. Ibid, p. 1.
110. Shariati, A., "On Humanism" in *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique* trans. by R. Campbell (Berkeley, California: Mizan Press, 1980) p. 19.
111. Ibid, p. 19f.
112. Ibid, p. 20.



113. Ibid.
114. Ibid, p. 19.
115. Shariati, *Man and Islam*, p. 3.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid, p. 4.
118. Ibid, p. 3.
119. Ibid, p.4
120. Ibid, p. 7.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Professor Chandel quoted by Shariati in Ibid. p. 8.
125. Ibid, p. 9.
126. Shariati, “Humanity Between Marxism and Religion” in *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, op. cit., p. 94.
127. Ibid, p. 94f.
128. Shariati, “Modern Calamities” in *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, op. cit., p. 39f.
129. Ibid.
130. Shariati, “Mysticism, Equality and Freedom” in *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, op. cit., p. 114.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid, p. 115.
133. Ibid, p. 116.
134. Ibid, p. 117.
135. Ibid
136. Ibid, p. 118.
137. Ibid.
138. Shariati, “Humanity Between Marxism and Religion” in *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, p. 95.
139. Ibid, p. 96.
140. Shariati, A., *Allama Iqbal*, Trans. from Persian to Urdu by Kabeer Jaeesi (Lahore, Pakistan: Frontier Post Publications, 1994) p. 37.
141. Ibid, p. 31.
142. This tract, its presentation and the circumstances surrounding it have been put in the form of a book titled *Tarikh Jama'at-e-Islami ka Aik Gumshudaa Bab* (Lahore: Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore, 1990)
143. These words appear as part of the mission statement of the All Pakistan Education Congress that was published in every issue of its journal *Islamic Education*. The mission statement was written by Dr. Rafiuddin and the present citation is taken from a reprint of this statement in an introductory brochure published by the Congress titled: *All Pakistan Islamic Education Congress: The Founder, the Congress, the Agenda, the Message* (Lahore: APIEC, 1995) p. 29.
144. Rafiuddin, M. *Ideology of the Future* (Lahore, Pakistan: Book Lovers Bureau, n.d.) p.420.
145. Quoted by Dr. Israr Ahmad in *Da'wat Rujū' ilal-Qur'an ka Manzar-o-*

- Pasmanzar* (Lahore: Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore, 1992) p. 3.
146. Ahmad, Israr. *Istebkam-e-Pakistan* (Lahore: Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore, 1993) p. 91.
147. Quoted by Muhammad Sarwar in *Maulana Maududi ki Tebrik-e-Islami* (Lahore, Pakistan: Sindh Sagar Academy, 1956) pp. 66ff.
148. The depth of Ahmad's respect and gratitude to these two individuals specifically can be measured from the comments that he makes regarding them throughout his writings. Especially in the works titled *Maulana Maududi aur Mayn*, and *Jama'at Shaikh-ul-Hind aur Tanzeem-e-Islami*.
149. Ahmad, Israr., *Islamic Renaissance: The Real Task Ahead* (Lahore, Pakistan: Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an, 1996) p. 26f.
150. Ibid. p. 20.
151. Ibid, p.29.
152. Ibid, p. 20.
153. Ibid, p. 28.
154. Ibid.
155. Fukuyama., *The End of History*, op. cit., p. 311.

### Quotes from Past Issues

Islam is a polity based on an ethical ideal ... it conceives of man not as mere body nor as mere spirit, but as an embodied spirit. (B. H. Siddiqui, *Islam and Modernity: A Dialogue*, Jan-Mar 1996)

The Globalization of Culture is closely linked with the globalization of economy and the rapidly rising power of transnational corporations. (Ayesha Chaudhry, *The New Face of Imperialism*, Jul-Sep 1998)

The so-called Enlightenment, indeed a strange term to apply to what was, in fact, a darkening of human intelligence and human imagination. (Charles Gai Eaton, *The Roots of Western Culture*, Jan-Mar 1998)

What modern and contemporary man does not seem to realize, however, is the truth that in denying a faith in a Supreme Being, he is replacing the traditional and sacred beliefs with a contemporary and more secularized belief. (John Herlihy, *The Dynamic Range of Faith*, Jul-Sep 1997)

The unmistakable message from the Qur'an and *Sunnah* is that there can be no gradualism in moves towards a *riba*-free economy. (Dr. Sayyid Tahir, *Strategy of the Elimination of Riba*, Jul-Sep 1997)

It is the un-Islamic and escapist version of mysticism that encourages good people to leave the affairs of the world. (Dr. Ahmed Afzaal, *Rendezvous in Orlando*, Oct-Dec 1998)