A paper read at the first Pakistan Oriental Conference held at Lahore in December, 1956.

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF ISLAMIC RESEARCH

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The real task before our Organizations of Islamic Research

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BY

Dr. MOHAMMAD RAFI-UD-DIN
M.A., Ph.D

Director, Iqbal Academy

Karachi (Pakistan)

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THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF ISLAMIC RESEARCH

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Several institutes of Islamic research, some of them sponsored and financed by the Government of Pakistan, are already working in the country. Another institute of Islamic research which is expected to be bigger than any of these is being set up by the Government of Pakistan shortly at Karachi to satisfy the provisions of the Constitution. This shows the great importance that the majority of our people attach to the need for Islamic research. But I am afraid there is still a good deal of confusion among us about the exact meaning and purpose of Islamic research.

Definition and Scope of Islamic Research

Islam, as brought to us by the Last of the Prophets, Mohammad (peace be upon him) consists of the sacred teachings embodied in the Quran and Hadith. Islamic research will, therefore, have to be defined as research that is centred around the contents of these sacred books and is carried out with the object of making these contents more easily intelligible to others.

This definition will enable us to know precisely what Islamic research includes and what it excludes. It includes all that the Muslim scholars have written in the past or may write in future (A) on the sacred books and (B) on books written about the sacred books. It excludes (C) all that Muslim scholars have written in the past or may write in future on a subject other than Islam *e.g.* on Medicine, Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Lexicography, History, Art or Literature. It excludes also (D) all research work that we may undertake on books written under (C) above. Moreover, since

the contents of the sacred books are not intelligible to the non-Muslims, as such, and non-Muslims cannot be expected to make them intelligible to others in their capacity as sacred contents of the sacred books or even to have the intention to do so, Islamic research will also exclude (E) all research work done by non-Muslim scholars on the sacred books or on books written about the sacred books.

Mechanical and Original Islamic Research

Islamic research is of two kinds. It is either (1) Mechanical or (2) Original. For example, preparing an index or a dictionary of one of the sacred books or of a book written about one of the sacred books, translating, re-arranging or summarizing its contents, collecting or making available for convenient reference historical or other material relating to its subject-matter is mechanical Islamic research while giving an intellectual explanation, interpretation or elaboration of the subject-matter of the sacred books is original Islamic research.

Original Islamic research is more important than the mechanical one since it relates to the essence or the meaning of Islam. Indeed it is Islamic research proper. It calls for a deep insight into the teachings of Islam, an insight which can result only from a sincere faith in Islam amounting to a passionate love for it and a continued and willing submission to its religious and moral discipline. It is not possible unless a man enters into the spirit of the sacred books, and develops by his constant obedience to the Prophet a view of the Universe akin to his view. Since this kind of Islamic research is the result of faith or love, it engenders faith or love in others who avail of it. The works of Shah Wali Ullah, Gazali, Rumi, Mohyuddin Ibni-Arabi, Ibn-i Taimiyyah, Hafiz Ibni Qayyim and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi are examples of Islamic research of this kind.

The Functions of Original Islamic Research

Since original Islamic research is always the response of Islam to the intellectual challenge of the age to its rational foundations, it performs a double function. (1) It refutes directly or indirectly the wrong philosophical ideas that have become prevalent at the time and have begun to have an adverse effect on the faith of the Muslims. (2) It affirms the truth of Islam and defends Islamic

beliefs and ideas by making use of all the right philosophical ideas that are available at the time. This double function becomes possible because the research scholar develops, on account of his love for Islam and his desire to re-interpret it correctly, an intuition or a perspective of things which enables him to sift the right ideas from the wrong ideas.

Functions of Mechanical Islamic Research

Mechanical Islamic research does not need any insight of Islam and since it is not necessarily the product of love or faith it can inspire neither love nor faith in others. The only importance of mechanical Islamic research is that it facilitates the study of the sacred books for the ordinary reader and subserves the needs of the original research scholar by making the subject-matter of the sacred books more easily accessible to him. The original research scholar is like an engineer who designs and constructs a beautiful building while the mechanical research scholar is like a labourer who brings the bricks required for the construction a little nearer to him. The latter is helpful but not indispensable to the former.

Oriental Research

Pure mechanical research on the sacred books of Islam may sometimes be actuated by a faith in Islam but its efficient pursuit does not need as a pre-requisite the existence of any faith in Islam at all. That is why it is carried out most efficiently even by Jews and Christians. As a matter of fact the Jews and Christians of the West are its real pioneers in modern times. But in such a case it is not at all correct to designate it as Islamic research. It is a part of a larger research known as Oriental research that was initiated and developed in the West by a class of scholars who called themselves Orientalists because they were interested in and sought to know the languages and literature of the East. Oriental research is entirely mechanical and concerns itself with translating, editing, annotating, summarising, remodelling or indexing ancient works of History, Philosophy, Religion, Lexicography, Science and Literature, written in the Oriental languages like Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese, Indonesian and Turkish, etc.

The motives of this research were in the beginning entirely missionary. Later on when European powers began to colonize

in the East, they became also administrative and political. One of the objects of the Westerners' interest in Oriental studies is no doubt to satisfy their curiosity and to provide themselves with amusement by uncovering the hidden relics of an ancient civilization which according to them exists no longer and which has been superseded by a far superior civilization of which they themselves are the torch-bearers. Their attitude is similar to ours in carrying out excavations at Taxila by means of which we lay bare to the world for their amusement or for the satisfaction of their curiosity the burried signs of an ancient civilization which has ceased to exist for ever. Now that Orientalism is being patronized by the universities of the West most of which maintain chairs of Oriental studies, it has also become a lucrative and dignified intellectual profession in the West as well as in the East. In the course of time the Orientalists have developed a technique which our scholars of Oriental languages learn from them at the universities of the West. Now, most of the universities of the East also maintain chairs of Oriental studies, which are generally occupied by scholars who are trained by the Western Orientalists in the technique of Oriental research. So far as Islamic research is concerned this technique can be of use only to the mechanical part of it and no more.

Prejudice against Islam and Muslims

The research of the Orientalists on books of Arabic and Persian written mostly by Muslims is not actuated by any regard for Islam or for the Muslim scholars. The case is rather the reverse of it. They have generally a definite prejudice against Islam and Muslims. It is, therefore, futile to expect them to take a favourable view of Islam whenever they happen to digress from their mechanical work in order to interpret any of the doctrines or beliefs of the Muslims. That is why a portion of their work is full of reflections against Islam and Muslims. We, therefore, need to revise this portion of their work in order to purge it of their unfair remarks. But to the extent to which such a revision of the work of the Orientalists will pertain to books written by ancient Muslim scholars on subjects other than Islam, it will not be counted as Islamic research even of a mechanical nature. It will be only Oriental research done by Muslims. In fact all research work done by Muslims on books

written by Muslim scholars of the past on secular subjects, mentioned under (D) above has to be classified as ' Oriental research '.

A Wrong Name

Unfortunately this latter kind of research is often erroneously described as Islamic research on the ground that it is research on books written by Muslims. As a matter of fact books written by ancient Muslim scholars on secular subjects are no more Islamic books than a table made by a Muslim carpenter is an Islamic table. If these books are Islamic books and research on them is Islamic research, then, books written on secular subjects by Muslim scholars of the present times too must be called Islamic books and research on them must be designated as Islamic research. But we do not call these latter books Islamic books nor research on them is known as Islamic research. Why, then, should we prefer to use the adjective "Islamic" wrongly when we happen to be talking about such books written by Muslim scholars of the past?

A mass of intellectual knowledge, as distinguished from revelational knowledge, can be accurate or inaccurate, vague or clear, systematic or unsystematic but it cannot be Muslim, Jewish or Christian. Knowledge is one and indivisible, a single light emanating from a single source which may shine over one individual or another and over one community or another, at its pleasure. It is above creeds and nationalities. That is why those who undertake its search benefit from each other irrespective of their creeds and nationalities.

A Characteristic of Oriental Research

Since Oriental research is a mechanical process and has nothing original to give, it is characterized by its emphasis on petty things. A whole life, for example, may be wasted on showing that the correct spelling of the name of a book or a scholar is not this but that or on proving that an individual was born a few miles towards the north and not the south of a particular place or a few hours after and not before a particular point of time, although the individual himself may not matter very much as a scholar and may well deserve to be forgotten. He is considered to be extremely important simply because he is mentioned somewhere in the ancient literature.

The Real Task of the Muslim Orientalist

If the object of Oriental research were to bring to light the intellectual achievements of the ancient scholars of the East, which

was the most cultured and civilized part of the globe till recently and show their relation to the intellectual achievements of the present age, it will still not be Islamic research but it will be, no doubt, a real service to the cause of knowledge in general since it will help to restore the continuity of the intellectual endeavour of the human race as a whole by bringing its present into line with its past. But this is not the manner in which Oriental research is being carried out either in the East or in the West at present. The task is difficult since it requires a familiarity with the intellectual world of the past as well as of the present, but it is the real task before the Orientalist, particularly the Muslim Orientalist.

With us the object of Oriental research should be after all the search for knowledge and not the search for Oriental knoweldge. Knowledge cannot be Oriental or Occidental. Our ancestors at least never made any such distinction and that is the cause of all those intellectual achievements of man for which they have the credit today. Should the vast galaxy of Muslim scholars, whose books are the Orientalists' sphere of study, come to life today, they will hasten to make all the knowledge of the West their own. If the object of Oriental research is really the search for knowledge it will be more consistent with its object to discard entirely the use of the word Oriental for research or studies and the word Orientalists for Muslim scholars — a use which we started in imitation of the Westerners who live permanently in the West and have a permanent East. We live both in the East and the West. All languages are ours and all real knowledge that has been developed so far whether in the East or West is ours. It will be more reasonable to change the name "Oriental Research" to "Research in the Ancient and Medieaval Studies" and to extend its scope to include research on books written in the past not only in the languages we call "Oriental" like Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese and Turkish but also in ancient European languages like Latin and Greek.

Oriental Research is not Islamic Research

In any case Oriental research has nothing in common with Islamic research and must be kept strictly apart from it. It should be centred in special departments of our universities as in the West. An institute of Islamic research can have nothing to do with it consistently with its name or purpose.

Mechanical and Original Islamic Research sometimes Overlap

Sometimes original and mechanical Islamic research overlap each other so that a product of original research contains some element of mechanical research in the shape of a re-grouping and re-arranging of the contents of the sacred books and a product of mechanical research is tinged with the effort to interpret and explain their contents. But the value of a product of Islamic research depends upon the element of original research that it contains. It will be more valuable if it contains a greater quantity of original Islamic research of a high intellectual merit and degree of accuracy. The research of Iqbal, Ibni Taimiyyah, Shah Wali Ullah, Gazali, Rumi and Mohyuddin Ibni Arabi is considered to be more valuable than that of hundreds of other ancient and modern scholars of Islam for the same reason. Each of these scholars has given the original intellectual interpretation of Islam that was needed by the world at the time.

Revelation and Reason

The question arises: What has been the need to interpret Islam from the intellectual point of view again and again. Is it not true that the Quran and Hadith are enough by themselves to guide human beings in their beliefs and actions? Have they not explained themselves to the extent to which it was necessary? Do we need to add anything of our own, some product of our own human reason and understanding, to the revelations of the Creator and the sayings of the Prophet to make them intellegible and useful, knowing that human reason is far inferior to Divine revelation as a guide to man.

It is true that human intellect has no place compared to Divine revelation as a guide to the ultimate nature of things and to the shape that the practical life of the individual and the society must take as a consequence of that nature. But human intellect and Divine revelation have yet got a natural relationship in view of which we have to take the following facts as true and beyond all controversy:

(1) That Divine revelation *cannot* be accepted unless our reason guides us to an intuition or a conviction that

it is really Divine and true. That is why the Quran appeals to human reason and intellect so frequently. Do we not make a distinction between a prophet and a pseudo-prophet?

(2) That Divine revelation consists of external spoken or written words which are invariably converted into a meaning or an import in the mind of the listener or the reader before they can be believed or obeyed. So long as they do not undergo this process of conversion (a process which is entirely intellectual and human) from an external entity to an internal realization, in other words, so long as they do not cover themselves up in the garb of some intellectual interpretation, they can create neither belief nor action. That is why the beliefs and actions of people following the same revelation differ and there is such a variety of sects and religious movements in Islam which is only one.

(3) Revelation gives a correct view of the nature of man and universe and the human intellect in the form of Philosophy attempts to do the same. This self-imposed function of the human intellect coincides with that of revelation. Hence it has a tendency to examine the assertions of revelation even after they have been accepted as true. It endeavours to find an answer *satisfactory to itself* to questions which have been already answered by revelation. For example, there is the question, "Does God really exist?" A person may believe in the answer of revelation to this question totally. Yet as a human being *i.e.*, as an intellectual being, he is bound to have by his side an answer to it given by the intellect as well.

The Need to Re-Interpret Islam in every Age

Intellectual knowledge is always advancing and in the new intellectual ideas that arise in every age truth is always found mixed up with untruth. Original Islamic research has, therefore, to be renewed in every age in order to sift the truth from untruth, to refute the wrong philosophical ideas that happen to be challenging Islam and to affirm and defend Islam with the right philosophical ideas

of the time that go in its favour. The research scholars of every age have to separate the chaff from the grain in the mass of the new intellectual knowledge of that age, and make use of the grain and throw the chaff to the winds.

The Intellectual Challenge of this Age

Never was the intellectual challenge of an age to Islam so serious as it is now. The philosopher, the historian, the economist, the sociologist and the psychologist have all begun to strike at the very roots of Islam. The theories of Mechanical Evolution, Psycho-Analysis, Scientific Socialism and Historical Materialism which are becoming more and more popular in modern times, challenge the very foundations of our religion. We cannot hope to live as Muslims unless we produce an answer to these theories, remembering all the time that in case our answer does not conform to the intellectual standards of the age and does not satisfy, by the technique and method of its reasoning, the top-intellectuals of the world, it will be no answer at all. We have not produced this answer yet. Unfortunately the *ulama* who fought many a battle of Islam on the intellectual front in the past take no notice of this new danger to our religion, to say nothing of their making an effort to prepare the new generation against it. Even the non-Muslims are taunting us for our unjustified complacence in this matter. The socialist writer Prof. W. C. Smith says in his book *Modern Islam in India* :—

> " Whereas there used to be zealous religious debates on the street corners, hardly more than a decade or two ago, and the educated used to pore over and to puzzle over book after book on modernism, today the youth is unacquainted and unconcerned with any of the intellectual problems which religion, as a valid way of life, is facing . . . We have seen how the liberals finally answered more or less the criticisms of Islam which the Christians advanced. Today the modernized Muslim is satisfied with those answers; and no one arises to answer, and hardly even to notice, the criticisms of Islam and of all religion, advanced in modern times by the rationalist, the historian, the psychologist and the sociologist. Just as the nineteenth century orthodox Islam that refused to meet the charges of the Christians and the Western liberals, and attacked Sir Sayyid Ahmed and Amir Ali when

they did so, was a bulwark of social conservatism; so today that Islam which refuses to meet these modern charges can serve only socially reactionary groups".

What the Modern Man demands from the Followers of Islam

Islam has raised a number of questions in the mind of the modern man and he demands a convincing, scientific answer to them from the followers of Islam. Some of these questions are: Is it not true that matter is the Ultimate Reality of the universe and that spirit is but an emanation from matter at a particular stage of its development and complication? Is not religion a creation of economic circumstances and hence devoid of all worth or value of its own? Is not the economic factor of human life the determining force of history and religion one of the transitory phases or incidental bye-products of the historical process? Is not religion an abnormal outlet of a thwarted sex instinct or an obstructed impulse for power? Is it not an artificial imposition of a cruel society which expects the individual to conform to certain unnatural restrictions, known as moral principles, for its own safety? Is it not true that morality is a relative term and has a different import for different people and under different circumstances? Is prophetic experience or Divine revelation possible? Is not prophethood, if at all it is possible, a transitory phenomenon with no importance for the future of humanity? Is not the reason of man enough to guide him? Why should prophethood be necessary when man is already endowed with reason? If it is necessary why should it not continue till the end of the world? etc.

We have to discover an answer to these questions which is not only favourable to the fundamentals of Islam but also perfectly scientific, at least more scientific and more convincing than any answer which the followers of any of the other ideologies may have to give to them. The conscience of our community has vaguely realized that if we do not immediately produce such an answer, which will of course amount to a complete scientific interpretation of Islam, we cannot continue our existence as an ideological community. It is this fact that is at the bottom of their demand for Islamic research which we now find embodied in our Constitution.

A Characteristic of the Present Age

It is the age of intellectual ideologies. In this age the followers of all ideologies except those of Islam are busy defending themselves intellectually because they realize that to do so is essential for their political existence, in fact for their existence of any kind. Ideology which is in essence a vision, an intuition or a faith about the nature of man and universe is the one power that rules the life of the individual, the community and the state. If the ideology on which a state is based can be shown to be intellectually sound and rationally consistent, it is bound to have two results. First, it must increase the attachment of the individual to the state and thereby the solidarity and efficiency of the state to the highest possible extent. Secondly, it must create an increasing number of the supporters and helpers of the state outside its boundaries and thus extend continuously the sphere of its political influence. The greater the rational justification of an ideology, the greater its chance to spread over the earth and stay there. That is why the followers of every ideology feel the necessity to explain and interpret it rationally and scientifically. Communism, already claims to be a scientific ideology. National socialism of Hilter was put forward as a philosophy in *Mien Kampf*. It was a new application of the Hegelian idea of the state as a mystical being deserving unqualified allegiance and possessing absolute rights and powers. Fascism too derived a rational support from the philosophical system of the Italian philosopher Croce. Americans no longer believe that Democracy is merely a form of government. They believe and they have attempted to show in some of their latest publications, that it is a philosophy of life. The Indians claim that their state is based on the Gandhian ideology.

The Ultimate Philosophy of Man and Universe

An ideology may be wrong or right but to its lovers it is the sole truth in the world and the only view of man and universe which can be rationally established. When they try to interpret or or defend it intellectually, their aim is really to bring to light the only rational system in the universe which they believe to be latent in the nature of their ideology and cannot be found anywhere else. But it is evident that, since Truth is one, we can have only one philosophical system that is really correct and scientific and

not two or more. This means that in the race of ideologies for their own scientific interpretation only one ideology will succeed and that ideology will survive and dominate the world while all other ideologies will disappear. The surviving ideology will prove to be the ultimate philosophy of man and universe which has been the dream and search of all philosophers and scientists ever since the dawn of reason. There is every reason to believe that Islam is the only ideology that can lend itself to a really scientific interpretation as a view of the universe. But what have we done so far to show to the world that our conviction is well-founded? Our remissness in this matter has been made more serious by the fact that the followers of other ideologies have already done a lot to show to the world that their ideologies alone are scientific and the intelligentsia of the world including that of the Muslim world, the section of humanity and of the Muslim population that really matters, is rallying more and more to their side every day.

Islamic Research a Matter of Vital Importance

At this critical stage of our life, when we are facing a serious challenge to our existence from other ideologies, we can save ourselves as an ideological community only by producing a scientific interpretation of Islam. It is to this end that all organizations of Islamic research in this country, if they are worth their name, should converge their energies. There is no time to be lost. Procrastination has been the ruin of many a community in the past. Islamic research is not a luxury for us which we may indulge in at our convenience or leisure. It is a matter of life and death for us. If we fail to take it seriously at once we shall be courting certain extinction.

The Way to Save Ourselves from being Converted to Wrong Ideas

Ideas are a far greater force of conquest and subjugation in modern times than all the armaments combined. Since they can travel on the wireless they move faster than armaments. They can transcend geographical barriers and cross political boundaries without encountering any hindrance. Every state is an organized ideological community. An ideological community which does not endeavour to conquer other ideological communities with its ideas

runs the risk of being conquered by them itself and being wiped out of existence. In fact we are already on the way to our complete mental and psychological conquest by other ideas and hence our complete obliteration as Muslims, simply because we have abandoned the effort to win other people to our ideology. Outwardly we are still Muslims but inwardly most of us have lost our faith in Islam and have begun to like and love other ideologies at the expense of Islam.

To the extent to which our love for other ideologies is increasing, our faith in Islam is declining. Immorality, nepotism, corruption, self-seeking, favouritism, racialism, provincialism and all the evil practices that are spreading among us and of which some good people among us are always complaining, are but the symptoms of our declining faith. Another symptom of our dwindling faith is that we have lost a correct understanding of Islam and some of us who are as much the victims of the propaganda of other ideologies as any among us, have come forward to interpret Islam in their own way as if to help it out of its present difficulties. This has given rise to a number of conflicting interpretations of Islam and led to a further confusion and a further deterioration of our faith in Islam as it is known, on historical evidence, to have been understood and practised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his immediate followers. This state of things has made some sincere Muslims very anxious and they are making strenuous efforts to win the Muslims back to Islam by appealing to their faith in the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him). But in spite of these efforts the average Muslim is receding ever farther and farther away from Islam every day. Such efforts, based as they are on our ignorance of the difficulties of the Muslim disbeliever, indeed, can never be successful. For the Muslim who loses his faith in Islam borrows his ideas from other ideologies in the name of rationalism, knowledge, learning, science or philosophy. In order to win him back to Islam we must produce a suitable literature calculated to influence his tutor, the non-Muslim ideologist, in favour of Islam.

The Way to Win the non-Muslim to Islam

But the method of presenting Islam to a non-Muslim is far different from that we usually employ for bringing it home to a Muslim, for the simple reason that we have to proceed always

from the known to the unknown and the known of the non-Muslim is very different from the known of the Muslim. The Muslim knows that the Quran is a revealed book; the non-Muslim does not know it. The latter knows only the facts and laws of nature which he can discover as a result of his study of natural phenomena and we have to appeal to these facts and laws alone while calling him to Islam. This is not a new method of preaching Islam. This is indeed the method of the Holy Quran, which invites the disbelievers again and again to study the manifestations of nature and claims to be a divinely revealed book on the basis of facts that can be ascertained from that study.

The Quran in fact makes a prediction that the facts of nature relating to the external universe and to the human mind will be made known by the Creator in the near future in such an abundance that the disbelievers will be forced to realize the truth of the Quran. Taking a lead from the Quran through the Muslim scholars, who are recognized by all as the real inventors of the scientific method, man has been making a detailed and systematic study of the phenomena of nature since the advent of Islam. He has now accumulated a huge mass of facts about nature which he has classified in a number of systems known collectively as Science. The systems relating to facts about matter, animal and man (human mind) are known as Physics, Biology and Psychology respectively.

The Failure of the non-Muslim

Man has no doubt succeeded in collecting the facts of nature carefully and accurately but he has failed to understand the relation in which they stand to the nature of the Ultimate Reality and consequently to each other. That is why the diversity of his ideals, ideologies and philosophical systems still continues. For every philosophical system is an attempt to explain or establish the relation of the known scientific facts to the nature of Reality with which they have to be rationally consistent. It is in other words, the attempt to arrange scientific facts in a rational order. An ideal is a view of the nature of Reality and its characteristics. An ideology is a body of ideas, derived from an ideal, which may or may not be rationally ordered. A philosophical system is a rationally ordered body of facts derived from a vision of the nature of Reality.

The Method of the Philosopher

The philosopher has first of all an intuition, a vision or a faith about the nature of Reality (which may be inspired rightly or wrongly by the facts known to him) and then goes on to show its relation to facts, that is to rationalize his basic concept of the nature of Reality. When his intuition of Reality is wrong his rationalization is wrong and the rational arrangement or the intellectual system of his ideas is full of loopholes and discrepancies which he overlooks or attempts to conceal in his arguments. Such loopholes and discrepancies manifest themselves more prominently in the human and social sciences *i.e.*, Individual Psychology, Social Psychology, and the Philosophies of Politics, Ethics, Education, Art, Law and History, which are directly based on the philosopher's view of the nature of man and universe. That is why, as the scholars of the West themselves admit, there is a chaos in the social sciences as they are developed at present in the West, where a mechanical or materialistic outlook on life generally prevails among the philosophers of human activity.

On the other hand if the philosopher's intuition of Reality is correct, the result of his attempt to rationalize his intuition is that the whole body of scientific facts fall into a beautiful order and assume a perfect logical arrangement in a perfect rational system, free from all loopholes and discrepancies.

The Task before our Organizations of Islamic Research

The correct vision of Reality is that of the perfect Prophet or that of his sincere and devoted follower who takes it from the prophet by virtue of his devotion to him. The task before our organizations of Islamic research is to show to the world that all scientific facts at the physical, biological and psychological levels of existence are relevant only to the intuition of reality which the Quran creates. In this way the philosophical systems that bar the non-Muslim from coming over to Islam and steal quietly the faith of the Muslim believer will be shattered. The support of scientific facts will be taken away from them and made available to Islam. Hence these systems will become unconvincing, ineffective and useless and a new clean, correct and convincing philosophical system totally

favourable to Islām will emerge to take their place. That is how we can purge the existing mass of knowledge of its errors in the light of the Quran. That is how we can prove that the correct vision of Reality is that which is created by the Holy Quran. That is how we can start from the known of the non-Muslim — scientific facts — and bring him to his unknown — a faith in Islam, and that is how we can save the Muslim sceptic from going astray. That is how we can produce a scientific interpretation of Islam which we need for our very existence in this age.

When a scientific interpretation of Islam, which will be at the same time a scientific interpretation of man and universe, has actually emerged, it will provide us with a correct foundation for the re-organization of social sciences. It will enable us to give a lead to the social philosophers of the West in their effort — which has hitherto failed — of turning social sciences into real sciences. Indeed the work of our institutes of Islamic research will not be taken to have gone beyond its preliminary stages so long as they have not reconstructed Individual Psychology and Social Psychology and the Philosophies of Politics, Ethics, Education, Art, Economics, Law and History as parts of a single philosophical system of Islam. This is evidently a task which can engage a dozen scholars for a considerable number of years. This shows the extent and scope of the work that our institutes of Islamic research have before them.

A Biological Necessity

A scientific interpretation of Islam, I repeat, is a biological necessity for the Muslim community today and we can ignore it only at the penalty of death. It is said that offence is the best kind of defence. This is true as much of the battle a state has to fight on the ideological front as it is true of the battle it has to fight on the military front. If we do not open an ideological offensive soon enough we may have no ideology to defend, or at least find that the ideology we have to defend is not the same we had to defend some years ago. But we cannot open an ideological offensive unless we produce a scientific interpretation of Islam in the manner outlined above. In view of the urgency of the task we need to employ the services of our most powerful intellects for its speedy and successful accomplishment. All the funds that we can spare must be utilized

for this task and it should be the exclusive concern of those of our research scholars who can participate in it, for a considerable time to come. I do not mean that in the meantime we should stop Oriental research and mechanical Islamic research, but we should certainly confine Oriental research, whatever the title under which we may like to retain it in future, to the universities, as it can have nothing to do with our institutes of Islamic research.

The Place of Mechanical Islamic Research

As regards mechanical Islamic research it should be subordinated entirely to the needs of the original Islamic research and should be undertaken at the request of the Islamic research scholar engaged in original research in order to meet his requirements as they arise in the course of his work. We shall have to resort to mechanical Islamic research also when we proceed to translate the sacred books and books that embody their new scientific interpretation into other languages of the world, for the propagation of Islam. But it will indicate a serious lack of a sense of proportion on our part to concentrate on mechanical research on the sacred books, for its own sake, at a time when our faith in the sacred books is being itself shattered. It will be like taking pains to count accurately the number of persons in a sinking boat or to describe the colours of their clothes — during critical moments when everything could be done to save the boat itself — till the boat has actually sunk. An excellent index of the Holy Quran or a similar product of mechanical Islamic research, even if it is the precious result of years of hard labour on the part of a Muslim Orientalist, will be of no use to a Muslim who has lost his faith in Islam.

The Immediate Need of the Muslim Community

It is sometimes said that the crying need of the Muslim community at present is the formulation of a new legal system of Islam. But how can we have a new legal system of Islam unless we have first of all a correct understanding of Islam. We should first know the Islam from which we have to derive a new legal system. We Muslims are at present divided among us as regards the true interpretation of Islam and are giving a number of conflicting interpretations to it. When a scientific interpretation of Islam which can be only one and not many, becomes available, it will be not

only a complete refutation of all wrong ideologies and philosophies of the non-Muslim but also a complete refutation of the wrong interpretations of Islam given by those Muslims who have come forward to re-interpret Islam in order to give it a new appearance more acceptable to its modernized Muslim critics. A scientific interpretation of Islam is, therefore, the only basis on which we can build our legal system. In fact when a scientific interpretation of Islam has actually emerged we shall find that many of the problems of evolving a legal system of Islam are already solved and that the whole task has become very easy.

An Inopportune Attempt

At this stage of our life when our faith in Islam is again at the lowest ebb, any attempt to revise the legal system of Islam will be most inopportune. It will have the effect of spoiling rather than improving the existing laws of Islam. It is the light of faith and love alone that can guide the *Mujtahid* correctly on the path of *Ijtihad*. Where is that light to be found today? Not only a deep and prolonged study of the sacred books but also a complete submission to the moral and religious discipline of Islam is essential for the emergence of that light in its full brilliance. It is said that there is just now the need to change the social laws of Islam. But so long as we ignore and violate the strictly moral and religious laws of Islam, we cannot be expected to have much respect for its social laws too. So long, therefore, we cannot be in a position to judge accurately how the social laws of Islam ought to be changed or whether they ought to be changed at all.

The Real Ijtihad

A genuine *Ijtihad* is always the outcome of an intense love of Islam. In such a case it is a natural and spontaneous growth out of the Shariah as it was left to us by the Prophet and his companions. Our present desire for *Ijtihad* is not the outcome of a love for Islam; it is the outcome of a concealed hatred for it and a covert admiration for other ideologies. It is a desire to change the tenets of Islam to suit the ideas which we have borrowed from these ideologies and which we inwardly love and admire. It is an effort to equip Islam with the " wisdom " we have learnt from the lovers of other ideologies and to impart it with a new " beauty " and a new " grandeur "

we have conceived under their ideological leadership. It is not a genuine *Ijtihad*, not a natural and spontaneous growth out of the Shariah at all, but an alteration of the Shariah according to our whims, a replacement of Islam by other ideologies of our liking as much as possible. Genuine *Ijtihad* will become possible only when our love for Islam has risen again to its original heights and we have begun to understand the Shariah, as it was practised by the Prophet and his companions, in the light of that love once more. So long as that stage of our love has not reached again, we cannot have the insight to see whether there is really any change in the conditions of our society which makes the change of some of the laws of the Shariah necessary under the laws of the Shariah itself. If Hazrat-i-Umar had that insight it does not follow that we too have got it today in this age of general disbelief.

What the Existing Conditions of our Society really Demand

What appears to us to be a change in the conditions of the society calling for *Ijtihad* and change of laws, is really our moral deterioration, our love of alien ideologies and our hatred of the moral and religious discipline of Islam acting and reacting on each other. All these conditions are no more than symptoms of the loss of our faith in Islam. Our *Ijtihad* will not improve the situation but will make it worse. For it will lower still more the prestige of the Shariah and along with it that of Islam as a whole and thus lead to a further deterioration of our faith. That is why Iqbal expressed the view that in a period of decline it is far safer to follow in the footsteps of the bygones than to have resort to the *Ijtihad* of those who are devoid of the light of faith. The proper corrective for the conditions mentioned above is not to have new Islamic laws which can at the most determine our Islamic actions outwardly and artificially but rather a new Educational System of Islam which alone can be relied upon to alter the individual completely from within. It is hardly correct thinking to educate and train the individual to think and act in a manner that is un-Islamic and then to complain that he is not acting in the Islamic way and to enforce laws to impose an artificial check on his un-Islamic actions. Laws are meant to become active only where education has failed.

It is strange that we desire to alter the existing Islamic laws to improve the society superficially and artificially without first

making an effort to improve it really and basically by evolving and enforcing an Islamic System of Education. But the creation of an Islamic System of Education, which should not only be Islamic but also *perfectly scientific*, depends upon our producing a scientific interpretation of Islam, which, as we have seen above, is also the only possible basis for our legal system of the future. From every point of view, therefore, our immediate need is not altering the existing Islamic laws but regenerating our faith and regaining a correct understanding of our religion by creating a scientific interpretation of Islam.

A New Kind of Mechanical Research

The desire to change Islamic laws on the part of those who have lost their admiration for Islam to the advantage of other ideologies has resulted in a new kind of research which is wrongly imagined to be Islamic Research by many. To desire Islamic laws to change in the direction of alien ideologies and then to produce journalistic books by giving a new arrangement and a new language calculated to impart a new meaning favourable to this desire and at the end to give a new title to the research work of our ancient and modern scholars and even to the contents of our sacred books, is a mechanical book-making activity, undertaken with a special purpose, but not Islamic research at all. Its object is not to discover and explain the scientific foundations of Islam as it is, but to change it and bring it as close as possible to other ideologies for the satisfaction of their admirers, ignoring the fact that these ideologies are themselves transitory. It does not, therefore, need a high-standard modern academic equipment for its performance. Since the whole process of being converted to the view point of other ideologies, of serving them and getting others to serve them at the expense of Islam, is unconscious, those who are in it, imagine that they have acquired a unique understanding of Islam and are rendering an unprecedented service to its cause.

The Research of Ancient Muslim Scholars cannot Serve our Purpose

Some of us seem to think that the philosophy of Islam required in this age is already available to us in the writings of our great religious scholars of the past like Shah Wali Ullah, Imam-i-Gazali and others. It is a great mistake. The research work of these great

scholars, however valuable it may have been at its own time, cannot as it exists at present, avail us in the least in our effort to answer the intellectual challenge of this age which we alone can meet. The wrong philosophical ideas that we have to refute (*e.g.* Dialectical Materialism, Psycho-Analysis and Mechanical Evolution) are entirely new, being a product of the peculiar intellectual climate of this age. They were unknown to our great religious scholars and teachers of the past. It is, therefore, futile to expect to find their reply in the writings of these scholars. The challenge of each age is different and has to be met only by men who live in that age.

Moreover, as already stated, the task of the Islamic research scholar is not only to refute the incorrect philosophical ideas but also to make Islam intellectually stronger and more convincing and more attractive to others by explaining it in the light of the correct philosophical ideas of the age, which, by reason of their correctness, cannot but go in its favour. As the incorrect ideas of this age are peculiar to it so the correct ideas that have emerged in it are its special feature. The latter are embedded in the former as gems in a heap of rubbish. The new gems cannot be had unless the new rubbish is destroyed. We have to undertake Islamic research again in this age not only to destroy the new rubbish but also to take possession of the new gems that it contains.

Drawbacks of the Refutations of Wrong Ideas already Attempted in this Age

It may be said that the refutation of the philosophical ideas and systems of today has been already attempted by several scholars. But a common drawback of these refutations is that they do not answer all the questions that they raise and leave innumerable facts of existence unexplained and unrelated to the Quranic view of man and universe. They are not even based on a correct and sympathetic understanding of the view-point of our opponents. They, moreover, do not conform to the recognized intellectual standards of modern times and do not follow the accepted modern technique of philosophical reasoning and scientific exposition. The result is that they are unconvincing to the non-Muslim and hence utterly ineffective and useless. They are meant to please a section of the Muslims who are satisfied with the existing interpretation of Islam and consider it to be superior to all philosophies of the present or

future whether or not it can be proved to the full satisfaction of others. Nothing short of a complete philosophical system of Islam which fully recognizes and explains all the known facts of existence can be a complete and convincing refutation of the philosophical ideas that challenge the foundations of our religion today.

Educating for Islamic Research Essential

It may be argued that scholars like Shah Wali Ullah, Gazali and others mentioned above, who have produced an original and creative research work on Islam were special personalities who possessed extraordinary creative abilities for this kind of research and that it will not be possible for us to get high standard original research work, such as we need at present, artificially by engaging persons who lack naturally endowed creative abilities even if they happen to be our best intellects.

I submit in reply to this objection that in every society there is always a sufficient number of persons endowed with all sorts of capacities by nature, but generally their capacities remain dormant. They become manifest, even when they are badly needed by the society, only if their owner has the chance to live under a set of conditions which are particularly favourable for their full growth and expression. If we create such conditions for a number of our most powerful intellects we shall soon find that many of them are able to produce most easily and efficiently the sort of original and creative research work that we need.

Iqbal's Philosophy of the Self—the only Basis of Islamic Research in this Age

Secondly, we have already had among us a specially gifted person who has given us all the salient points of that scientific interpretation of Islam which we require at present. That person is Iqbal and that interpretation of Islam is the Philosophy of Self. All that we need to do now is to develop and elaborate these points and, to carry them to the end of their logical conclusions. If we do so we shall not only actualize the Philosophy of Self as a complete and coherent philosophical system recognizing and explaining all facts of existence, which potentially it is, but also provide a final refutation of all philosophical ideas inimical to Islam which are in existence today or may exist in future. The real task before us

is not, therefore, to create a scientific interpretation of Islam from the beginning but to develop and elaborate to the fullest extent a scientific interpretation of Islam which is already in existence. This task is relatively easy and does not require rare personalities for its accomplishment. It can be done by our best available intellects who have the necessary religious, moral and academic equipment.

Only One Philosophy of Islam is Possible

There can be only one modern philosophy that is based on the intuition or vision of Reality which the Holy Quran creates, and not two or more. In case we grant that Iqbal's Philosophy of the Self is that philosophy, as we in fact already do, it follows that no Islamic research proper (*i.e.*, a research which aims at the creation of a complete scientific interpretation of Islam) *not a single page of it*, is now possible outside the Philosophy of Self. This extremely important point is being sadly overlookled by our scholars of Islamic research at present.

I said above that the misfortune of the non-Muslim is that while a valuable mass of facts about nature is now available to him in the form of Science, he does not understand the relation in which they stand to the nature of Ultimate Reality. That relation can be only one and not two or more. To discover that one relation in its full details is to evolve a complete scientific interpretation of Islam. Hence the sort of Islamic research we need in this age can proceed only along a single straight line. That straight line was started by Iqbal and those who come after him have to draw it in the direction in which it is pointing. Indeed all knowledge develops along a single straight line. Discoveries or conclusions that deviate from that straight line are sooner or later discarded as baseless and wrong. Only that man can make a contribution to scientific knowledge who cares to know the point it has already reached, refutes successfully the portions of it that he believes to be wrong and substitutes those portions by new portions which are shown by him to consist of 'real' facts. This is, for example, how our knowledge of the atom has advanced. Supposing a scientist were to arise and write a book on the constitution of the atom today ignoring completely the important contributions of the last scientist to this branch of knowledge, his book will not be worth

much. He will appear to be a great atomic scholar to the ignorant but he will make himself ridiculous to those who happen to know the heights our knowledge of the atom has already achieved. Similarly the man who does not care to study and understand Iqbal's Philosophy of the Self or who, having understood it, ignores it without affirming or refuting portions of it with which he agrees or disagrees respectively, cannot contribute anything valuable to the development of a scientific interpretation of Islam. The product of his research will remain backward and hence worthless.

The Essential Qualifications of the Islamic Research Scholar

Since the object of Islamic research is to meet the challenge of wrong philosophical ideas to Islam, a knowledge of Philosophy and of the technique of philosophical reasoning will have to be taken as an essential part of the qualifications of an Islamic research scholar. In addition he must be conversant with the scientific method and have a general acquaintance with the recent advancements in the domains of Physics, Biology and Psychology along with their philosophical implications. This means that he must have some training in Science. He must also possess a first-rate knowledge of the Arabic language to enable him to have a direct access to the subject-matter of the sacred books. Another necessary qualification of the Islamic Research worker will be a religious trend of mind showing itself in a deep love for Islam and a willing submission to its moral and religious discipline.

A person who lacks the training and the acumen of the philosopher and a thorough knowledge of the philosophical and scientific ideas that have emerged up to date, will not be able to handle the work of Islamic research proper at all, although he may have a very good knowledge of the texts of the Holy Quran, Hadith and Fiqh and of all the books of our ancient scholars.

Of course, it will be difficult to find persons who possess all these qualifications up to the required extent from the very beginning. But we can expect that even if a person has each of these qualifications somewhat below the required level he will go on adding to them as he will proceed with his work till they reach the required standard in every respect. An exceptionally brilliant student of Philosophy and Arabic who is not less than thirty years of age,

who has a taste for the sciences, who has a deep love for Islam and is interested in Islamic research of the original and creative sort, will be ordinarily found to be a suitable person to take up the work of Islamic research, under the supervision of a competent guide. The quality of his work will depend very much on the quality of the guidance and training that he gets in the institutte where he works

The Points which must be Impressed on the Mind of the IslamicResearch Scholar

The institute of Islamic research where a research scholar is working will be expected to make him realize that for an efficient performance of his duties it will be necessary for him.

(1) To get himself fully acquainted with the spirit of the Holy Quran

In the absence of his acquaintance with the spirit of the Book it will not be possible for him to distinguish the wrong philosophical ideas from the right ones. The whole worth or value of his work will depend on his ability to make this distinction. Hence he will have to spend a good deal of his time in the study of the Holy Quran, and Hadith and the lives of the Prophet and his companions and of the scholars and saints of Islam.

(2) To develop a full acquaintance with the philosophical ideas at variance with the teachings of Islam which he has to refute.

For this purpose he will have to study the original sources of these ideas with a sympathetic attitude of mind to begin with. We cannot understand the thoughts of a great philosopher if we study him with a prejudiced mind and if we cannot understand him we cannot refute him.

(3) To develop a complete acquaintance with the scientific and philosophical ideas that have emerged so far.

(4) To address his writings *mentally* to the top-most non-Muslim intellectuals of the world so that he is able to make a strictly scientific and unbiased approach to the problems he is handling.

(5) To endeavour to put a correct idea in place of the wrong idea that he is refuting and to answer in detail all questions raised by the new correct idea he is offering. A negative approach to philosophical problems can never create a conviction.

This means that he will not be able to refute a wrong philosophical idea without creating a complete philosophy of the universe especially when that wrong idea already belongs to another philosophy of the universe. For example, it will not be possible for him to refute the Marxian philosophy of History, till he has produced another more scientific philosophy of History which is consistent with the teachings of Islam. His Islamic philosophy of History will then raise a number of questions which will take him into other departments of Philosophy, and if he answers them too, as he must, his philosophy of History will develop into (P) a complete Philosophy of the Universe. Similarly it will not be possible for him to refute the theory of Mechanical Evolution without giving an alternative theory of evolution which is consistent with the Quranic theory of the universe. The Quranic theory of evolution too will raise a number of questions whose answer will also constitute (Q) a complete Philosophy of the Universe.

(6) Not to declare as wrong while refuting a particular wrong idea those philosophical ideas which he had put forward as correct ideas while refuting another wrong idea previously. Similarly he should not put forward as true, while refuting a particular wrong idea, those philosophical ideas which he had declared as wrong while refuting another wrong idea in the past. On the other hand he should stick to his original position in each case. This means that he should take a position with respect to the correctness and incorrectness of an idea to which he can adhere all the time. This implies again that his refutation of different philosophical theories or ideas will be correct and successful only if he employs a single comprehensive philosophical system for the

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refutation of all of them. Thus, philosophical systems mentioned under (P) and (Q) in paragraph (5) above must be identical. That comprehensive philosophical system which may be the final refutation of all wrong ideas can be built only out of Iqbal's Philosophy of the Self, the modern philosophy of the Holy Quran in which all previous philosophies of the Holy Quran, in fact all philosophies of the universe advanced so far, have potentially achieved their culmination and perfection.

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