

CHAPTER SEVEN

Neo-Kalām: A Possible Transformation of Traditional Islamic Thought

Equipped with penetrative thought and fresh experience the world of Islam should courageously proceed to the work of reconstruction before them. This work of reconstruction, however, has a far more serious aspect than mere adjustment to modern conditions of life.

Muhammad Iqbal

IN THE INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER to this volume, I presented the basic doctrines upon which the views of Islamic *kalām* with respect to the natural world are based. Those doctrines I have called the “principles of *daqīq al-kalām*”. For a long time, these principles contradicted the philosophical substratum of classical physics—the pre-twentieth century physics and classical cosmology—namely, the notion of an eternal universe and the concept of deterministic nature. To the contrary, such principles are now found to be in agreement with the spirit of the basic concepts and views of modern physics, namely, relativity and quantum physics. As there is no recognizable philosophy of modern physics, the principles of *kalām* might be eligible to present a foundation for a new full-fledged philosophy of modern natural sciences.

In the five chapters that followed the introduction of the principles of *daqīq al-kalām*, I have presented a few examples of applications of those principles in an endeavor to show their strength in presenting sound arguments on current issues in science and religion debates. Five topics were discussed: law and order in the universe, causality, divine action, space and time, and finally, in the previous chapter, I have given examples of arguments presented by al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd on the size of the universe and the fate of the Sun.

Living in a world where the value of science is becoming more and more relevant for societal as well as individual progress, it becomes a rather important

task to revive a rational approach and to try to realize a scientifically viable system of thought in the organization of modern Islamic thinking. Thus, we now need to discuss the possibility for such a venture to be realized in a practical program that may substantially contribute to transforming Islamic thought and successfully accomplishing a realm of new ideas and directions. The aim is to establish a systematic approach that may lead to a reformulation of current theology and the interpretations of the truth of Islam. Such a transformation is surely necessary for any reformulation that aims at modernizing scholastic thinking, as well as that of the wider public, and at a more lucid involvement in the modern world. Despite the great cultural wealth of Islam, the Islamic world, and particularly the Arab world, is very late in pursuing a proper approach to modern life and civilization. This goal might appear to be a sort of wishful thinking, but history of thought tells us that many revolutionary ideas started out as dreams, later culminating in real movements and achieving profound transformation. In this chapter, I will glimpse at the possibilities for *daqīq al-kalām* to provide a philosophical basis for a new *kalām*, one which will in turn constitute the “mother theory” for developing a transformation in Sharia law and in Islamic thought in general.

For any dream to turn into reality, the obstacles hindering its realization have to be identified accurately and the work needed to remove those obstacles should be performed by proper and efficient means. The main impediment to realizing a transformation of Islamic thought into a new era lies in the fact that the traditional teachings are now many centuries old. These old teachings are persistent, almost rooted in the Islamic subconscious, despite the fact that the whole world has changed. In many cases, these teachings may not reflect the true facts of Islam, but are a sort of ideology that was adopted by religious clerics under the influence of the ruling regimes only to later become a fundamental part of public beliefs. That ideology belongs to age-old concepts, interpretations, and methodologies that are no longer relevant in our modern time. Accordingly, a refreshing of Islamic thought is strongly needed at this stage in the world’s development in order to enable Muslims to contribute positively to the progress of mankind.

Islam has its own character and the good thing about the legacy of Islam is that its main authentic sources are available and have been preserved, in many cases, with a high degree of authenticity. The teachings of the Qur’an and the narrations of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) contain great value that humanity should not miss out on. However, those teachings of the Qur’an and the hadiths have suffered in some cases, throughout the history of Islam, from misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and from the wrong implementation.

The present task for Muslim scholars and public leadership is to reconsider the facts of Islam from its original sources and to formulate a system of thought that can serve to develop Islamic society in order to achieve real progress and improvement. The understanding of the basic tenets of Islam has to be renewed and, instead of employing age-old methodologies, we need to grasp those original tenets within a framework which is compatible with the original aims of the Islamic message. This message is summarized in the verse which says, “We have not sent you (Muhammad) except as a mercy for all mankind” (Qur’an 21:107). So, let us revive this concept of mercy and apply it to all of humanity so that Islam is used to achieve this goal and not as an ideology for terror and war.

Violence and Islam

The incidents of international violence that have been carried out during the last two decades by some groups who claim their acts as a defense of the Muslim nation have left severe scars on international geopolitics and have caused a retaliation that went far beyond the need to suppress those isolated fanatical movements. Two major Islamic countries (Afghanistan and Iraq) have been destroyed and left in wreckage with their people left divided and immersed in bloodshed. Other Muslim countries have also been badly affected by the new strategies of the West and its impositions of security requirements that contribute more and more to setting back public opinion of Muslims, breeding hatred, and culminating in an unbalanced “clash of civilizations”, instead of a dialogue of civilizations. The bad traits of both sides, the Western imperialism and the Islamic dogma, have dominated. Those strategies can by no means lead to peace and prosperity in the world.

In an essay, Abdal Hakim Murad (Tim Winter)¹ has blamed Western post-modernism and so-called Qutbism (after Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian Islamic activist) for generating such a criminal reaction as suicide bombing. But, one should not underestimate the serious effect of the cultural background that contributes to this attitude among terrorist groups. The misinterpretation of some traditional Islamic beliefs about life and people who subscribe to other faiths, and the misconception that the vicious acts of suicide bombers are the honorable acts of martyrs, which will be rewarded with a joyful life after death, are all to blame too. There are many absurdities that have been planted in the minds of people belonging to certain cultures that would encourage terrorist acts provoked by the suffering of those people as a result of the aggression of Western powers. In many cases, people, whether in the West or the East, are driven by influential ideologies that go beyond reason. These acts have been experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq. Innocent people

in those invaded countries were brutally tortured, raped, and beaten to death for no reason other than a hatred implanted by ideologies. The sectarianism that became embedded in Iraq following the American invasion has caused continuous bloodshed between Sunni and Shi'i. At the moment, this conflict could expand into a third world war in the Islamic world. The damage and severe wounds caused to Iraqi society might need many decades to heal. For this purpose, the peoples of the West and the East are required to do their homework, to revitalize the good tenets found in their cultures, and to bring into action the good of their respective traditions and spirits.

The value of human life as defined in the Qur'an is very high; it is clearly stated that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all of mankind (5:32). It is a dogmatic and incorrect understanding of Islam, and miseducation in religious concepts by some sects, that has produced such an ugly ideology which degrades the value of someone who does not subscribe to Islamic belief. Furthermore, this backward ideology and prevailing misinterpretation of the truth of Islam are compounding a situation of underdeveloped societies ruled by ruthless dictators and religious dogma. For this reason, a reformation of Islamic thought becomes a strongly needed goal in order to achieve a transformed way of thinking that may help Muslim societies to deal with their problems reasonably and efficiently. However, there are several serious obstacles that may hinder the transformation process. I can identify here the following:

(1) The consideration of the hadiths (alongside the Qur'an) as a prime source for Islamic beliefs and the deduction of Sharia law without taking into consideration the historical circumstances surrounding them or the fact that they were narrated during ideal conditions at the time of the Prophet. No one seems to pay attention to the fact that the approved sources of the hadiths, in the official collections, were chosen selectively on ideological grounds in many cases.

(2) The assumption that the best understanding of Islam was only achieved in the remote past by our predecessors (the Salaf) and that our understanding in the present day cannot supersede that, irrespective of the advancement in our knowledge of the world compared with that of the Salaf.²

(3) The assumption that the optimum interpretations and commentaries of the Qur'an were given by the Salaf and that they cannot be replaced by any better understanding, despite the fact that the available traditional interpretations of some verses of the Qur'an are actually in disagreement with the literal meaning of the Arabic.

(4) The domination of the narrated texts and thoughts over rational facts in the mentality of most Muslims. These narrations have been given sacred

status, despite the fact that most of them do not enjoy enough authenticity to be part of the true legacy of the Prophet. As such, this deeply rooted method of dealing with religious matters will present the biggest stumbling block in achieving a successful transformation in Islamic thought.

It was very depressing for me to find that one of my students had decided to leave the astronomy course that he had been so keenly attending at first, because he suspected that modern astronomy might corrupt his religious beliefs. This student was studying Islamic Sharia, for whom the course was originally intended. The problem is that a backward way of teaching, along the lines mentioned above, persists among many religious leaders, especially in Saudi Arabia.

In physics, the inertia of a body prevents any change, whether in a state of rest or of motion. Similarly, any transformation of thought within a society can be expected to find some natural resistance to change. Yet, in the realm of thought, two factors are at play: the *inertia* and the *means*. The resistance to change will surely be greater if new ideas are introduced from external or alien sources. This might explain why Greek philosophy did not flourish in Muslim societies and why it was soon confined to small circles once al-Ghazālī had presented his arguments refuting the philosophical approach, using the doctrines of *kalām* as a rival to philosophy. This historical example is very important, since it teaches us many lessons. It was not the genius of al-Ghazālī alone which defeated philosophy in the Islamic world, but it was the fact that its rival, *kalām*, was far more in harmony with the Islamic mind than the doctrines of Aristotle. From this example we can learn that the chance of success is much greater for a change in thought when it is initiated from within that mindset and culture itself. On the other hand, we also learn from the rise and the downfall of *kalām* that, when religiously structured thoughts turn to politics, they are deemed to fail because of the genuine difference between the tactics required by politics and the strategies assumed by religion. It is known that *kalām* was initially considered to be a novel and genuine Islamic trend of thought by which the basic doctrines of creed were rationally understood. This is why originally *kalām* was considered to be one of the two pillars of Islamic thought: *uṣūl al-dīn*, by which the fundamentals of belief are justified, complemented by *uṣūl al-fiqh*, by which Sharia laws are deduced. However, once *kalām* became the subject of political aggravation, it lost its popularity and was discarded by the public as well as by successive rulers and jurists who suffered as a result of the political imposition of *jalīl al-kalām* deductions. Consequently, *kalām* was deserted and the wealth of *daḥīq al-kalām* passed away with the junk of the *jalīl*.

I should stress again that social systems are different from physical systems, in that they require change to come from a force within and not from the outside. A change which is externally imposed may cause a reaction, not an interaction. This might explain why Western influence on Islamic societies over the last two centuries, intending to bring about modernization and a transfer of thought, has failed. The failure of Napoleon's campaign in Egypt and Syria is just one example. Despite employing the best intellects of France, wearing the Islamic turban, and coordinating with prominent clerics, Napoleon failed to buy the cooperation of the Egyptians. Many other attempts had a similar fate, because they were trying to impose rules and lifestyles which were incompatible with the traditions of the society. For a change to take place in a society, one needs to see interaction, not reaction. For this reason, a successful transformation of Muslim society must be brought about from within the Islamic tradition itself, not from outside.

Historical Attempts

For historical reasons related to the clash between the fundamentalist theologians and the Mu'tazila, the exchange of *kalām* arguments was prohibited by the state at the beginning of the eleventh century. The Abbasid Caliph al-Qādir Billāh (r. 991–1031) issued an edict historically known as the Qādirī document, by which he defined the basics of Islamic belief and asked the nation to follow them. The statement warned that those who did not abide by its stipulations would face severe punishment. A look at the prevailing circumstances at that time shows that this statement targeted several social and religious issues. On the one hand, it was aimed at ending the social unrest brought about by the spreading argument between Mu'tazili and Sunni theologians (the Ash'aris); such argumentation developed into clashes at certain incidents, including the mutual accusation of deceit and *kufr* between the two sides. The second aim was to reorganize Islamic theological trends into a well-defined mainstream and thereby avoid much of the confusion and deviation that took Islamic beliefs far away from the original Qur'anic stipulations and the teachings of the Prophet. Yet, this historic move by Caliph al-Qādir resulted in some undesirable consequences for Islamic theology and Islamic thought in general. The main effect was causing a setback for the rational trend in Islam. This resulted in inhibiting innovative thinking and confined intellectual achievement to certain stagnated venues. Consequently, much of the intellectual work produced during the period that followed was mainly concerned with revisions and commentaries of old manuscripts. Although the Qādirī document, as it is known, was a good move intended to restore social peace and to align the abundance of thoughts, it was also a victory for

dogma and resulted in spreading a state-designed “formal Islam”, one very much limited to the narrated basic principles and the old literal commentaries of the Qur’an that are engulfed in old understanding and interpretation. This resulted in a state of stagnation developing over a very long time, and which has been the dominating influence on Islamic thought until now. It is known that the Qādirī document was formulated by Hanbali advisers in the Caliph’s court, which is why most public belief moved in this direction from then on.

Although the Qādirī document adopted by successive governments was very much in conformity with Hanbali attitudes, nevertheless they could not predominate in the Islamic world because of the much stronger positions held by the Hanafis and Shafī‘is. The Sufi groups were much more acceptable to people and consequently the Sufi outlook was more dominant during the twelfth century and the centuries that followed. The Sufi approach went to extremes in terms of spiritual practice, to the extent of deviating from basic Islamic teachings, and went on to be much disfavored by the traditional clergy until Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) was able to establish a philosophical base and scholastic curricula for a more radical Sunni Islam. The teaching of this cleric gradually became the predominant faith in the Middle East and North Africa. But, as the ordinary people of urban regions like to live life in a more practical manner, their religious practices became much more lenient. This brought back traditional Islamic trends with a Sufi touch into the lives of people in the Middle East, mainly in Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula (now Saudi Arabia). The movement of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703–92) was launched in collaboration with a local ruler of the region of Najd in the Arabian Peninsula. This collaboration resulted in the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which adopted the Wahhabi understanding of Islam.

The Western Renaissance, the scientific revolution, and the transformation of thought which took place in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became the subject of long debates among Muslim elites. The aim was to assess such a change and to decide how to react to the consequent Western influence. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, efforts by some learned Muslim scholars were made to understand the change that was taking place in the West. Muḥammad ‘Alī (1769–1849), the famous ruler of Egypt, sent forty students to study in France. Some important books on topics of literature, natural sciences, and philosophy were translated. In order to be able to compete with the West, Muslim scholars began to examine Islamic disciplines and question their methods. New Qur’anic exegesis dealing with those verses that have scientific relevance appeared. An example of this is Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī’s commentary of the Qur’an called *al-Jawāhir*. Islamic law

codification according to modern civil law took place and in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) some new studies appeared. The idea of revitalizing Islamic *kalām* came up and some Muslim scholars found that *kalām* would be the best framework through which to achieve a major transformation in the mentalities and lives of Muslims all over the world. Most of these scholars realized that *kalām* provides the basis for an original Islamic methodology that can preserve the basics of Islamic belief and at the same time enable the assessment, evaluation, and adoption of rational trends in Islamic thought. Yet, these scholars realized that the “old *kalām*” would be inadequate to achieve a transformation in Islamic thought and Muslim society toward the new era of modern scientific and philosophical achievements. Sait Özerverli³ has written a good review of the attempts to revitalize *kalām*; here, I will give a short summary of the views that were presented by some of those scholars.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a number of Muslim scholars expressed their hopes of revitalizing Islamic *kalām* in order to address current issues of Islamic life. Works under such titles as *‘Ilm al-kalām al-jadīd* (in Arabic and Persian) and *Yeni ‘ilm-i kalām* (in Ottoman Turkish) were used to propose this revitalization. In Ottoman Turkey, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Ḥarpūtī (1842–1916), who was a professor of *kalām* in Darülfünun (now Istanbul University), wrote a book on the history of *kalām* in which he suggested revising the old *kalām*:

Just as early *mutakallimūn* reacted to Aristotelian philosophy selectively, today’s *mutakallimūn* should study modern thoughts accurately and choose according to Islamic principles what is necessary from them so that a new contemporary *ilm-i kalām* can be established.⁴

Clearly, with these words Ḥarpūtī has identified his approach and suggested that Muslims should deal with modern thoughts selectively. This kind of approach might not lead to a generative system of thought unless originally based on a theory of *kalām* that provides the infrastructure according to which we can make our selections.

İsmā‘īl Haḳḳī İzmīrlī (1868–1946) contributed substantially to attempts to revitalize *kalām*. He wrote a book entitled *Yeni ‘ilm-i kalām* (*New science of kalām*) in which he set out a plan to revise Islamic theology. According to İzmīrlī, al-Bāqillānī’s *kalām* was replaced by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s because of its inadequacy, but now al-Rāzī’s *kalām* has become inadequate and should too be replaced, since it no longer meets the needs at our modern age. To him, post-Ghazālī *kalām* depended on Aristotelian philosophy and the emergence of new problems has made it necessary for Muslim scholars to develop a new *kalām* based on contemporary needs and more in harmony

with philosophy. İzmirlî argued that our formal theology (in Ottoman, *resmî ʿilm-i kalām*) has lost its scientific foundations. Thus, it should change to be in conformity with new philosophical theories and develop in accordance with the needs of the age.⁵ The basic thesis of İzmirlî's proposal was classical philosophy's loss of validity over the preceding three centuries. Since the Islamic message needs to be understood by earlier and later generations, an outdated scholastic method should not be used to explain its doctrines. So, in his *Yeni ʿilm-i kalām*, he considered scientific methodology and employed both formal and modern logic. Yet he did not include natural sciences in his book in order to avoid complexity and turning it into philosophy. According to him, Muslim theologians ought to approach modern thought carefully and adopt suitable new methods, while refusing the methodological premises of the classical Muslim theologians. He concluded by suggesting that, if a change does not occur in Islamic theology, the Islamic message will not satisfy people intellectually.

In Egypt, the forerunner for the revitalization of *kalām* was the famous Imam Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905). On criticizing the *kalām* studies of his time, ʿAbduh stressed that only a few scholars had access to the books written by the great early theologians such as al-Ashʿarī, al-Māturīdī, al-Bāqillānī, or al-Isfarāʾīnī; students of *kalām*, he said, read only much later books by post-Ghazālī theologians:

Those studying *kalām* were not dealing with problems of theology but were only working on understanding, with difficulty, the literal meaning of hard formulations within the text. In other words they were summarizing passages without any real ability to distinguish between correct and incorrect information.⁶

ʿAbduh correctly recognized that reading textbooks alone was not enough for those who wanted to be theologians, because, he said, the science of *kalām* is clearly related to the observation of nature and is based on well-established logical arguments. ʿAbduh also accused post-Ghazālī theologians of accepting the philosophical doctrines of their age without really examining their validity and accuracy.

Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī (1875–1954) followed ʿAbduh in his trend of seeing the harmony between science and religion and also tried to open the way for changes in *kalām*. Through his numerous writings, he strongly resisted the ideas imbued in Western materialism. He wrote his book *al-Islām fī ʿaṣr al-ʿilm* (*Islam in the age of science*) in order to defend the claim that Islam was not an obstacle to science, but rather a supporter and advocate of science; in it he stressed that in scientific discoveries and rational truths there would be nothing to oppose Islamic principles, and he strived in his book to show this.

In India, perhaps it was Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–98) who first used the concept of a “new *kalām*”. According to Khan, to merely claim that Islam is not contradictory to science is not satisfactory at all. Therefore, he proposed a new *‘ilm al-kalām* based on a modern methodology:

Today we need, as in former days, a modern *ilm al-kalām* by which to either render futile the tenets of modern science or [show them to be] doubtful, or bring them into harmony with the doctrines of Islam.⁷

Shiblī Nu‘mānī (1857–1914), a disciple of Khan, stressed the need for a new *kalām* with his book *‘Ilm al-kalām*,⁸ which he wrote in a style different from the traditional books, criticizing the use of lengthy introductions concerned with logical terms and philosophical details. Instead, he argued that an author of *kalām* must aim at a simple and clear style of explanation to satisfy both the heart and mind. Shiblī argued that, since *kalām* is a methodological science that attempts to define and explain Islamic doctrine, not only must late Ash‘ari theologians such as al-Ghazālī or al-Rāzī be seen as theologians (*mutakallimūn*), but also Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) and other Sufi philosophers who presented Islam in a spiritual method. Shiblī insisted that the *kalām* books written in his time, especially in India, Egypt, and Syria, were not in accordance with the needs of the age because some of them were based on the post-Ghazālī method while others were only copies of Western philosophical thought. It is important to note that Shiblī did not support the abdication of the historical, ethical, and social legacies of religion in general, nor of Islam in particular, in contemporary studies. In his “new *kalām*”, Shiblī suggested that some of the traditional topics, such as the creation of the Qur’an, whether the attributes of God are part of His essence, and whether human action affects belief or not, should be avoided. Shiblī criticized Ash‘aris for not having emphasized the role of reason sufficiently and for denying deterministic causality. Instead, he adopted the scientific findings and mechanistic determinism of the philosophy of classical physics.

Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) wrote in his famous book *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* that the Qur’an accepts changes in life and supports experimentation and observation over logical reasoning. Iqbal proposed that future theologians of Islam should recognize old concepts and theories, such as those related to atoms and indeterminacy, in order to bring *kalām* and modern science more in line with each other. This is the point where Iqbal’s wish meets my aim of revitalizing *daqīq al-kalām*. Obviously, Iqbal was aware of Einstein’s theory of relativity and the studies of atomic structure that brought forth criticism of causality. Therefore, his conjecture

was surely based on the findings of modern physics, even though he was not a specialized physicist.

Transformation from Within

During the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, there were several attempts to transform Islamic society. Many modern thinkers tried to propose revisions to the systems of thought and called for modernization. A wide spectrum of reformists and movements suggested changes to the structure of Islamic thought; these can be classified in three categories:

(1) *The Salafi Movements*. These movements claim the adoption of the traditional teachings of Islam as narrated by the Prophet and his followers. The basic trend is to follow the main sources of Sharia represented by the Qur'an and the hadiths. This includes the Wahhabi movement originated by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, which called upon Muslims to negate Sufi beliefs and practices (mysticism) and to give up subscription to traditional Sunni religious authorities (*taqlīd*), namely the Maliki, Hanafi, Shafʿī, and Hanbali schools. However, Salafi movements constitute a wide spectrum of ideologies; some have even adopted elements of Sufi tradition, such as the Mahdī movement in Sudan and the Sanussi movement in Libya. The Muslim Brotherhood movement, which was founded by Ḥasan al-Bannāʾ (1906–49), is one variant of a modernized Salafi movement.

(2) *The Liberal Movements*. This includes the attempts of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–97) in Egypt and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1855–1902) in Syria and Egypt to establish a new orientation for Islamic thought by which Muslims would deal with the Western civilization selectively to adopt the achievements and ideas which did not contradict the original teachings of Islam. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, a cleric and a disciple of al-Afghānī, along with Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935) and Muṣṭafá ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1885–1947), continued on the same line, but was not able to have much influence on the traditional approach to Sharia. The reason for the poor influence of these movements, in my opinion, lies in the fact that they could not propose a consistent view and methodology in the form of a general theory to deal with the legacy of Islam. Most of their proposals were scattered calls for the introduction of rational thinking and employing scientific methodologies without suggesting a new system of thought. ʿAbduh and his followers were accused by traditionalists as being members of a Masonic group, which badly affected their reputations.

(3) *The Secular Movements*. During the last few decades, some scholars have tried to introduce new methodologies in studying the Qur'an. These methodologies are based on Western theories in linguistics and hermeneutics. The

famous names of these scholars include Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973), Amīn al-Khūlī (1895–1966), and Salāma Mūsá (1887–1958). More recently, Muslim scholars such as Mohammed Arkoun (1928–2010), Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (1943–2010), Tayeb Tizini (1934–), and Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī (1936–2010) critically discussed Islamic thought and proposed revisions of the old views. These attempts could not achieve much influence in the Islamic world for one good reason—that its frame of reference was in Western philosophies and methodologies—and this is a very sensitive point when it comes to studies related to the Qur’an or the Sharia. In addition, their arguments were not convincing, as they seem to have ignored some of the basics of Islamic belief, dealing with the Qur’an independently of any consideration of its divine source. These strategies are deemed to fail in influencing Islamic thought and mentality.

Targeting the need to establish a methodology for a new understanding of the Qur’an, a Syrian engineer called Muḥammad Shahrūr published a book in 1990 under the title *al-Kitāb wa al-Qur’ān*. In this book, Shahrūr tried to identify the differences between some terms which are usually considered synonymous, such as *al-kitāb*, *al-furqān*, and *al-qur’ān*, with several other terms which he considered from a linguistic perspective. However, he did not seem to be consistent in his methodology, as he made selective choices of the terms as they had been written in the Qur’an. It is unfortunate that his work has mistakenly been considered by some authors to be a “highly original book”⁹ and was praised by Western authors, when a closer look at the details of his work shows that most of his analyses are flawed and most of his conclusions are wrong. In this respect, Shahrūr is a layman in Arabic linguistics, as he has misunderstood expressions to have different meanings in different parts of the Qur’an, whereas those different terms are actually describing the same things by their different aspects. The Qur’an is a *qur’ān* (recitation), as it is a sacred readable text, and it is a *kitāb* (book), as it contains stipulations (orders) of the Sharia, and it is a *furqān*, as it separates truth from mendacity. As far as I can see, Shahrūr’s unfounded claims and superficial interpretations will quickly disappear despite the support and propaganda provided to his books.

Islamization of Knowledge

The “Islamization of knowledge” is a phrase which describes attempts and approaches to recast various fields of modern thought in an Islamic perspective. The claim is that modern knowledge in the social, political, and natural sciences is cast in a Western mold based on materialistic perspectives and that it serves interests which are far from Islamic tenets. This goal was announced

in the First Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977, where it was said that, “The task before us is to recast the whole legacy of human knowledge from the standpoint of Islam. In concrete terms, we must Islamize the disciplines in accordance with the Islamic vision”.¹⁰ This announcement did not gain much momentum, despite the great efforts made by the conveners of that conference, namely, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1931–) and Isma‘īl al-Farūqī (1921–86), who were very enthusiastic about the project. Later, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) was established to implement such aims, but unfortunately no clear working methodology is known, other than wishful thinking, for the declared goals of the Islamization of knowledge.

The reason, I find, for the failure of the Islamization of knowledge proposal was its lack of a philosophical basis. Beautiful dreams and passionate aims, though necessary, cannot guarantee success in such cases. The Islamization proposal did not have the profound vision by which intellectuals can be nucleated to work on a genuinely innovative program that achieves its aims. This is why the conference was no more than a debate between conflicting views which could not find common ground, except in the aim of revitalizing the role of the Muslim nation (*umma*) within contemporary international civilization.

The system of knowledge is like a tree; we see the colorful and beautiful symmetrical upper part, but we do not pay much attention to the lower parts, the roots, which are necessary for the sustainment of the tree’s life. Likewise, some Muslims look at the deeds of Islam and the social impact that it could have once adopted in the life of individuals and societies and they become eager to implement these ideals without nourishing the roots of these deeds.

Renowned characters such as Professor Abdus Salam, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Ziauddin Sardar objected, at least partially, to the concept and the suggested methodology. I would agree with the late Professor Abdus Salam in identifying science as being an outcome which is independent of any religion or belief. It is the implementation of science and its application which might be tinged with special religious and philosophical beliefs. However, when we analyze the philosophical basis of certain scientific assumptions, we may find that there is a kind of character within those assumptions that subscribes to certain beliefs. This might be clear in social sciences, as they involve many assumptions and analyses which depend on underplaying philosophies and views; nonetheless, one can find examples from natural sciences too. For example, to assume that the universe is eternal embeds the assumption that there is no creator or that God is the universe itself. That is why Stephen Hawking questioned the place for the creator once he found that the universe

is non-singular (has no beginning) in time. In another example, to assume that the laws of nature work independently would be eliminating divine action, except, perhaps, for coordinating the action of such laws. Nevertheless, a theist science need not enroll divine action in every step of natural processes, it suffices to assume that necessity is at play with the available possibilities and that the outcome of the action of natural laws is indeterministic. To summarize, I would say that introducing Islamic tenets into science can be made possible if an underlying philosophy is found to furnish a background for the views. In this case, *daqīq al-kalām* is qualified to play such a role. Problems in natural as well as social sciences and the arts can be analyzed, studied, and interpreted in the light of the principles of *daqīq al-kalām*. Accordingly, a wealth of knowledge that has a common and consistent basis might be formed, which will then constitute a coherent knowledge that reflects an Islamic contribution to civilization.

Obviously, science and scientific knowledge is not an ideology and should not be set in ideological molds, whether Marxist, Islamic, or otherwise. Knowledge should satisfy four basic requirements to be called “scientific”: it should be explanatory, consistent, verifiable (or falsifiable), and predictive. Knowledge that does not explain anything or is in self-contradiction, or is not verifiable, cannot be called “scientific knowledge”. On the other hand, predictability is a strong element in any theory, as it can be used as a direct means of verification. Accordingly, the “Islamization of knowledge” should contribute to the meaningful content of scientific knowledge and enhance one or more of the elements in its structure, otherwise it would be a useless exercise sought in vain.

The Scientific Miracle of the Qur’an

Faced with advancements in science and technology, some Muslim intellectuals rediscovered the Qur’an through verses which point to natural phenomena and events. These intellectuals tried to give a modern scientific interpretation for those sacred verses, claiming that the Qur’an had predicted these discoveries fourteen centuries ago, an observation which they called the “scientific miracle of the Qur’an”. In many cases, these attempts at interpretation were performed by unspecialized people who had only a vague understanding of scientific truth. Consequently, they made mistakes in representing scientific facts and, in some cases, they presented pseudoscience.

From an Islamic point of view, the Qur’an is the word of Allah, revealed from the divine knowledge and cast into Arabic. Since Arabic words, like in any other language, are meaningfully limited, this allows for interpretation within the available meanings of the words. For this reason, the wording of

some verses might seem obscure and might allow for different interpretations. This is what made different exegeses of the Qur'an possible in the first place. Synonyms of the same word may bear different meanings and these meanings can only be studied within the context of the subject matter of the verse. For this reason, the possible meanings of a verse are not open to random interpretation, but are constrained by several factors, most important of which is lingual consistency and internal uniformity. Lingual consistency might be easily achieved through the wide spectrum of synonyms available in Arabic, but internal uniformity is more difficult to achieve; for this task, we need to look throughout the Qur'an for all those verses containing the same word. For example, the word "heaven" is mentioned 120 times in the Qur'an and points to several different meanings, including clouds, and the word "heavens" appears in the Qur'an 190 times. A study aimed at finding the astronomical designation for these two words has concluded that, while the word "heaven" (singular) can be understood as pointing to a few different meanings, the word "heavens" (plural) is obscure and cannot be taken to point to any limited set of terms that we can designate in our current knowledge of astronomy or cosmology.¹¹

But, does the Qur'an contain scientific miracles? That is to say, does the Qur'an contain descriptions which point to scientifically meaningful knowledge? According to Islamic belief, the Qur'an is a miracle by its own merits; it is the word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad with a divine choice of words. It was narrated by the Prophet and written under his supervision. So, when in certain verses the Qur'an describes natural phenomena, it is not surprising to find some Muslims contemplating about it. However, such contemplations and reflections should be performed by specialized people in order to avoid presenting pseudoscience or unfounded claims. Laypeople should take these signs as ratifying the power of Allah, the beauty and consistency of His creation, but not derive science from it. A specialized scientist who is well acquainted with Arabic may reflect on those subtle verses in order to look for scientific viability, not to prove or disprove the Qur'an since we can always claim that science is incomplete, but also to look for alternatives to those available from the claimed discoveries of science. Such an exercise was performed by one of my students, who questioned the reality of the claim that the cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB) leads to an ever-expanding universe. This claim was based on the finding that the universe is spatially flat and, according to the Friedman models, a spatially flat universe should continue expanding forever. Such a result is in sheer contradiction with the stipulations of the Qur'an, which says that the heavens will collapse one day (21:104). Since the same observations of the CMB confirmed

the presence of a non-zero cosmological constant, my student considered a flat spacetime plugging in a cosmological constant, constructing the Einstein field equations and solving it. Our result shows an oscillating universe that starts from a non-singular Planck-sized space expanding to reach a maximum radius and then collapsing into a state similar to the one it started with. So, the conclusion was that a flat universe with a non-zero cosmological constant would allow a collapsing phase once a specific value of the cosmological constant is made possible.¹² Obviously, all this is speculative, since the fate of the universe is far from being known with any degree of certainty. However, such a mathematical exercise, which was implicitly provoked by an apparent contradiction between the Qur'an and the findings of science, was certainly not futile. Moreover, the Qur'an presents descriptions of the day when the Sun will collapse, providing the knowledgeable reader with such a stunning picture of Earth, the Moon, and the stars that one can hardly deny its factual value when compared with descriptions provided by current astrophysicists. Therefore, it is not fair to completely ignore the value of the scientific signs pointed to in the Qur'an. But, we should always remember that these signs are not presented to construe astrophysical knowledge and develop theories but to encourage believers to contemplate nature and become more confident in the word of Allah. Some other signs are presented to attract the attention of non-believers to discover that the Qur'an is truly the divine word. This, I see, is the true meaning of the "miracle of the Qur'an".

The Approach

Two important factors play essential roles in the successful transformation of Islamic thought: first, the change should be made from within Islamic thought itself and, second, it should be based on a strong philosophical basis stemming from original Islamic sources.

My proposal for effecting a transformation of Islamic society is based on revitalizing *kalām* so that it might become an efficient methodology for analysis and deduction in religion and modern Islamic thought. I suggest this should be done in two stages. First, we should revitalize *daqīq al-kalām* with the aim of using this tradition of thought to represent the Islamic view of nature and science. The fact that the principles of *daqīq al-kalām* are in conformity with concepts of modern physics and cosmology would enable us to achieve such a goal without much trouble. Second, once the principles and the methodology of *daqīq al-kalām* are established, some essential problems in natural sciences, social sciences, religion, and the arts have to be analyzed and studied according to the new methodology. Questions such as the epistemological value of science, determinism, and causality in the natural world,

biological evolution, the design argument, and many others might be discussed and analyzed within the context of neo-*kalām* interfacing with scientific fact to develop a worldview that shares the achievements of modern science. This might be initiated by some sample case studies to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of the new methodology and principles.

Once *daqīq al-kalām* finds a firm ground in scholastic studies, other questions such as divine action, consciousness, free will, and predestination can be studied on the foundation provided by the earlier studies of *daqīq al-kalām*. No doubt these studies will be an essential step for delving into topics of *jalīl al-kalām*, which is much more subtle. In the light of the findings of a new *jalīl al-kalām*, questions of Sharia law can be discussed and proper rules can be deduced. The sources of Sharia which are adopted in my approach are: the Qur'an, the authentic and applicable hadiths, and the intellect (*ʿaql*). These three sources are to be used in deducing all the doctrines of *ʿaqīda* and all Sharia laws.

No doubt, the above ambitious proposal needs a huge collective effort that may be implemented over several decades, but all of this can start by establishing a small institute for fundamental studies in Islam. After all, the road of a thousand miles starts with a single step. The most important thing is that the vision should be clear and that the concepts and principles should always form a consistent package that can be used to analyze specific workable examples, providing solutions that are reasonable, while being in conformity with the stipulations of the original sources of Islam.

I believe that, if one can develop a trend for change that motivates critical thinking and proposes an efficient scheme for dealing with the revision of Islamic thought, which includes Islamic Sharia, then real transformation might be initiated. To be successful, this transformation should stem from the original sources of Islam and thus should preserve the mission of Islam and develop it into a workable modern system of thought.

When deciding on a revitalization of *kalām*, there are a number of vital issues that must be considered. First, we should take into consideration that *kalām* was not traditionally favored and that it was considered to be a disreputable subject. Most traditional theologians who appeared in the fourteenth century and later considered the *kalām* discourse to be distorting the facts of Islam and a potential danger that might cause a person to leave Islam and become a *kāfir*. This attitude is still widespread among Muslims nowadays and I confess that I have faced difficulties in discussing issues in *daqīq al-kalām* with some scholars who were brought up according to traditional beliefs. Second, we should take into consideration that the practical failures of some scholarly efforts during the nineteenth century, and the early decades of the twentieth, were partially due to the fact that they were not acquainted with modern

scientific knowledge, and consequently they could not harmonize the truth of Islam with science. Examples are ‘Abduh in Egypt, and Khan and Shiblī Nu‘mānī in India. Facts of quantum physics, relativity, and modern biology were unknown to those scholars and consequently they adopted the concepts of classical physics and their limited knowledge of other natural sciences, so they either could not practically implement their claims of a harmony between science and Islam, as was the case with ‘Abduh, or they adopted the concepts of the mechanistic world of classical physics and assumed deterministic causality, which is in contradiction with the concepts of Islam, as in the case of Shiblī Nu‘mānī.

The new approach suggested for the transformation of Islamic thought opens the way for a well-founded methodology of theological development: *ijtihād*, which has been nearly banned from the discussions of fundamental trends of jurisprudence. Those fundamental trends concern the resources of Sharia, the rules of accepting and rejecting narrations of hadiths, the rules of interpreting verses of the Qur’an dealing with Sharia rules, and the rules of deducing the law. This is a pivotal point in establishing new trends in Islamic jurisprudence.

Some thinkers and reformists of our modern times were captivated by the methodology of the Salaf and their understanding of the terms of the Qur’an and hadiths, including some deliberate or accidental mistakes that they committed in those interpretations. We should not allow ourselves to be so captivated; we should not accept their methodology in full; we should also allow for whatever we find to be truthful. For this purpose, we should be able to provide strong arguments from the Qur’an, the Arabic, and the use of reason, using the common grounds of agreement, to support the fact that our approach maintains the originality of Islamic teaching as delivered by the message of the Prophet Muhammad.

The introduction of new trends should take into consideration the affirmed facts of Islam, on both the spiritual and the practical level, and of course we should be careful not to create a new religion by deducing Sharia laws through misinterpreting the Qur’an or hadiths and taking the words out of context. Such an unusual approach causes more confusion in Islamic thought, as is the case with Syrian engineer Muḥammad Shahrūr’s exploit, which is deemed to fail and will find no echo within the social Islamic sphere. I find it a shame to support such an unfounded approach, since it goes far beyond the meaning of the Arabic words spoken in the Qur’an. To identify some examples of synonymous words such as *kitāb* and *qur’ān* and to say that they do not point to the same meaning is certainly acceptable, and to deny that some verses of the Qur’an supersede others in their legislative power (by *naskh*)

might be acceptable too, and to claim that there is no clear order for the stoning of sins in the Qur'an is also acceptable, but to deny some basic laws which have been clearly stipulated is a sheer distortion of basic Islamic teachings and is certainly a slippery slope.

The main goal for the transformation in Islamic thought is to revitalize the good and valuable tenets of Islam and put them into practice. The sources of Islam provide the capable researcher with enough support for this endeavor and there is plenty of room for the reformation of legal as well as social trends, though the latter might be much more difficult to uphold.

One of the major topics of old *kalām* was the question of the divine attributes. This was one of the main sources of disagreement and conflict among the *mutakallimūn* themselves, as well as with other theologians. For this reason, a new understanding of divinity is required. Allah is described in the Qur'an as He whom *nothing resembles*, yet He is the one who hears and sees (38:11). This means that the reality of the divine stands in His existence and His ability to act. God's perception of a matter goes beyond our comprehension, since He is not a material entity, and therefore we cannot expect that He perceives through any physical means. Thus, these attributes must be taken a priori and should not be subjected to rational analysis. However, we are directly concerned with divine action. To understand the development of the world, our lives, and our destinies with the presence of divine action requires that we analyze and understand how God acts through His creation. This is why the Qur'an has called upon us to contemplate creation and to question how it was all started. Such an understanding will help us to comprehend the mechanism of the development of the physical world and may help us to understand our destiny. Here analytic theology plays a role, where our understanding of this creation may help us very much to understand how re-creation in the next life would be possible. If we adopt the re-creation principle as a general rule, then it would be easy to envisage how the next form of life might be much different from this one. For example, the moment that we cease to be alive, our souls may be re-created in another world. This assumption does not necessarily entail the many-worlds hypothesis, because the world into which the soul transfers is strictly non-physical. To summarize, I would say that, while the topic of divine action in the world is of interest for neo-*kalām*, the issues concerning the divine attributes are not a matter for philosophical interest, but one to be taken metaphorically and that need not be studied any further. Nevertheless, spiritual experience should be allowed room in neo-*kalām*, as it constitutes a vital part of Islamic teaching and religious practice. The rational acknowledgment of spiritual experience can always be understood through the fact that there is always much to learn about our soul

and the world that might go beyond our limited current knowledge. That is to say, spiritual experience is something that cannot be denied, as it is a real feeling obtained through the interaction of our senses with the environment and our mind. Therefore, it cannot be but an integrated part of our consciousness, which might extend far beyond our direct experience.

Subjects to Encounter

There are some essential subjects that one would encounter once embarking on a serious transformation program in Islamic thought. The first is to define clearly the sources from which rules of belief and laws are to be derived. The second is to define how to deal with such sources and validation that such deductions would require. Here I will take a glimpse at this subtle topic in order to draw out the main aspects of the change that is sought.

The Sources of Sharia

An important part of Islamic thought is concerned with Sharia law and these are the core rules by which Muslims practice their everyday lives both individually and jointly in groups. At present, we have a great store of thoughts that have accumulated over many centuries of deduction and work on Sharia laws. These include the foundational works of the Sunni fundamentalists who laid the basis of Islamic jurisprudence, namely Imam Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ḥazm, and their followers al-Ashʿarī and al-Māturidī, and also the later traditionalists al-Ghazālī, al-Shātibī, Ibn Taymiyya, and their students. According to the Hanafi rules, the main sources for deducing the law are the Qurʾan, the hadiths, *qiyās* (the use of analogical reasoning in legislations), and *ijmāʿ* (the consensus of jurists, the *ʿulamāʿ*). Al-Shāfiʿī considered *qiyās* to be a part of *ijtihad* (the innovative deduction of the law), and he also considered the *ijmāʿ* of the Companions of the Prophet as a strong source for deducing laws. Al-Shāfiʿī believed the practice of the Prophet's Companions and their opinions concerning law to be a source of higher priority than *qiyās*.

In our modern era, and considering the previous experience of Muslims and the huge changes in knowledge and lifestyle, we can confidently say that we need new deductions for Sharia laws and for this purpose the sources can be defined as:

- (1) the Qurʾan;
- (2) the authentic Sunna;
- (3) the intellect (reason).

In our time, there are established institutions representing the public in different forms and by different means. Parliaments are the political organ for

representing people, civil society organizations play a role in serving the interests of society, and next to this a council of *‘ulamā* can also be established to draw up Sharia laws, which should then be subjected to the endorsement of parliament. The collective efforts of all of these in an organized society ought to flourish into the proper representation of public interest, which means *ijmā*^c in practice. Through this collaboration, an Islamic society would be able to adopt Sharia laws and put them into practice in a civilized way. However, a system for deducing law from the sources should be established so that fruitful results can be obtained. In early Islamic history, specifically during the reign of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, several important debates took place where the practice of *ijmā*^c happened through an assembly of Muslim leaders. One of these occasions concerned the problem of land distribution in Iraq, which had been confiscated from the Persian regime, where the decision was taken to keep the land in the ownership of the central Islamic government and not to reallocate it to individuals who had participated in the conquest. The other occasion was deciding who should lead the fighters in the main battle against the Persians, where ‘Umar himself suggested that he should be the leader, but his suggestion was rejected by the assembly out of fear that the sudden loss of the Caliph in battle might cause a fatal setback to the Muslim side. The details of such incidents are mentioned by famous historians such as al-Ṭabarī.

Metaphor in the Qur’an

Metaphor is one of the serious issues to be discussed in Islamic *kalām* and it was the Mu‘tazila who first suggested that some content of the Qur’an should be understood in a metaphorical way. Ibn Khaldūn¹³ gave detailed accounts of the arguments put forward by the Mu‘tazila and other groups in connection with the metaphoric interpretation of the Qur’an. Among these are the divine attributes, the descriptions of heaven/s and hell, and the punishments and rewards which are described in many physical terms. This raises several questions: How do we deal with a metaphorical statement in the Qur’an? What rules should be followed to uncover the true meanings of such statements? Ibn Rushd considered that whatever in the Qur’an appeared to be in conflict with scientific knowledge should be considered a metaphor and should be subjected to rational interpretation (*ta’wīl*). This suggestion would have attributed to the Qur’an the scientific knowledge of the time, and so, as we know scientific knowledge is mutable, the suggestion by Ibn Rushd cannot be taken seriously.

A metaphor is identified as a word or phrase which describes an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. Such a metaphor should then be understood by its implicit meaning, which is mostly contextual. For example, when it is said “The hand of Allah is above their hands” (Qur’an 48:10), it

should be understood to mean that the power of Allah is supporting them. Similarly comes the question which has caused much debate; where the Qur'an says "and His Throne was on the water" (11:07), it is again a metaphor describing that His kingdom was based on water, and since water is the basis for life, accordingly one may understand that the Throne of Allah is life itself, as He is known by us through life. Such an understanding is more acceptable now that we realize water is a very essential component of life. Similarly, the reward in paradise and punishment in hell should now be understood as something that takes place in another world, which might be non-physical, since the literal descriptions given in the Qur'an do not apply to our physical properties. Moreover, the next life is always described as happening in another form and in a different world, so it would not be in any sense strange to describe paradise, hell, reward, and punishment as metaphors for the state of life after death. Scientifically, there are many alternative suggestions for imagining possible other non-physical worlds in which at least some of the identified peculiarities can be realized. For example, a space-like world can accommodate eternity in the absence of time, and so forth. Such matters can be discussed in much more detail and a reasonable picture might be obtained. On the other hand, joy, amusement, sorrow, and depression are all psychological feelings, so it might happen that our entities in other worlds might not be presented in material form anyway. Nevertheless, the concept of life after death remains a matter of belief.

The Sunna of the Prophet

The Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad is composed of his narrations (hadiths) and his established acts. This part of Islamic heritage is almost well preserved, however its value in respect of authentication might differ from one system of judgment to another. The traditional method is to look through the sources of narration and apply an authentication test or to investigate the sequence of narrators following the prime narrator, who is normally one of the Companions of the Prophet. According to Sunni Muslims, all of the Companions are primarily considered to be authentic and just, therefore there is no question of defects concerning them.

The Prophet Muhammad has taught his followers almost everything in life. The contemporary followers watched and recorded nearly every aspect of his life and narrated it to subsequent generations. Obviously, some of the behavior of the Prophet was to do with his own personal life, habits, choices, or tastes, which means it was part of his personal character. Others were his teachings that aimed at organizing individuals and society to carry out their lives in the most effective ways. Nevertheless, most Muslims do not

differentiate between what was a particular characteristic of the Prophet and what was a part of his religious teachings. It is unfortunate that the Sunna was taken to be part of the religious duties of Muslims and that it should be followed as if it is the order of God. This has caused much concern for Muslims, to the extent that, in some cases, the Sunna was thought to supersede the Qur'an. For this reason, although the punishment of having illegal intercourse, for example, is limited by the Qur'an to a hundred lashes, Muslim clerics insist on applying death by stoning to the married offender. They claim that the act of the Prophet supersedes the stipulations of the Qur'an. In another example, we find that the Qur'an left open the allocations for the *zakāt* tax, such an important element in the organization of society and the state. This might be understood as a *tolerance* in Islamic law necessitated by the suitability of the condition in each case; such allocations can only be defined by the needs of the society at a given place and a given time, thus they were left open. However, the clerics insist on applying the same allocations that were practiced during the time of the Prophet, with some differences between them. Several other examples can be furnished too. Such practices of the Sunna have constrained the freedom to organize the economic and social life of society within unnecessarily tight limits.

A serious review of the Sunna is needed in order to reclaim the true understanding of the Qur'an, not forgetting, for instance, that the Prophet himself had instructed his Companions not to write down his teachings other than the Qur'an. An inane explanation is normally given for the instructions of the Prophet on this issue, claiming that it was prescribed only to avoid mixing the Qur'an with Sunna. This revision of the Sunna should cover the authentication rules, the basis of assessing hadiths, and the role of reason in justifying the Sunna. These issues can only be dealt with within a well-defined neo-*kalām* framework.