



1401 AH—1981 AC

Ijtihad

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The *Occasional Papers* Series

The publication program of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has already addressed important issues in the field of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. In this respect a number of books have already appeared in several languages under twelve main series: *Dissertations; Human Development; Indices; Islamic Methodology; Islamization of Culture; Islamization of Knowledge; Issues in Islamic Thought; Lectures; Occasional Papers; Perspectives on Islamic Thought; Research Monographs; and Studies in the Islamization of Knowledge.*

The *Occasional Papers* series, published by the Institute's London Office, covers a number of research papers, articles and lectures from the Institute's world-wide program as well as by Muslim scholars willing to make contributions. These are presented individually in the form of booklets that can be easily read or referred to. It is hoped that the booklets will reach students, scholars, and specialists as well as major sections of the world's Muslims alike in order to generate a fruitful debate on the vital issue of Islamization, to create an awareness of the intellectual crisis in its various shapes and forms, and to encourage an active role in the proposed course of action and solution. This series is also translated into other languages.

This paper was originally an Arabic lecture delivered at the Summer School on Islamic Thought jointly organized by the IIIT London Office and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Oxford in Dhu al Hijja 1410/July 1990.

The use of Islamic terminology in transliteration is a policy of the IIIT. Some of the terms used are untranslatable, while others are so important that the Institute felt that familiarity with them is necessary for a better understanding of Islamic issues. These terms have been footnoted once or sometimes explained briefly between brackets. All those which have not yet been accepted in English dictionaries are in italic. As many of these occur more than once the readers are advised to refer to the footnotes whenever necessary.

When mentioning dates the Islamic one comes first separated from the Gregorian one by a slash. When an Islamic date is mentioned alone, it is followed by AH.

The translation of the Qur'an used in this series is that of Yusuf Ali (Amana Corporation, revised, 1989). However we made changes to verses quoted from it whenever we deemed it necessary for the sake of elucidation and precision of meaning.

IIIT, London
1413/1993

Preface

Ijtihad, for long codified and confined to history, needs to be redeemed and put to effective use. The challenges of the present demand it. The very inception of ijtihad and its release by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a great rationalistic and innovative force ought to have guaranteed it a lasting presence and influence in the life of the Ummah at various levels. Indeed, its illustrious advocates and practitioners during the early age of the Ummah, following the Prophet's death, were but imbued with and guided by the active spirit of the Sunnah; they were testifying and paying tribute to Islam's rationality and fairness, as well as suitability for all ages and localities. Their practice was a daily acknowledgement of and contribution to the dynamism and vitality of an Ummah cognizant of its responsibilities to the rest of the world and of the honor and respect Islam gives to Man's reason and role on earth.

Consigning the salubrious factor to the annals of history is a denial of the rationalistic, egalitarian, and humane aspects of a realistic and durable Faith. The act would also be a repudiation of the requisites of changing times and of the clamouring need to rid the Ummah of its present baggage of malaise and miseries and enable it to forge ahead, inspiring other nations and communities.

The courage that needs to accompany such a mission is tremendous, the methodology massive and meticulous. With this work, Dr al'Alwani has contributed to the debate on this vital issue. The very way he tackled it—sometimes with boldness, sometimes with caution—shows that the debate is not an open-and-shut issue, and that it needs to widen quickly in view of the urgency of a solution for the civilizational future of the Muslim world.

The Editors

On This Book

Considering that the accepted juridical sources of Islam are valid for all times and places, *ijtihād* may be described as a creative but disciplined intellectual effort to derive legal rulings from those sources while taking into consideration the variables imposed by the fluctuating circumstances of Muslim society. Consigning *ijtihād* to the annals of history is a denial of the rationalistic, egalitarian, and humane aspects of a realistic and durable Faith. The act would be a repudiation of the requisites of changing times and of the clamouring need to rid the Ummah of its present baggage of malaise and enable it to forge ahead, inspiring other nations and communities. It can be proved historically that the Ummah only entered its current crisis after *ijtihād* fell into disuse and was gradually replaced by *taqlīd*.

It is only through *ijtihād* that Muslims will be able to construct a new specific methodological infrastructure capable of addressing the crisis of Islamic thought and so, propose alternatives for the many problems of the contemporary world.

The courage that needs to accompany such a mission is tremendous, the methodology massive and meticulous. With this work, Dr al 'Alwani has contributed to the debate on this vital issue. The very way he tackled it—sometimes with boldness, sometimes with caution—shows that the debate is not an open-and-shut issue, and that it needs to widen quickly in view of the urgency of the situation.