

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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# **Toward Global Cultural Renewal: Modernity and the Episteme of Transcendence**

Mona M. Abul-Fadl

*INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE of ISLAMIC THOUGHT*

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The use of Islamic terminology in translation is a policy of the IIT. 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

The seventh paper in this series, *Toward Global Cultural Renewal*, was first published in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS), Vol. 5, No. 2 under the title "Islamization as a Force of Global Renewal or: The Relevance of the *Tawhidi* Episteme to Modernity."

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 from 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, and to create an awareness of the intellectual crisis in its various shapes and forms, while encouraging an active role in the proposed course of action and solution. This series is also translated into other languages.

The publication program of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIT) 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 fifteen main series: *Academic Dissertations; Accessing the Islamic Intellectual Heritage; Concepts and Terminology; Human Development; Indices; Islamic Methodology; Islamization of Culture; Islamization of Knowledge; Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought; Lectures; Occasional Papers; Perspectives on Islamic Thought; Reform Movements and Methodologies of Change; Research Monographs and Rasail Islamiyah al Ma'rifah* (Studies in the Islamization of Knowledge).

## THE OCCASIONAL PAPERS SERIES

between brackets. All those which have not yet been accepted in Anglo-Saxon dictionaries are in *italic*. As many of these occur more than once, readers are advised to refer to the relevant 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 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (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.

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## **EDITORS' NOTE**

This paper—originally delivered as the Faruqi Memorial Lecture at the 16th Annual Conference of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists meeting at Plainfield, Indiana, USA, July 1987—puts today's quest for Islamization into historical and ideational perspective. It traces the movement to a new-found awareness among Muslims, cognizant of the immense worth and potential of their heritage, eager to emerge from their actual debilitation, whether enforced or self-inflicted. The drive towards collective effort and for the pooling of resources is highlighted as a prominent and auspicious feature of the trend. But the main thrust of the paper is directed at examining the capacity of Islam to tackle successfully the wide-ranging problems that beset the universal Muslim Ummah as well as the world at large.

In the course of this exploration, Dr. Abul-Fadl considers and evaluates various contemporary approaches to truth and compares them with the Islamic "mode of knowing," discovering it to be a superior and beneficent foil to the existing paradigms and epistememes of modern culture. She also advocates and in effect offers a blueprint of a new kind of scholarship, one that invokes the "vocational ideal" and has the power and the vision to absorb intelligently cultural diversity and transmute it into an overarching and transcendent, but realistic and humane, critique. The credentials of Islam to buttress and enlighten such an endeavor are presented with clarity and conviction. And while the pervasive and protean malaise of contemporary civilization is attributed to the sense of vacuity and absence of higher purpose brought about by the renunciation of God, that of the Muslim Ummah is seen to be rooted in intellectual lethargy.

The author finds such issues compelling in view of an unprecedented cultural hegemony fostering and promoting degenerative symptoms among the "subordinate" cultures of the earth. However, and despite the colossal challenges which face the

quest for renewal and reintegration—challenges that are unflinchingly tackled and delineated in the paper—the final view is one of hope and affirmation in both human recoverability and the latent power of Islam to lead man out of the present morass.

## ON THIS BOOK

Today's quest for Islamization is here put into historical and ideational perspective. It traces the movement to a newfound awareness among Muslims, cognizant of the immense worth and potential of their heritage, yet clamoring to emerge from their actual debilitation, whether enforced or self-inflicted. The author considers and evaluates various contemporary approaches to truth and compares them with the Islamic "mode of knowing," discovering it to be a superior and beneficent foil to the existing paradigms and epistemes of modern culture. It offers a blueprint for a new kind of scholarship, one that invokes the "vocational ideal" and has the power and the vision to absorb intelligently cultural diversity and transmute it into an overarching and transcendent, but realistic and humane, critique. The credentials of Islam to buttress and enlighten such an endeavor are presented with clarity and conviction. And while the pervasive and protean malaise of contemporary civilization is attributed to the sense of vacuity and absence of higher purpose brought about by the renunciation of God, that of the Muslim Ummah is seen to be rooted in intellectual lethargy. However, and despite the colossal challenges which face the quest for renewal and reintegration, challenges that are unflinchingly tackled and delineated in this paper, the final view is one of hope and affirmation in both human recoverability and the latent power of Islam to lead man out of the present morass.

