

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

وَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْمَسِيحِ الْمَوْعُودِ

We send prayers and blessings upon His (swt) Noble Messenger (saw)

And upon his (saw) Servant, the Promised Messiah (as)

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ الَّذِي فِيكُمْ وَيُنَظِّقَ لَكُمْ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

Allah desires to make clear to you, and guide you to, the paths of those before you, and to turn to you in Mercy. And Allāh is All-Knowing, Wise [4:27]

The Shari'ah

An Introductory glimpse into the divinely ordained path

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7 Safar 1429 A.H. – Friday 15 February 2008

London, UK

1. What is the *Sharī'ah*?

Before delving deep into the *Sharī'ah* (referred to as Islamic Law for introductory purposes), it is imperative for those who are not trained or are unfamiliar in the *Sharī'ah* (Islamic Law) to comprehend its status and nature.

Firstly, it must be borne in mind that in these days the term *Sharī'ah*, has been hijacked by the 'entertainment' media – so-called as they currently seem to be more interested in the selling of stories as opposed to their role as reliable, albeit opinionated, information outlets – who have forced a political and legal meaning upon the term whereas its traditional origins are far removed from proffering such connotations.

The classical and historical meanings of the *Sharī'ah* are of primary importance and thus these are discussed first, before going into a somewhat detailed analysis of its constituent parts.

i. Lexicology

Grammatically,¹ according to the classical scholars of Islām, *Sharī'ah*, derived from the root letters *sh-ra-'a*, denotes 'a law or ordinance' and this necessarily includes a 'way of belief and practice in respect of religion.'²

The derivative words that stem from its root according to the most classical lexicons are a window into the extensive and profound meanings of the word *Sharī'ah*. These include 'a clear and manifest way,'³ 'the way to a watering-place'⁴ and 'fluid and fluidity';⁵ thus the allegory which is second-nature to Islāmic legal lexicological discourse is illustrative :- a Muslim is one who follows the *Sharī'ah*, and in doing so takes the form of fluid and fluidity, so much so that if

¹ Here, a basic point of grammar is necessary – whereas in English, one word can have a few connotations, Arabic words are derived from a root which is made up of three or four letters. From these letters are derived tens of words which connote similar things.

² *Qāmūs alfāz al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Vocabulary of the Holy *Qur'ān*), compiled by Dr. Abdullah Abbas al-Nadwi, (1983, Dār al-Shurūq, Jeddah) p.303.

³ *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān*, by al-'Allāmah al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, (2002, Damascus), pp.450-451; See also Asad, M., *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, (2001, Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur), p.41

⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵ *Ibid.*,

he/she were to move to a foreign (non-Islāmic) land they would take up the culture of that land (insofar as that culture does not contradict the obligatory aspects of the belief system) and of those people. The theory is that just as fluid from a bottle completely takes up the shape of that bottle, but when poured into a glass, it fully conforms to the shape of that container without changing its constituent or molecular nature. In exactly the same manner, by practising and adhering to the *Sharī'ah*, a Muslim is fluid, or rather dynamic, in that when placed in unfamiliar surroundings, the provisions of the *Sharī'ah* are expansive and flexible so as to permit him or her to conform to their new surroundings completely, without, however, changing his or her essential make-up – i.e., that of a Muslim (thus, where conforming would involve the breach of any of the Laws of Islam, e.g., if alcohol, or pre-marital relationship are part of the culture of a people then because both are forbidden by the *Sharī'ah* there can be no compromise; however, dress, language, mannerisms, other local customs, etc. are adoptable).⁶

To further illustrate this point, perhaps the term *Sharī'ah* is best explained as a source of water, or the path to a watering hole.⁷ A source of water, or a watering hole, fills to the top and overflows, the overflow eventually makes tracks in the village or city and streams are created by the flow and rush of the water. Soon the water begins to create further streams, and wherever these streams diverge, the water benefits the land in those areas, either by making the land arable and cultivable, or delivering water to the inhabitants in those areas

If this parable is fleshed out with the example of Muslims living in a non-Muslim country, then it is suggested that if the water represents the *Sharī'ah*, or the path, then it stands to reason that Muslims, by following the *Sharī'ah* and adopting it and practising its essence and meeting its objectives, will be of benefit to all those along the path of the *Sharī'ah*, be they Muslim or non-Muslim – as the water does not discriminate as to who it benefits – similarly, the Muslim practising the divine laws of the *Sharī'ah* should be of benefit to whomever he or she comes across on their journey, and should intend to provide benefit and advantage to all those whose paths he or she crosses.

⁶ Unlike legislation and western legal documents, the *Sharī'ah* does not refer to one legal text, rather, it encapsulates the two sources of knowledge on which the whole of the edifice of Islam is built; the *Qur'ān*, which is the divinely revealed message vouchsafed to the Prophet Muḥammad, and the *Sunnah*, which refers to two interlinked spheres; the actions of Muḥammad, and the sayings of Muḥammad.

⁷ *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān*, by al-'Allāmah al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, (2002, Damascus), pp.450-451.

2. Sources of the *Sharī'ah*

Muslim Jurists generally classify the sources of the *Sharī'ah* into two main categories: The Chief sources include, (1) The *Qur'ān*, (2) The *Sunnah*, (3) *Ijmā'* (scholarly consensus of opinion), and (4) *Qiyās* (judgment based on juristic analogy).

The supplementary sources include, (1) *Istiḥsān* (the deviation on a certain issue from the rule of precedent to another rule for a more relevant legal reason that requires such deviation), (2), *Istislāh* (the unprecedented judgment motivated by considerations of public interest to which neither the *Qur'ān* or the *Sunnah* explicitly refer), (3) '*Urf*' (customs, in speech and action, of a particular society that are considered when formulating legal judgments).

However, it is important to note, as does Dr. Ramadan, that these classifications of the sources is by no means exhaustive, decisive or the only authoritative one.⁸

i. *The Qur'ān and its Legislative Characteristics*

All the scholars of Islam are unanimous on the fact that the *Qur'ān* is the primary source of the *Sharī'ah*, is the most authoritative guide for the Muslims and is regarded by all Muslims as the word of God revealed to Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), just as Torah was revealed to Moses (عليه السلام), and it is held to be a continuation, and the last in the line, of the Abrahamic scriptures. Some scholars even say that it is the only source of the *Sharī'ah*, and the “absolute authority wherefrom springs the very conception of legality and every legal obligation”⁹ and that all other sources are merely explanatory.¹⁰ Generally, the Jewish Law was, due to the needs of that time, very harsh and strict, and when, as is commonly stated, the ‘law became a curse’ because of its emphasis on retribution, God revealed the Law of Christianity which emphasised elements of

⁸ Ramadan, S., *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, (2nd Ed., 1970, Dr. Said Ramadan), pp.33; Here, as it is relevant to our objectives, only the first two sources will be discussed in detail; The *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah*. Matters of *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās* will be cited from the views of scholars according to necessity.

⁹ Ramadan, S., *Supra*, n.8, pp.42-43

¹⁰ Kamali, M.H., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, (2003, The Islamic Texts Society), p.16

forgiveness, tolerance and love to counter the law that had become a curse. However, this too was an extreme so that if one was to slap you then you would have to ‘turn the other cheek.’ Thus, when the need of the age necessitated it, the *Qur’ān* was revealed,¹¹ with revised commandments and prohibitions for the new age, as lucidly summarised by Hallaq:

“At about this time [626AD] Sūrah 5¹² of the Qur’ān was revealed, ushering in a list of commands, admonitions and explicit prohibitions concerning a great variety of issues, from eating swine meat to theft. Throughout, we find reference to the Jews and Christians and their respective scriptures. In 5:43 God asks...why the Jews resort to Muḥammad as an arbiter ‘when they have the Torah which contains the judgment of God’.

‘We have revealed the torah in which there is guidance and light, [and by which] the prophets who surrendered [to God] judged the Jews, and the rabbis and Priests judged by such of Allah’s scriptures as they were bidden to observe.’ In the next too verses, the Qur’ān turns to the Christians, saying in effect that God sent Christ to confirm the Prophethood of Moses and the Gospel to reassert the ‘guidance and advice’ revealed in the Torah.”¹³

Hallaq further confirms that *“[i]f the Jews and Christians were favoured with legally binding revelations, so too are the Muslims,[as] the Qur’ān declares in Sūrah 5, verse 48...”¹⁴*

The *Qur’ān* contains many *Aḥkām*¹⁵ (rulings) which include commandments as well as prohibitions on various matters ranging from commanding belief in the Unity of God, to the prohibition of polytheism, sexual relations before marriage, etc.

Fundamental to understanding the importance of the *Qur’ān* is its immutability and non-abrogable nature.

In the opening of the second chapter, God unequivocally declares:

¹¹ Although revealed and protected orally in the early years of the history of Islām, it was combined into book form shortly after the demise of the Prophet, and later published widely in the Arabian peninsula.

¹² Sūrah refers to ‘Chapter’ – here, Chapter 5, *Al-Mā’idah* is being referred to.

¹³ Hallaq, W.B., *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, (2005, Cambridge University Press), pp.20-21

¹⁴ *“...And We gave him [Jesus] the Gospel which contained guidance and light, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing.”* [The Holy *Qur’ān*, 5:47]
“And let the people of the Gospel judge according to what Allah has revealed therein, and whoso judges not by what Allah has revealed, these it is who are the transgressors.” [The Holy *Qur’ān*, 5:48]

“And We have revealed unto thee the Book [i.e. the Qur’ān] comprising the truth and fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Book ...Judge therefore, between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their desires, turning away from the Truth which has come to the. For each of you We prescribed a clear spiritual Law.” [The Holy *Qur’ān*, 5:49]; See also, Hallaq, W.B., *Supra*, n. 13, pp.20-21

¹⁵ Many scholars have put the figure of such rulings in the *Qur’ān* at around 500

“A-L-M.”¹⁶

“This is the perfect book; there is no doubt in it.”¹⁷

And:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islām as religion.”¹⁸

The *Qur’ān* was revealed in two distinct periods of the Prophet’s (صلى الله عليه وسلم) life; in *Makkah* and *Madīnah* respectively. The *Makkan* part of the *Qur’ān* established the basic principles of law and religion which were practiced and supplemented in *Madīnah*.¹⁹

Imām al-Shāṭibī (رحمه الله) states that the five essential values that Islam seeks to protect and which thus form an integral part of the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī’ah*, are religion, life, intellect, family and property, were all fundamentally elucidated in the *Makkan* portions of the *Qur’ān*.²⁰

Although some muslim scholars and reformers have accepted the theory of abrogation of certain verses of the *Qur’ān*, based upon the verse below, there are as many strong arguments to reject the theory of the abrogation of *Qur’ānic* verses, as well as many verses that specifically contradict the theory of abrogation of *Qur’ānic* verses. Many of the former theories are attributed to have emerged during the time of the deviant *Khawārij*²¹ sect and are thus unreliable:

“Whatever message We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof.”²²

¹⁶ The Holy *Qur’ān*, 2:2. The verse of the *Qur’ān* cited here begins with the letters corresponding to A (*alif*), L (*lām*) and M (*mīm*) which are known in *Qur’ānic* lexicology as ‘*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta’āt*’, or, the separated (literally cut-up) letters. On the Authority of Ibn Mas’ud and Ibn ‘Abbas, these letters are taken by some to represent the meaning, *inter alia*, “*anā Allāhu ā’lam*” – “*I am Allāh the All-Knowing*”.

¹⁷ The Holy *Qur’ān*, 2:3.

¹⁸ The Holy *Qur’ān*, 5:4

¹⁹ Imām Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, (1341 AH., Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Makhlūf, Cairo: *Al-Maṭba’ah al-Salafiyyah*), Vol.III, p.104

²⁰ See generally, Al-Raysuni, A., ‘*Imām Al-Shāṭibī’s Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law*’, (2006, Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur), pp.136-147, at p.137

²¹ A deviant sect who left traditional Islam early after the death of Muḥammad.

²² The Holy *Qur’ān*, 2:107; As explained, this verse is mistakenly inferred to give credence to the Abrogation theory – however it will be observed on reading the verse in its context that nothing in the verse refers explicitly to the *Qur’ānic* verses. Both in the preceding and the following verses, specific reference is made to the *ahl al-kitāb* (The Peoples of the Book – referring to the Jews and the Christians) and specifically their jealousy as to the new Revelation which is actually an abrogation of their verses. For an extensive discussion on this point see *The Holy Qur’ān: English Translation and Short Commentary*, p.49, n.132

The legislative content of the *Qur'ān* (*al-aḥkām al-'amalīyyah*) constitute what is known as *fiqh al-Qur'ān*,²³ or the *juris corpus*²⁴ of the *Qur'ān*.

Akin to any comprehensive legislative text, the *Qur'ān* specifies the purpose, reason, objective, benefit, reward and advantage of its injunctions as it is addressed to the conscience of the individual with a view to persuading him or her of its truth and divine origin and thus such elucidations are accompanied by allusions as to the benefits that may be accrued by observance of the commands or, subsequently, the harm that is prevented by its prohibitions.

This is well defined by Kamali's overview of the concept of *ta'līl*, or ratiocination,²⁵ which he deems inherently linked to the illustrations described above.

For those unfamiliar with Islāmic legal thought and philosophy it is essential to comprehend that commands and prohibitions are expressed not only as 'lawful' and 'unlawful',²⁶ but there are certain classifications within each of these that vary according to the degree of their

²³ *Lit.*, 'the understanding of the *Qur'ān*', or, the 'jurisprudential nature of the *Qur'ān*'

²⁴ It contains around 350 legal verses (*āyāt*) most of which were responses to concurrent problems as and when they were encountered and prevailing practices "such as infanticide, usury, gambling and unlimited polygamy", whereas others were pre-emptive and in consonance with God's attribute of 'The All-Knowing' (*al-'Alīm*) and 'Knower of the Unseen' (*'Ālim al-Ghayb*).

Yet other verses laid down prospective penalties enforcing the reforms introduced by Islam and around 140 verses regulated matters of devotion, payment of alms, fasting, pilgrimage, war and conflict. Approximately 70 verses relate to matters of marriage, divorce, the waiting period after decease of husband, dower, maintenance, paternity, inheritance and bequest and the same number also refer to economic and commercial transactions (*mu'amalat*) such as sales, rent, mortgage, sale, contract, loan. There are around 30 verses on crimes and penalties such as murder, highway robbery, rebellion, adultery and false accusation, and another 30 refer to justice, equality, evidence, consultation and the rights and obligations of citizens. It should be noted however, that the *fuqahā'* (jurists) are not in agreement over these figures as such calculations tend to differ depending on the approach taken and interpretations inferred. See generally, Kamali, M.H., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, (1997, The Islamic Texts Society), p.19

²⁵ Generally defined as the "search for the effective cause for the ruling in the texts". An in-depth discussion of the concept of *ta'līl* is not essential to our objectives in this essay – for an extensive discussion on this topic, an accurate expose can be found in Kamali, M.H., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, (1997, The Islamic Texts Society), pp.34-37

²⁶ The question as to whether a particular injunction in the *Qur'ān* has binding force or whether it is merely a recommendation or even permissible is not always manifest from the plain (*zāhir*) reading of the sentences or words of the textual sources.

Rather than expound the subject of commands and prohibitions, unnecessary for our imminent purposes, scholarship necessitates some limited discussion of the diversity of the *Qur'ānic* language on legislation.

permissibility and forbiddance in the sources, and are often open to interpretation, specification and *Ijtihād*.²⁷

Commandments, recommendations, praiseworthy actions and positive effects of actions are all highly indicative of the legality (*mashrū'iyah*) of the particular conduct in question, if not its obligatory or commendable nature.²⁸

If the lexicology of the specific text implies a specific conduct's obligatory nature (*wujūb*) in the case of an explicit command or manifest instruction on doing something and refraining from its opposite action, the conduct in question is given the status of 'obligatory' (*wājib*). In the absence of clear commandment or if there is anything which mitigates its obligation, i.e., an effective disclaimer such as, "...it is better for you if you do such and such..." such conduct is mitigated to the level of 'commendable' or 'highly recommended' (*mandūb*).

Furthermore, when something is declared 'permissible' (*ḥalāl*) or grants permission in respect of something (*idhn*), or when it is stated that there is 'no sin' or 'no blame' upon a person for some conduct, or if there is an express denial of the prohibition of something, such expressions infer the permissibility (*ibāḥah*) and free choice (*takhyīr*) in respect to that conduct.²⁹

Denunciation or condemnation of a specific act is clear and manifest, either through the description of the conduct itself in harsh terms, or a description of the ill-effects of such conduct; any legal instruction with any ambiguity as to its delineation of permissible and impermissible would not amount to effective legislation.

Prohibition of certain conduct is identified by accompaniment of sever deprecation of the act, identification of a punishment for certain conduct, description of the act as unclean or impure and referral to such conduct as 'sin' (*fīsq*) or 'deviation' (*ithm*).³⁰

²⁷ *Lit.* 'effort' or 'intellectual exertion to arrive at a legal conclusion' This refers to the in-built mechanism in Islamic Law which allows for dynamic and time-specific interpretation in scenarios and contexts which were previously non-existent and which thus render the original prohibitions or permissibility applicable or non-applicable relatively.

²⁸ Kamali, M.H., *Supra*, n.10, pp.33

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.33

³⁰ Any link to Satan (*shayṭān*) also infers condemnation of such acts!

If the language is specific and explicit in prohibition with no compromise on the act, the specific conduct becomes absolute in its impermissibility (*ḥarām*),³¹ and in the absence of any clear mention of its impermissibility, or any doubt thereof, it is deemed reprehensible (*makrūh*). The determination and classification of such injunctions are the function of the *mujtahid*,³² who arrives at a conclusion in the light of the language of the relevant textual sources as well as the general and specific objectives and principles of the *Sharī'ah*.

This brief linguistic analysis of the legislating lexicology of the *Qur'ān* manifestly shows its flexibility in the deduction and extrapolation of its judgements and allows for infinite application of its laws.

The language of the *Qur'ān* further allows for interpretation of the exact enforceability of its judgements, limited to those which are not explicit and determined (*qat'īy*) allowing for timeless adjudication by those trained in the law to imply whether the time period in question and societal issues necessitate an obligation, recommendation or mere permissibility.³³

The categories enumerated above form a part of what the jurists (*fuqahā'*) have attempted to codify in juristic manual as the five values (*al-aḥkām al-khamsah*). When an act is adjudged to be obligatory it is labelled *farḍ* or *wājib*; if it is deemed absolutely forbidden, it is termed *ḥarām*. The spectrum found in between these two extremes are usually religious in character and form and provide measures for any form of human conduct. Only the two extremes of this spectrum provide legal injunctions which are respected as commands and prohibitions – the remainder are non-legal and non-justiciable, as aptly summarised by Kamali in his classic thesis on the topic.³⁴

³¹ It is worth noting here, that even with those things which are categorically stipulated as being haram (unlawful), the legal maxims of Islamic Law (*al-qawā'id al-fiqhīyyah*) provide that “Necessity makes the unlawful lawful” (*Al-darūratu tubīyih al-maḥzūrah*). It is on this basis that the jurists validate demolition of an intervening house to prevent the spread of fire to adjacent buildings, just as they validate dumping of the cargo of an overloaded ship to prevent the danger (or darār) to the life of its passengers.

³² *Lit.* ‘One who does *Ijtihād*’ (See *Supra*, n.27) - one who is trained in the science of jurisprudence and is able to exercise effort and judgement in Islamic Law.

³³ Kamali, *Supra*, n.10, pp.34

³⁴ *Ibid.*;

“The *Qur'ān* thus leaves open the possibility, although not without reservations, of enacting into *ḥarām* what may have been classified by the *fuqahā'* of one age as merely reprehensible, or *makrūh*. Similarly, the recommendable, or *mandūb*, may be elevated into a *wājib* if this is deemed to be in the interest of the community in a different stage of its experience and development.”

ii. The *Sunnah* and *Aḥādīth*

The *Sunnah*, an Arabic word which literally means ‘method’ was applied by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) as a legal term comprising what he said, did and agreed to.³⁵

The *Sunnah*³⁶ is the second source of the *Sharī’ah*, which is divided into the narrations of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) (*ḥadīth*) and actions of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) (*Sunnah*); both of which are used to interpret the *Qur’ān* as implied by the following *ḥadīth*:

“The character of the Apostle of Allah was the *Qur’ān*.”³⁷

The *aḥādīth* (pl. *ḥadīth*) were transmitted orally to the major *ḥadīth* scholars who compiled collections of *aḥādīth* in book form, the earliest being compiled around 160 years after the death of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم). Each *ḥadīth* scholar had his own rigorous methodology for accepting or rejecting narrations that Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) was claimed to have uttered, and there are 6 unanimously accepted *ḥadīth* collections³⁸ which are accepted by the Sunnis.³⁹

In juristic usage the term *Sunnah* has varied in its inference. The scholars of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* infer *Sunnah* to mean “a source of the *Sharī’ah* and a legal proof next to the *Qur’ān*.”⁴⁰ But to the scholars of *fiqh*, *Sunnah* refers to a *Shar’ī* (i.e., pertaining to the *Sharī’ah*) category which falls under the category of highly recommended (*mandūb*), related to the instructions, actions, words,

³⁵ Ramadan, S., *Supra*, n.8, pp.43-44

³⁶ Many scholars, muslim and non-muslim alike, define the *Sunnah* as the narrations and actions of Muḥammad. This is technically incorrect, as the science of *ḥadīth* clearly shows. Some narrations are classified as weak narrations and may contradict certain other narrations. If both allude to contradictory descriptions then there is a possibility that Muḥammad did both actions at different times according to various factors. However if the narrations allude that he, for example, ordered the stoning of an adulterer, and another narration states that he ordered the flogging of the same adulterer, then one has to be accepted and the other rejected. The methodology employed to do this is a science in which *ḥadīth* scholars are trained, and ultimately it depends on which of the *aḥādīth* are in accordance with the *Qur’ān* – if a *ḥadīth* is found to be contradictory to the *Qur’ān* and cannot be interpreted in the light of the *Qur’ān* then, as agreed to by all *ḥadīth* scholars, it should be rejected as a fabrication or having been erroneously transmitted.

³⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Ṣalāt* (Book of Prayers) Book 004: *Ḥadīth* No.1623. I.e., he was the *Qur’ān* personified.

³⁸ These are those collections compiled by the *ḥadīth* scholars: Imām Bukhārī, Imām Muslim, Imām Abū Da’ūd, Imām Tirmidhī, Imām Nisā’ī, Imām Aḥmad (رضي الله تعالى عنهم اجمعين).

³⁹ Common term for those who adhere to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah* – Those who follow the way of the Prophet and do not divide themselves into sects.

⁴⁰ Kamali, *Supra*, n.10, pp.46

omissions or practice of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) however this does not mean that the *Sunnah* is confined to the *mandūb*, as in its usage as a source of *Sharī'ah*, the *Sunnah* may authorise and clarify an act to be not only *mandūb*, but also *wājib*, *ḥarām*, *makrūh*, and so on.

Thus, to clarify, in *Ūṣūl al-Fiqh*, one may say that such an act is validate by the *Qur'ān* or by the *Sunnah*, whereas an exponent of *fiqh* (a *faqīh*) would say that such an act is *Sunnah* which means that it is not obligatory (neither *fard* nor *wājib*); but rather falls under one of the five headings under *mandūb*.⁴¹

Muslim scholars and jurists use the terms *Sunnah* and *ḥadīth* interchangeably, but for our purposes it should be understood that they are in fact two separate sources.

Literally, *ḥadīth* is a narrative, communication, or a factual account of an event. This is in line with the usage of the word in the *Qur'ān*, but in its technical sense it refers to the exclusive sayings of the Prophet memorised by the companions during the lifetime of the Prophet and written into *ḥadīth* collections by *ḥadīth* scholars who applied their own rigorous methodology to authenticate narrations according to the strength and number of narrations and the reliability of the narrators.⁴²

3. Jurisprudential Methodology – *Fiqh*⁴³ and *Ūṣūl al-Fiqh*

The Islāmic revival that has been observed in this century (in thought, practice and academia) has led to an interest in Islām at a phenomenal degree. Researchers, and pertinent to our interest in this short essay, jurists, have taken a special interest in Islāmic Law (*Sharī'ah*), possibly due to the fact that it has served throughout the centuries, not only as the master science, but also the most effective agent of change in the social order and the community life of the Muslims, and more than any factor, it has safeguarded the social fabric of Islām through the political vicissitudes of our times.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.47

⁴² For an extensive discussion on the science of the verification of *ḥadīth* see Kamali, M.H., *Supra*, n.10, pp.44-82

⁴³ Derived from the root '*fa-qa-ha*' it has been defined as: (1) 'The mid-way between [knowledge of the] unknown and the known, thus it is a speciality within knowledge'; (2) 'knowledge of the rulings of the *Sharī'ah*'; (3) 'to understand, to comprehend'; (4) 'to study and specialise in [knowledge]'. *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān*, by al-'Allāmah al-Rāghib al-Isfahāni, (2002, Damascus), pp.642-643

⁴⁴ Gibb, H.A.R., *Mohammedanism*, (2nd Ed., 1953, Oxford University Press), pp.9-11; Thus it is deduced, that to comprehend Islām, Muslims, their history or culture, it is vital to understand the nature of Islāmic Law, and to

The other terms and concepts intertwined with *Sharī'ah* are *fiqh* and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Whereas, as explained above, *Sharī'ah* encompasses the sources of Islamic Law and Islamic Law itself, *fiqh* refers to the science of knowing the law, and can be translated into English legal vernacular as Jurisprudence, whereas *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* refers to the methodology of Jurisprudence.

The word *Uṣūl* is the plural of '*aṣl*', literally 'root'. Therefore, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, or the roots of Islamic Law, details the indications and methodology by which the rules of *fiqh* are deduced from their sources, that is, the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*, and thus is the science developed by Islamic scholars which represents the theoretical basis of the *Sharī'ah*.⁴⁵

This description is accurate in the sense that the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* constitute the sources as well as the subject matter to which the methodology of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* is applied. The two sources in and of themselves contain very little by way of methodology, but rather provide the indications and essential principles from which the rules of the *Sharī'ah* are extrapolated.⁴⁶

Summarily explained, the methodology of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* comprises methods of reasoning such as analogy (*qiyās*), juristic preference (*istiḥsān*), presumption of continuity (*istiṣḥāb*) and the rules of interpretation and deduction – thus *fiqh* is the end product, whereas *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* is the methodology employed to get to the end product.⁴⁷

An adequate knowledge of *fiqh* necessitates in-depth familiarity and expertise with its sources. The knowledge of the rules of *fiqh*, therefore, must be acquired directly from the sources, necessitating this as a characteristic inherent in the *faqīh* (exponent of *fiqh*) and therefore the deduction is that a person who learns the *fiqh* in isolation of its sources is not a *faqīh*.⁴⁸

understand Islāmic Law properly, its structures and foundations (*Uṣūl*) must be understood. As the methodology of *Sharī'ah* jurisprudence is so unique, secular jurists in particular need to grasp and note the differences with other legal systems.

⁴⁵ Ramić, Š.H., *Language and the Interpretation of Islāmic Law*, (2003, The Islāmic Texts Society), p.ix

⁴⁶ Kamali, M.H., *Supra*, n.10, p.1

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2

The *faqīh* must not only know the rule that misappropriating the property of others is forbidden, but also the detailed evidence in the source, that is, the *Qur'ānic* verse (2:189) which stipulates “*And do not devour your wealth among yourselves through falsehood...*”⁴⁹

Knowledge of the rules of interpretation is also essential to a correct and valid understanding of a legal text as obviously if incorrectly understood rules cannot be deduced with authority, especially where the text does not enunciate a clear (*zāhir*) ruling.

Thus, rules by which one is to distinguish a text in which there is room for multiple deductions from one which is definitive, the manifest (*zāhir*) from the explicit (*naṣṣ*), the general (*‘āmm*) from the specific (*khāṣṣ*), the literal (*ḥaqīqī*) from the metaphorical (*majāzī*), etc., and how to understand the implications (*dalālāt*) of a given text are among the subjects which are given detailed attention in *Ūṣūl al-Fiqh*.

An adequate comprehension of the rules of interpretation enables the proper use of human reasoning in a system of law which originates in divine revelation. This is methodology of analogy (*qiyās*) which is an approved method of deducing rulings from the sources of the *Sharī’ah* using analogical reasoning. Again, the *Ūṣūl al-Fiqh* regulates the employment of this method as to its limits, how analogy should be constructed, what authorities are required in conjunction to it (or in conflict) with other recognised proofs. Juristic preference (*istiḥsān*) is also a rationalist doctrine and a recognised methodology. It generally connotes giving preference to one, out of many conceivable and valid solutions to a problem, to be determined by the jurist relative to the specific case, with equity, fairness and the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī’ah* firmly in mind.

The principle objectives of *Ūṣūl al-Fiqh* is to guide and regulate rulings deduced by intellectual exertion (*Ijtihād*) on the part of the Jurist (*mujtahid*) practicing *Ijtihād*.

It may be useful at this point to clarify, for those unskilled in, or unfamiliar with Islamic Jurisprudence, that the knowledge of the rules of interpretation, the *‘āmm*, *khāṣṣ*, *muṭlaq*, *muqayyad*, etc., is equally relevant to modern statutory law. When the jurist and the judge, whether in the *Sharī’ah* or in secular law, fails to find any guidance in the clear text of the statute

⁴⁹ This is the detailed evidence for the ruling, whereas to merely state a general and well-known principle in the *Qur’ān* such as “theft is forbidden in the *Qur’ān*” would not be regarded as an evidence.

on a particular legal matter, he will exercise judicial construction or analogy and thus the skill is invaluable whether in a *Sharī'ah* context or a court of statutory jurisdiction.⁵⁰

A *mujtahid* is bound to observe an order of priority between the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*, and thus resort to the *Sunnah* is only made when he/she fails to find any guidance in the *Qur'ān*, or if that guidance is general and a clarification is required which can only be derived by recourse to the *Sunnah* or the *ḥadīth*.

However, should there be a clear text in the *Qur'ān* on the matter, it must be followed and given priority over any ruling derived from the *Sunnah* or the *ḥadīth* which may happen to be in conflict with the *Qur'ān*.⁵¹

The priority of the *Qur'ān* over the *Sunnah* is partly due to its nature of consisting of only of manifest revelation (*wahy zāhir*) whereas the *Sunnah* mainly consists of internal relation (*wahy bāṭin*) and is largely transmitted in the words of the narrators themselves.

The other reason for the order of priority relates to the standard of authenticity of the sources – the *Qur'ān*'s authenticity is not open to doubt and is thus classified as *qat'ī* or decisive, with respect to authenticity and must necessarily therefore take precedence over *Sunnah*.⁵²

The last point relevant to the order of precedence between the two is that the *Sunnah* behaves explanatorily to the *Qur'ān*, and explanation or commentary naturally occupies a secondary place relative to the source that it explains.⁵³

Some scholars have been mistaken in asserting that the *ḥadīth* explains the *Qur'ān* over the explanation of *Qur'ānic* verses as being explained by other of its verses, and over the *Qur'ān* being explanatory upon the *ḥadīth*. This has led to the unfortunate position whereby the meanings and possible interpretations of the *Qur'ān* have been dictated and limited to the explanation by a certain *ḥadīth* and precludes any further interpretation. This has been aptly

⁵⁰ Kamali, M.H., *Supra*, n.10, pp.2-3; One important matter, and one which we will have recourse to later, is one of the central principles of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*; the precedence and order of priority of the *Qur'ān* over the *ḥadīth*.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.58-59

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.59

⁵³ Imām Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, (1341 AH., Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Makhlūf, Cairo: *Al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafīyah*), Vol.IV, p.3

rebutted by contemporary and classical scholars trained in the science of *Qur'ānic* exegesis (*tafsīr*).

As Kamali notes, to take such a position, an effective reversal of the role of the two sources, would result in the situation in which incidents of conflict between the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* must be resolved in favour of the latter.⁵⁴

Some scholars have asserted that the famous *ḥadīth* of Sayyidna Mu'ādh bin Jabal (رضي الله عنه) (which clearly denotes the superiority of the *Qur'ān* over the *Sunnah*) is anomalous in that not everything in the *Qur'ān* is given priority over the *Sunnah*, since, it is further asserted, the *mutawātir ḥadīth* (narration of a tradition which has come from many chains of reliable narration which thus attest to its authenticity) carries the same status as the *Qur'ān* itself. Furthermore, according to the majority opinion, one must have recourse to the *Sunnah* before implementing a *Qur'ānic* rule in order to ascertain whether it has specific qualifications as to its application as evidence by the *Sunnah*, which the explicit text of the *Qur'ān* does not detail.⁵⁵

Although certain jurists differ with the above assertions of the *Sunnah's* priority over, or in explaining the *Qur'ān*, as opposed to the *Qur'ān* detailing the *Sunnah*, it should be noted that Imām al-Shāṭibī (رحمه الله) states, notwithstanding the weak proposition above in face of the explicit texts and nature of the *Qur'ān* and its own attestations as to its authority over secondary sources⁵⁶ (of which the *Sunnah* is, in relation to the *Qur'ān*), this need not affect the order of the priority in favour of the *Qur'ān*.⁵⁷

Imām al-Shāṭibī (رحمه الله) is strongly of the opinion that in every case where the *Sunnah* is called upon to specify or qualify the general or absolute terms of the *Qur'ān*, it effectively explains or interprets the *Qur'ān*, and such explanation or interpretation need not be the only or most

⁵⁴ Kamali, M.H., *Supra*, n.10, p.60

⁵⁵ Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, (1341 AH., Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Makhlūf, Cairo: *Al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafīyah*), Vol.IV, p.5

⁵⁶ Reference is being made to the Holy *Qur'ān* 16:44; "...And We have sent down to thee the Reminder that thou may explain to mankind that which has been sent down to them, and that they may reflect."

⁵⁷ Al-Shāṭibī, *Supra*, n.55, Vol.IV, p.5

authoritative one, exclusive of any others – thus in no such instance is the *Qur'ān* abandoned in favour of the *Sunnah*.⁵⁸

4. Objectives of Islamic Law – *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

The primary and foremost goal of the *Sharī'ah*, “according to most jurists, is the freeing of Man from the grip of his own whims and fancy, so that he may be the servant of Allah by choice, just as he is one without it.”⁵⁹

To strengthen this primary goal, the purposes of the *Sharī'ah* pertain to this world as well as the next and both have the interest of Man in sight.⁶⁰

The purposes of the law, in Imām al-Shāṭibī (رحمه الله) view, are of two types: those that relate to the intention of the Lawgiver (God) and those that relate to the intention of the subject.⁶¹

The fundamental rule with reference to the subject is that his objectives must conform with the intention of the Lawgiver,⁶² and it is through the interaction of the two intentions that human actions are determined as being within the objectives of the Law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*).

The *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as enumerated by Imām al-Ghazālī (رحمه الله), and agreed to by most jurists including Imām al-Shāṭibī (رحمه الله), are primarily of two types: purposes pertaining to the Hereafter (*dīnī*) and purposes pertaining to this world (*dunyawī*). The worldly purposes further branch out into four categories: the preservation of life (*naḥṣ*), the preservation of progeny (*naṣl*), the preservation of intelligence (*‘aql*) and the preservation of one’s wealth (*māl*). Together with religion (*dīn*), these all yield five ultimate purposes of the law and are termed necessities (*ḍarūrāt*) and are the primary purposes of, or objectives sought to be achieved by, the law. The necessities (*ḍarūrāt*) are then followed by the needs (*ḥājāt*) which are additional needs which

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.IV, p.5

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.II, p.168; See also, Nyazee, I.A.K., *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihad*, (2002, Islamic Book trust, Kuala Lumpur) p.235

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.II, p.6; See also, Nyazee, *Ibid.*, p.235

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.II, p.5; See also, Nyazee, *Ibid.*, p.237

⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol.II, p.331; See also, Nyazee, *Ibid.*, p.237

supplement the primary purposes. The third category of are those things which seek to establish ease and facility and are known as complementary purposes (*taḥsīnāt*).⁶³

Another jurist, a century later, who was aware of Imām al-Ghazālī's (رحمه الله) codification of the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as enumerated above was Qāḍī Ibn Rushd (رحمه الله), more commonly known as Avveroes. He conducted his own formulation of the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and its ultimate values and are found at the end of his *magnus opus*, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid* (The Distinguished Jurist's Primer).⁶⁴

The jurists break up the *Maqāṣid* into three levels, as explained above. The first level is that of the necessities (*ḍarūrāt*) which they believe have been maintained by all societies as they constitute the fundamental elements of any kind of society. These are the primary *Maqāṣid* and the jurists focus primarily on these. These are then supported by the supporting needs (*ḥājāt*), which are then followed by the complementary values and norms (*taḥsīnāt*).

What is important to note about the significance of each level is that the primary purposes are supported by the secondary and tertiary levels, in absence of which, however, the primary purposes will stand by themselves. This is not true of the lower levels, as the existence of the supporting needs (*ḥājāt*) and complementary values (*taḥsīnāt*) depends upon the primary purposes and cannot be maintained on their own.⁶⁵

The importance of the individual purposes within the necessities (*ḍarūrāt*) is reflected in the order in which they are categorised: Thus religion (*dīn*) has precedence over life (*naḥs*), which

⁶³ Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, (1341 AH., Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Makhlūf, Cairo: *Al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafīyyah*), Vol.II, pp.8-13

⁶⁴ For the full account, See Ibn Rushd, Abu al-Walid Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (al-Hafid) (d.1198), *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid* (The Distinguished Jurist's Primer) (*trans.*), (1994, Garnet Publishing, Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilisation, Doha, Qatar), Vol II, pp.570-572; "The Qāḍī (Ibn Rushd), may Allāh be pleased with him, said:

It is necessary to know that the rulings (*aḥkām*) of the *Sharī'ah* are divisible into two kinds. One of these is adjudicated by the judges, and the majority of the (*aḥkām*) we have mentioned fall under this category. The second kind are those not adjudicated by the judges, and most of these are in the recommended (*mandūb*) category. This category of the (*aḥkām*) are like responding to the Muslim greeting (*salām*), blessing one who sneezes, and the like, which are mentioned by the jurists at the end of their books that are called *jawāmi'*..."

⁶⁵ Nyazee, I.A.K., *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihad*, (2002, Islamic Book trust, Kuala Lumpur) p.243

has precedence over progeny (*naṣl*), which has precedence over intelligence (*‘aql*), which has precedence over wealth (*māl*). Further, each of the primary purposes may be further sub-divided into public and private purposes. The public purposes seek to maintain the interests of the community as a whole, whereas the private purposes promote protection of the rights of the individuals.⁶⁶

Thus, these can be categorised into three: the rights due to Allah, the rights of the community as a whole, and the rights of the individual.

Each primary which is deemed a necessity has its particular supporting needs and complementary norms.

To illustrate the way in which this philosophy is practiced, Imām al-Shāṭibī (رحمه الله) explains, using the example of prayer (*salāt*), he states that the essential parts of the prayer are its elements (*arkān*) and obligatory observances (*farā’iḍ*). Everything else is for its completion and is complementary.⁶⁷ The parts of the prayer are categorised amongst the *Maqāṣid* in such a way that “each outer shell forms a protective boundary for the inner shell. One who crosses the outer shell or boundary will soon demolish the inner shell.”⁶⁸ Thus, the person who gives up the supererogatory prayers (*nafl*) will soon give up those offered by the Prophet (*sunan*), and will finally demolish the obligatory prayers (*farā’iḍ*).

For example, he continues, even a drop of wine or a small quantity of it is prohibited, because it leads to consumption of larger quantities, though it does not intoxicate or damage the intellect. A severe penalty is provided for stealing a thing of small value as it leads to the stealing of larger amounts and to robbery.⁶⁹ In the same way, the ethical and moral norms hover around and protect the main and essential legal norms. The *ḥājī* and the *taḥsīnī* are, therefore, to be considered the servants of the *Ḍarūrī*.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Nyazee, I.A.K., *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihad*, (2002, Islamic Book trust, Kuala Lumpur) p.243

⁶⁷ Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, (1341 AH., Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Makhlūf, Cairo: *Al-Maṭba’ah al-Salafiyyah*), Vol.II, p.22

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.II, pp.22-23

⁷⁰ Nyazee, I.A.K., *Supra*, n.66, p.244

5. Conclusion

Perhaps it is fitting here, to outline the reasons for writing this essay, for if it had been written in the beginning, some may have become averse to reading on!

In this short essay, the author has intended to re-establish the classical understanding and definition of the *Sharī'ah* and what constitutes the *Sharī'ah*, or rather what its origins and functions are.

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, we are living in a time of extreme heedlessness in which, unfortunately, the materialistic elements of our societies have made us short-sighted with respect to our ultimate aims in life – the attainment of nearness to Almighty Allāh (صبيحانه و تعالى). We currently reside in times where slander and abusive dialogue has taken the place of intellectual exchanges and discourse. It is in such times when reversion and recourse to the sources are imperative.

Ḥaḍrat Masīḥ al-Mau'ūd (عليه صلوة و السلام) came in this age to revive the religion of Islām and to renew its holy and true teachings. He claimed to be the *Mujaddid* (reformer) that was to appear at the head of the 14th Century to revive the religion of Islām, just as many *Mujaddidīn* (reformers) appeared before him in accordance with the prophecy of our Noble Prophet, Sayyidna Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم).

Renewal is not performed by the introduction of new elements into the religion – that is known as *bid'ah* (innovation) – rather, renewal means exactly that: to revive the divinely ordained, true, traditional teachings as taught by the Master Prophet Sayyidna Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم).

This is what the life and works of Ḥaḍrat Masīḥ al-Mau'ūd (عليه صلوة و السلام) is a testament to. He brought no new teaching, neither did he abrogate anything which was once originally an ordained and integral constituent of the Divine law of Islām.

He renewed the lost and forgotten and, sometimes wrongly attributed teachings, that had found their way into Islām at the hands of innovators or human error, and corrected them according to

either the traditional Islāmic methodologies or the divine strengthening and inspiration that was bestowed upon him by Allāh (صبحانه و تعالى), just as was bestowed upon other *Mujaddidīn* and the *Sufīs* and the great *awlīyā* (Friends) of Allāh (صبحانه و تعالى). Such vanguards of the Islāmic Ummah are giants like Sayyid ‘Abd-ul-Qādir Jīlānī, Sayyid Abū-al-Ḥasan Kharqānī, Sayyid Abū Yazīd Bistāmī, Sayyid Junaid Baghdādī, Sheikh al-Akbar Mohy al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, Sayyid Dhu-l-Nūn al-Misrī, Sayyid Mu‘īnuddīn Chishtī Ajmerī, Sayyid Qutb-ud-Dīn Bakhtīār Kākī, Sayyid Farīd-ud-Dīn Pākpatnī, Sayyid Nizām-ud-Dīn Dehlvī, Sayyid Shāh Walī-ullāh Dehlvī, and Imām al-Rabbānī Sheikh Aḥmad al-Sirhindī (رضى الله عنهم و رضوا عنه), and this is a non-exhaustive list specifically mentioned by Ḥaḍrat Masīḥ al-Mau’ūd (عليه صلوة و السلام) in one list.⁷¹ Others yet include some of the greatest *fuqahā* (jurists) and Imāms of *Tafsīr* (interpretation of the *Qur’ān*) and *Ḥadīth* sciences such as Sayyidna Imām Mālik, Imām Ibn Hazm, Imām Ibn al-Taymīyyah, Imām Ibn al-Qayyim,⁷² and the list is endless.

Specifically on this point, Ḥaḍrat Masīḥ al-Mau’ūd (عليه صلوة و السلام) clarifying this subtlety states,

“My critic has further objected that God Almighty has said:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي⁷³

Therefore no reformer or Prophet is now needed. In so thinking the critic has raised an objection against the Holy Qur’ān itself, inasmuch as the Holy Qur’ān has promised the appointment of successors from among the Muslims and has said that through them faith would be strengthened, doubts would be set at rest and security would be restored after a state of fear. Thus if nothing is permissible after the perfection of the faith, then, according to the critic, the Khilāfat that continued for thirty years after the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) would also be rendered unnecessary, as the faith had been perfected and nothing more was needed. The citation of the verse

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي⁷⁴

⁷¹ Kitāb-ul-Barīyyah, Rūḥānī Khazā’in, Vol. 13, pp. 91-92

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.219-226 (footnote)

⁷³ “This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you.” Sūrah Al-Mā’idah, Ch.5:v.4 [Author]

by the critic is out of place. We do not allege that a reformer or a Muḥaddath detracts anything from the faith or adds anything to it. What we say is that when, after the lapse of time, the holy teaching of the faith is covered with the dust of wrong thinking and the pure countenance of truth becomes hidden, then reformers, Muḥaddathīn and spiritual successors appear to reveal the true and beautiful countenance of the faith.

We do not know whence our poor critic has learnt that reformers and spiritual successors arrive for the purpose of adding to or abrogating the faith. Their purpose is not to abrogate but to display the light and brilliance of the faith. The conception of the critic that there is no such need reveals that he does not have much regard for the faith. He has never reflected on what Islam is, what its progress signifies, how its real progress can be achieved, and who can be considered a true Muslim. That is why he considers it enough that the Holy Qur'an being available, and there being a plethora of divines, the hearts of most people are automatically drawn to Islam and no reformer is needed. He does not appreciate the fact that reformers and spiritual successors are needed among the Muslims, in the same way as Prophets are needed among other people.”⁷⁵

In conclusion non-Muslims, academics and everyday folk, are engaging with Islām more than ever before, and unfortunately so far, they have been met mostly with unacademic, amateur, rash and sometimes abusive discourse. As those who claim to follow the Noble Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the followers of the Imām Mahdī, the Imām of the Age (عليه صلوة و السلام), it is incumbent upon us to return to the traditional methodologies and classical texts as exemplified by the Ḥaḍrat Masīḥ al-Mau'ūd (عليه صلوة و السلام) in order to educate and enlighten the masses as to the true, classical and profound teachings of the Perfect Religion of Islām, as revealed by the Gracious and Merciful One, to his unlettered, beloved Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), who delivered the message with pristine purity and clarity so that his Ummah could attain nearness to the Almighty.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁵ *Shahādat-ul-Qur'ān*, Rūḥānī Khazā'in, vol. 6, pp.339-345