

“THE HUMAN INTELLECT, DIVINE REVELATION AND KNOWLEDGE BASED ON AL-QARADHĀWĪ’S WORK: *AL-‘AQL WA AL-‘ILM FI AL-QUR’ĀN AL-KARĪM*”*

Al-Qaradāwī begins by extolling – the special position of mankind as Allāh’s most honoured creature destined to construct a holistic civilization by managing and developing the world’s resources based on the guidance and knowledge from Divine revelation (*al-wahy al-Ilāhī*) as well as the exertions of the human intellect (*al-‘aql al-insānī*) and will. While reaffirming the supremacy of Divine revelation, al-Qaradāwī explains that the sound human intellect has been entrusted by Divine revelation to play crucial roles in the confirmation of revealed truths and the development of all fields of human knowledge necessary for effective and wholesome human vicegerency on earth. There should not be, however, any conflict between revelation and reason. A fuller exposition of this epistemological dimension of the Islamic worldview is given in his book *al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm fi al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* which was published in 1996.

The importance of the use of the human intellect for thinking, reflection, understanding, knowing, pondering and contemplation is reflected by the Qur’ānic use of several verbs which convey the aforementioned functions. The verb *‘aqala* (to use one’s intelligence, to comprehend, to understand, to think) is used in its present tense (second person plural, masculine and third person plural masculine) – *ta‘qilūn* and *ya‘qilūn* – 46 times in the Qur’ān while the verbs *‘aqala*, *na‘qilu* and *ya‘qilu* occur once each. The expression “*afalā ta‘qilūn*” (Will you not understand? Or Have you then no sense?) occurs 13 times. The expression is used to convey Allāh’s exhortation or admonishment to human beings for having double standards (Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 44); for neglecting the Hereafter and being deceived by worldly pleasures despite knowing God’s Scripture (Q. *Al-An‘ām* 6: 32, Q. *Al-Añrāf* 7: 169, Q. *Yūsuf* 12: 109); for ignoring the

message of the Qur'ān (Q. *Al-anbiyā'* 21: 10); for not understanding the powers of Allāh (S.W.T) in giving life and causing death (Q. *Al-Mu'minūn* 23: 80); for not realizing that the false gods worshipped by human beings could not bring benefit nor harm them (Q. *Al-Anbiyā'* 21: 63-67). In these verses the Qur'ān reprimands human failure to use the God-given intellect to strengthen true religious faith.

The verb *ta'qilūn* “you understand” is used in the Qur'ān mainly in connection with the “signs” (*āyāt*) or “symbols” of Allāh (S.W.T) as represented by the verses of the Qur'ān or as can be witnessed in nature.¹ The intellect is supposed to help human beings understand that the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in the Qur'ān as well as in the universe are meant to point to the existence and presence of Allāh (S.W.T) as well as His absolute power, wisdom and will.

The verb *ya'qilūn* (“they understand”) occurs 22 times, while its negative form *lāya'qilūn* (“they do not understand”) is used as a disparagement of those who do not use their intellect, which is Allāh's gift to them, to understand and to accept the wisdom behind the injunctions of Allāh (S.W.T) and the truths in the message of the Prophet (Ṣ.‘A.W).² In its positive form *ya'qilūn* (“they understand”) it is used mostly to describe a community, a people (*qawm*) “who understand” or “who use their intellect” to confirm the existence and supremacy of Allāh (S.W.T) and acknowledge His purpose pervading the universe through the variety of natural processes which serve the interest and welfare of mankind. One such verse is the following:³

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night
and day; and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man;
and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the

¹ See Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 242 (“Thus Allāh expounds unto you His Signs so that you may understand”), Q. *Āl'Imrān* 3: 118 (“We have made plain to you the Signs if you will understand.”); Q. *Al-Zukhruf* 43: 3 (“Behold, We have made it a Qur'ān in Arabic so that you might encompass it with your reason.”).

² See Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 171; Q. *Al-Mā'idah* 5: 58, 103; Q. *Yūnus* 10: 100; Q. *Al-Ankabūt* 29: 63.

³ See Q. *Al-Rūm* 30: 24; Q. *Al-Jāthiah* 45: 5; Q. *Al-Ra'd* 13: 4, Q. *Al-Nahl* 16: 12, 66, 67; Q. *Al-Ankabūt* 29: 35.

earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon; and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: [in all these] there are signs for people who use their intelligence.

(Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 164)

The above verse together with Q. *Al-Jāthiyah* 45: 5, Q. *Al-Ra‘d* 13: 4, S. *Al-Naḥl* 16: 12, 66-67 clearly indicate Allāh’s desire that human beings should use the intellect to understand the laws of nature and the benefits it brings as Allah’s generous provision to mankind. The intellect is also to be used to draw moral lessons from the history of nations or civilizations which were destroyed by Allāh (S.W.T) because of their injustices and iniquities. Those who do not use their God-given intellect to derive such lessons and consequently turned their backs against the Messengers of Allāh are described as people who have “hearts by which they could comprehend” (*qulūbun ya‘qilūna bihā*),⁴ but instead they refused to learn from historical events because their hearts, rather than their eyes, were blind:

Have they not travelled in the land, and have they hearts by which they could comprehend (and gain wisdom), and ears by which they could hear (the truth)? For indeed it is not the eyes that have become blind, but it is the hearts, which are within their bosoms, that grow blind.

(Q. *Al-Ḥajj* 22: 46)

⁴ “The word for ‘heart’ in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions... If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allah’s Providence and Allah’s Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently.” Abdullah Yūsuf Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’ān*, note 2825, 834.

The *Ūlū al-Albāb*

Allāh (S.W.T) designates those who use their intellect in the way He intended it to be with the special appellation of “*ūlū al-albāb*”⁵ and “*ūlū al-nuhā*” – those who possess or are endowed with “intellects” (*albāb*, sing. *lubb* or ‘*uqūl*, sing. ‘*aql* or *nūha*, sing. *nuhyah*) which are unadulterated (*ṣāfiyah*) and understandings which are luminous and pure (*al-afhām al-nayyirah al-khāliṣah*).⁶ The appellation *ūlū al-albāb* occurs in sixteen places in the Qur’ān, nine in Meccan verses and seven in Madinan verses.

The commentators of the Qur’an are generally unanimous in defining UA briefly as “possessors of intellect” or “people of intelligence”. Al-Ṭabarī says in his commentary (p.470) that UA means “the possessors of great minds” (*aṣḥāb al-‘uqūl al-kabīrah*). Al-Zamakhsharī says that UA, among other things, means “those who acted in accordance with the dictates of their intellects, then they observed and reflected” (*al-Kashshāf*: 494). Al-Rāzī observes that the term UA is an expression of praise and appreciation (*al-madhwa al-thana*) which Allah (S.W.T.) applies to those who use their intellects in the best possible way. To him the UA can be understood briefly as “the possessors of intellects” (*ūlū’l-‘uqūl*), or to be more precise as “those

⁵ “*Albāb*” is the plural of “*lubb*”, meaning lit. the innermost part of thing, “heart”, “mind”, “intellect”, “reason”, “understanding”. The expression “*ūlū al-albāb*” in the Qur’ān is translated by Muḥammad Asad (*The Message of the Qur’ān*) as “people endowed with insight.” Abdullah Yūsuf‘Ali (The Glorious Qur’ān) translates it as “men of understanding” and “You who are wise”. Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall (*Holy Qur’ān*) translates it as “men of understanding”. Mahmoud Ayoub (*The Qur’ān and Its Interpreters*, Vol.1) translates it as “those who have intelligence”. Muḥammad‘Ali al-Ṣābūnī (*Ṣafwat al-Tafāsīr*, Vol.1) gives the meaning of “the possessors of illuminating intellects which are free from base desire or caprice” (*aṣḥāb al-‘uqūl al-nayyirah al-khāliṣah min al-hawā*). Yūsūf‘Abd al-Laṭīf explains that “*lubb*” means “The intellect that is free from any blemish or defect” (*al-‘aql al-khāliṣ min al-shawā‘ib*). It is said “that it represents what is pure and righteous of the intellect”. Thus, “every *lubbis* an intellect, but not every intellect is a *lubb*.” Allāh (S.W.T) uses the appellation of *ulū al-albāb* to designate “the pure intellects” (*al-‘uqūl al-zakiyyah*) which could properly comprehend the wisdom of Allāh’s laws. (*Zubdat al-Mufradāt li-al-Ṭullābwa al-Ṭalibāt: Mukhtasar al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur’ān li Aṣfahānī*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1998, p. 447). Al-Ṭabarī defines *ulū al-albāb*as “People of intellects and understandings” (*ahl al-uqūlwa al-afhām*) (). IbnKathir defines it as “The pure and consummate intellects which comprehend things with their true natures” (*al-‘uqūl al-tāmmah al-zakiyyah allati tudrik al-ashyā‘ bi haqā‘iqihā*) (). Al-Qurtubi defines it as “Those who use their intellects in pondering and considering the evidences” (*Alladhīna yasta‘milūna ‘uqūlahum fī ta‘ammul al-dalā‘il*) (). SayyidQuṭb defines it as “The possessors of sound comprehension (*al-idrāk al-ṣaḥīḥor al-idrāk al-salīm*) who open their keen insights (*baṣā‘ir*) to receive the cosmic signs of Allah.” (*Fi Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 7th ed. 1971, Vol.4, 188. See also *Lisān al-‘Arab*(Beirut: DārṢādir, 3rd. ed. 1993), Vol.1, pp. 729-733.

⁶Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-‘Aqlwa al-‘Ilm*, p. 23.

who possess complete and consummate intellects”(*dhū al-‘uqūl al-kāmilah*) (*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*: 145,155). The expression, according to him, reflects great honour (*al-sharaf al-‘azīm*) and high esteem (*al-martabah al-‘āliyah*) conferred upon those who possess sound intellects.

An interesting and insightful interpretation is given by al-Rāzī when he compares verse 164 of Sūrah al-Baqarah which ends with the expression “*Ili-qawmin ya ‘qilūn*” (for people who use their reason) with verse 190 of Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān. Both verses contain a similar message, although the former is more elaborate, in the sense that the expression “people who use their reason” is also the fundamental attribute of the UA mentioned in the latter. He explains that the term UA is used in verse 190 of Āl ‘Imrān although the theme is the same because the intellect has two aspects – an outward (*zāhir*) dimension and an inner dimension which is the *lubb*. He opines that the human act of reasoning at the initial stage is ordinary intellection (*‘aqlan*) while at a more perfect stage it becomes profound intellection (*lubban*). But his humility and intellectual modesty make him say, with caution, “this is what comes to my mind, while Allah knows better the secrets of His great, munificent and wise Words” (*fahādhā ma khaṭar bi al-bālwa Allah a ‘lam bi-asrār kalāmihi al-‘azīm al-karīm al-ḥakīm*) (*idem*, p.110).

IbnKathīr in his *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm* explains the meaning of *albābas* “pure and consummate intellects (*al-‘uqūl al-tāmmah al-zakiyyah*) which comprehend things and their realities in the clearest way” (*allatī tudriku al-ashyā’ bi-ḥaqāihā’alā jaliyyātihā*) (www.al-islam.com/tafseer, acc. 14 October 2009). He elaborates that “those who understand, reason, and ponder over the meanings of things in their true nature are only those who possess sound intellects and correct understandings (*al-‘uqūl al-salīmahwa al-fuhūm al-mustaqīmah*)” (www.atafsir.com/Tafsir, acc. 21 October 2009).

Al-Alūsī says in his *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī* that UA are “those who possess unadulterated intellects (*al-‘uqūl al-khālīṣah*) which are freed from any kinds of blemished sentiments or imaginations” (www.altafsir.com , acc. 21 October 2009).

Al-Shawkānī defines UA as “those who have sound intellects which are freed from defects of deficiency” (*al-‘uqūl al-ṣaḥīḥah al-khālīṣah‘an shawā‘ib al-naqṣ*). In another paragraph he defines *albābas* “intellects which are pure (or uncontaminated)” (www.altafsir.com. acc. 19 October 2009).

Ibn ‘Ashūr in his *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīrwa al-Tanwīr* uses the expression “perfect minds” (*al-‘uqūl al-kāmilah*) (www.altafsir.com, acc. 19 October 2009).

SayyisQutb in his *Fī Zilāl al-Qur‘ān* describes UA as “those who possess sound comprehension” (*ūlū al-idrāk al-ṣaḥīḥ*) (*Fī Zilāl al-Qur‘ān*, 2: 188).

HAMKA, the well-known Indonesian scholar, translates UA at various places in his *Tafsir al-Azhar* as:

- a) “orang-orang yang mempunyai inti fikiran” (people who possess insight)
- b) “orang-orang yang mempunyai fikiran dalam” (people who possess deep thought)
- c) “orang-orang yang berfikir” (people who think)
- d) “orang-orang yang berakal” (people who use their reason)
- e) “orang-orang yang berfikiran dalam” (people who think deeply)

Shaikh Abdullah Basmih, the Malaysian translator of the Qur’an, *Pimpinan al-Rahman* gives more or less the same meanings as HAMKA:

- a) “orang-orang yang menggunakan akal fikiran” (p.87) (people who use their mind)
- b) “orang-orang yang berfikiran” (p.96) (people who think)
- c) “orang-orang yang berakal fikiran” (p.55) (people of reason)

d) “orang-orang yang berakal” (people of reason who could think and understand)

In English commentaries of the Qur’an, UA is translated as “men of understanding” by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (*The Holy Qur’an*), Marmaduke Pickthall (*Holy Qur’an*), Zafar Ishaq Ansari (tr. *Tafhīm al-Qur’ān of Mawdudi*) and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (*The Noble Qur’an*), while Muhammad Asad (*The Message of the Qur’an*) is the only one who translates UA as “the ones endowed with understanding”. In my humble opinion the translation of UA as “men of understanding” may not be quite acceptable nowadays given the prevalent gender preferences, whereas the Arabic word “*aṣḥāb*” is gender neutral. Thus “people of understanding” would be more acceptable.

In the verses Q.*Al-Baqarah* 2: 169, Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 197, Q. *Al-Mā’idah* 5: 100, the *ulū al-albāb* are urged to be God-Fearing in comprehending Allāh’s laws as the mindfulness of Allāh’s pleasure and displeasure is the best of attitudes to be adopted by the possessors of sound intellect. In the verses of Q. *Al-Ṭalāq* 65: 10-11, they are called upon to appreciate the purpose of Allāh’s sending His Message and the Messenger to them. In Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 269, they are being praised by Allāh (S.W.T) for being able to grasp His message and the wisdom in it. In the verses of Q. *Āl’Imrān* 3: 7, they are being commended for having the attitude of “those who are firmly grounded in knowledge” (*al-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilm*) who believe in the whole of the Qur’ān and do not try to delve into the mysteries or hidden meanings of the metaphorical or allegorical verses (*mutashābihāt*). In verses of *Āl’Imrān*, 3: 190-191, they are pointed out as people who, upon reflecting on the creation of the universe and the marvels that it contains, remember Allāh (S.W.T) in every situation they may be in. Their keen intellects then acknowledge the Divine purpose behind the creation, they praise Allāh (S.W.T) and seek His protection from the punishment of Hell in the Hereafter. In Q. *Yūsuf* 12: 111, they are highlighted for their sensitivity

to the lessons of human history and their ability to interpret correctly the Qur’ānic stories and historical events. In Q. *Al-Ra’d* 13: 19, they are praised by Allāh (S.W.T) for recognizing that what has been revealed to the Prophet was the truth, while others refused to acknowledge it. In other verses of the Qur’ān, they are described as possessors of elevated moral virtues which blend together “intellectual perfection” (*al-kamāl al-‘aqlī*) and “moral perfection” (*al-kamāl al-khuluqī*)⁷. In verses of Q. *Ibrāhīm* 14: 52 and Q. *Ṣād* 38: 29, they are singled out for their faith in the Qur’ān, their conviction, derived from their faith in the Qur’ān, in the absolute oneness of Allāh (S.W.T) and their attribute of always taking heed and receiving admonition from the Qur’ān.

The *ulū al-albāb* use their intellects to understand the “signs of Allāh’s action” in the creation of the universe through the methods of rational discernment (*ta’ aqqul*) and reflection (*tafakkur*), while in understanding the “signs of Allāh’s words” in the Qur’ān, they use the methods of deep pondering or contemplation (*tadabbūr*) and seriously taking heed of Allāh’s message or warnings (*tadhakkur*)⁸. In Q. *Al-Zumar* 39: 17-18, they are described as people who eschew false gods or deities and who, after reverently listening to the words of Allāh (S.W.T), try to follow the best course of conduct. In Q. *Al-Zumar* 39: 21, Allāh (S.W.T) mentions how verdant vegetation finally ends as useless rubble as a reminder (*dhikrā*) to the *ulū al-albāb*, while in Q. *Ghāfir* 40: 53-54, they are reminded that just as the original Torah contained Allāh’s guidance (*hudā*) to Moses and the Israilites, so does the Qur’ān join together all the revelations and the Messengers of Allāh (S.W.T) thereby guiding the *ulū al-albāb* to the Straight Path.

As for the expression *ulū al-nuhā*, also meaning “possessors of intellects” (*aṣhāb al-‘uqūl*), al-Qaraḍāwī explains that *nuhā* is the plural form of *nuhyah*, another name for the

⁷ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm*, p. 25.

⁸ Ibid., p. 26. See Q. *Al-Nisā* 4: 82; Q. *Muḥammad* 47: 24.

intellect, because “it prevents (*yanhā*) its owner from doing anything which is not proper for human beings to do”, just as the intellect is called “‘*aql*” in Arabic because “it restrains its owner (*ya‘qiluhu*) and holds him back (*yahjuzuhu*) from what is undesirable or improper.”⁹ The expression is used twice in the Qur’ān, both of them in *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20: 53-54 and 128. In *Ṭāhā*, 20: 53-54, Allāh (S.W.T) says that He is responsible for making the earth liveable and that He brings down rain to produce all kinds of vegetation and life in order for mankind to consume and utilize. In all these the *ūlū al-nuhā* would surely recognize them as signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in the world of nature. In *Ṭāhā*, 20: 128, Allāh (S.W.T) reminds His servants of the destructions He meted out to evil-doing communities of the past and says that the *ūlū al-nuha* would surely acknowledge the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in those catastrophic historical events.¹⁰

The Qur’ān also uses the word *al-fu’ād* for the intellect, in singular and plural forms, as one of the three basic means of attaining knowledge – hearing (*al-sam’*), sight (*al-basar*) and heart (*al-fu’ād*).¹¹ In many verses, the word *qulūb* (hearts) is mentioned instead of *fu’ād*. The verses show that “hearts” have the faculty of intellection (*qulūbun ya‘qilūna bihā*) and understanding (*qulūbun lā yaḥqahūna bihā*) which is the function of the intellect (‘*aql*) although the word ‘*aql* itself is not used in the Qur’ān.¹²

A. The Obligation of Reflective Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) and Bearing in Mind or Recollecting (*al-tadhakkur*) Allah’s Messages.

The Qur’ān urges human beings in a variety of ways to engage in thinking and rational reflection on all matters, with the exception of the essence of Allāh (S.W.T). “People who think

⁹ Al-Qaradāwī, *al-‘Ilmwa al-‘Aql*, p. 28.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹ Q.*Al-Isrā’* 17: 36; Q.*Al-Naḥl* 16: 78.

¹² See Q.*Al-Baqarah* 2: 7; Q.*Al-A‘raf* 7: 179; Q.*Al-Naḥl* 16: 108; Q.*Al-Isrā’* 17: 46; Q.*Al-Kahf* 18: 57; Q.*Al-Ḥajj* 22: 46.

or reflect” (*qawm yatafakkarūn*) are mentioned favourably by Allāh (S.W.T) in connection with self-understanding and efforts to understand the laws of nature and its innumerable bounties as signs of Allāh (S.W.T).¹³ The whole of the universe, from the smallest to the biggest objects, according to the Qur’ān, are to be subjected to human thought, reflection, meditation and contemplation. But thinking and reflection are to be applied as well to non-material, moral, spiritual and eschatological matters, in addition to the wisdom behind Allah’s revelation and injunctions.¹⁴ Such sincere thoughts and reflections, freed from base desires, should lead to the recognition of Allāh (S.W.T) as The Creator, The One and Only God and The Master and Sustainer of all that exists, and the recognition of Prophet Muḥammad as the true Messenger of Allāh (S.W.T).

To emphasize the highly regarded value of deep and sincere reflection, al-Qaraḍāwī quotes from the book of Ibn al-Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa’ādah* (The Key to the Abode of Happiness) what one of the Pious Ancestors once said: “A reflection (*tafakkur*) for a certain period of time is better than sixty years of worship (*‘ibādah*) [without reflection].” It is also said that “A reflection for a certain period of time is better than one night vigil.” ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz is reported to have said that “Thinking about the bounties of Allāh is one of the best forms of worship” (*Al-fikrah fī ni‘am Allāh min aḡḡal al-‘ibādah*). Ibn al-Qayyim, reflecting upon what Imām al-Ghazālī wrote on *al-tafakkur* in his *Iḡyā ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revivification of Sciences of Religion) explains that “thinking or reflection is the action of the heart (*‘amal al-qalb*), while *‘ibādah* [in the narrow sense of the word] is the action of the physical organs, and since the heart is the noblest of the organs, therefore its action is nobler than the action of the organs.¹⁵ Thinking, says Ibn al-Qayyim, generates knowledge which in turn generates the will and from

¹³ See Q.*Al-Ra’d* 13: 3; Q.*Al-Naḡl* 16: 10-11, 68-69; Q.*Al-Rūm* 30: 21.

¹⁴ See Q.*Al-Zumar* 39: 42; Q.*Al-Hashr* 59: 21; Q.*Yūnus* 10: 24; Q.*Al-A’raf* 7: 175-176.

¹⁵ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-‘Aqlwa al-‘Ilm*, p. 46.

the will action is produced.¹⁶ Therefore “useful thoughts” (*afkār nāfi‘ah*) from the seed-bed of the heart would give rise to good actions, while “bad thoughts” (*afkār radī‘ah*), which are induced by Satan in the heart which is empty or not used in the way it is meant to be, would lead to undesirable actions.¹⁷

In addition to its exhortation of reflective thinking, the Qur’ān also urges human beings to take heed of, to keep in mind and to recollect (*tadhakkur*) the Divine messages and lessons which they learn from Allāh’s revelations and signs in the Qur’ān or in the universe. While *tafakkur* functions as a means of “acquiring new knowledge” (*li taḥṣil ma‘rifah jadīdah*), *tadhakkur* brings about “old knowledge” (*ma‘rifah qadīmah*) which may be neglected or concealed through negligence (*ghaflah*) and forgetfulness (*nisyān*). The Qur’ān denounces “people who are negligent” (*al-ghāfilūn*) of the revealed truths or of the Hereafter in several verses.¹⁸ Those who “forget Allāh” in this worldly life are regarded as sinners. Consequently Allāh (S.W.T) would forget them on the Day of Judgement.¹⁹ Therefore one of the roles of the Messenger of Allāh (S.W.T) was to remind people while the Qur’ān was also described as “a reminder” (*tadhkirah*) for human beings. The benefit of *tadhakkur* is that it brings back knowledge to the heart, while the benefit of *tafakkur* is that it procures and increases knowledge. Al-Qaraḍāwī recalls the insightful saying of Imām al-Ghazālī: “Every reflective thinker (*mutafakkir*) is a recollector (*mutadhakkir*), but not every recollector is a reflective thinker.”²⁰ Nevertheless, the Qur’ān stresses the importance of *tadhakkur* by associating it as principle attitude of the *ūlū al-albāb* and by the question “Will you not then keep this in mind?” (“*afalā tatadhakkarūn*”, “*afalā tadhakkarūn*”), after conveying Divine teachings, transcendental truths or

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁸ See Q.*Al-A‘rāf* 7: 179; Q.*Al-Naḥl* 16: 108; Q.*Al-Rūm* 30: 6-7, Q.*Al-A‘rāf* 7: 136.

¹⁹ See Q.*Al-Tawbah* 9: 67; Q.*Al-Hashr* 59:19.

²⁰ Al-Qaraḍāwī refers to the chapter on *al-Tafakkur* in al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*.

spiritual lessons to mankind.²¹ The Qur’ān confirms that despite Allāh’s guidance and repeated reminders, human beings tend to be negligent and forgetful. “How seldom do you keep this in mind” (“*qalilan mā tadhakkarūn*”), says the Qur’ān, regarding man’s attitude towards Divine revelation, the absolute oneness of Allāh (S.W.T) and the authenticity of the Prophet’s message.²²

B. True Knowledge and Right Faith

From the viewpoint of the Qur’ān, true knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-haqīqī*) and right faith are linked together. As the verse “Read! In the name of your Lord who created” indicates, knowledge acquired through the means of reading is to be nurtured in the bosom of faith and manifests itself through the humility of the heart. True knowledge in fact leads to right faith.

There is, therefore, no intrinsic conflict between knowledge and faith or between true science and true religion in the Islamic worldview, unlike the experience of medieval Europe. “Knowledge strengthens faith and faith blesses knowledge, for truth does not contradict truth,” says al-Qaraḍāwī. To him “Knowledge is a religion, and religion to us is a (form of) knowledge.” He explains in the following way:

Knowledge for us is a religion because the Book of our Lord and the *sunnah* of our Prophet both invite us to knowledge and consider its pursuit a form of worship and a religious obligation, regardless whether it is ‘knowledge of religion’ (*‘ilm al-dīn*) or ‘knowledge of this world’ (*‘ilm al-dunyā*), be it knowledge whose source is Divine revelation or knowledge whose source is the universe. After all, revelation

²¹ See Q.Ṣād 38: 29; Q.Ibrāhīm 14: 52; Q.Al-An‘ām 6: 80; Q.Al-Sajdah 32: 4; Q.Yūnus12: 3; Q.Hūd 11: 24; Q.Al-Nahl 16: 17; Q.Al-Mu‘minūn 23: 84, 85; Q.Al-Şāffāt 37: 153-155; Q.Al-Jāthiyah 45: 23; Q.Al-Nūr 24: 1; Q.Al-An‘ām 6: 152.

²² See Q.Al-Tawbah 9: 126; Q.Al-A‘raf 7: 3; Q.Al-Hāqqah 69: 41, 42.

is the decree of Allāh and the universe is His creation, and there cannot be a contradiction between His creation and His decree, as He says: ‘Verily to Him belong all creation and all commandments. Blessed be Allāh, the Sustainer of all the worlds!’²³

Religion is to us a (form of) knowledge, because it is not based on blind adherence, or simply following the tradition set by the forefathers, chieftains or influential leaders – in fact, the Qur’ān wages war against blind imitation and absolute subordination to others. It calls upon everyone who subscribes to a religious creed that such creed is built upon proofs and conviction, not upon mere assumption or conjecture.²⁴

Knowledge which is connected with right faith does not lead to egocentrism unlike the case of Qārūn who said that “This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that is in me!” (Q. *Al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 78); rather it brings forth the spirit of humility as showed by Prophet Solomon when he said, “This [favour] is [an outcome] of my Sustainer’s bounty, to test me as to whether I am grateful or ungrateful [to Allāh (S.W.T)]” (Q. *Al-Naml* 27: 40), or by Dhū al-Qarnain when he said with humility “This [building] is a mercy from my Sustainer...” (Q. *Al-Kahf* 18: 98).

This is in contrast to the secularised knowledge prevailing in the West today, which has become “an implement of destruction and a tool which is menacing to mankind.” Al-Qaraḍāwī says further, “It is true that this knowledge has enabled man to reach the moon... but, in spite of that, he is unable to secure for himself happiness and tranquility on the surface of the earth.”²⁵

²³ Q. *Al-A‘rāf* 7: 54.

²⁴ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm*, pp. 96-97.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 97.

While the Qur’ān shows in many verses that true knowledge leads to right faith, truth and the right path, the question may be asked as to why there are people who know the truth but do not follow it. What are the factors which prevent some people from having faith after they have gained knowledge or from following the truth after having discovered it? To answer this question, al-Qaraḏāwī refers to the views of Ibn al-Qayyim contained in his book, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah*. The scholars are divided on this issue; there are those who believe that knowledge must necessarily lead to guidance (*al-hidāyah*) and those who do not agree with that view. Among the verses adduced by the first group in support of their view are “But those among them who are well-grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm*) and the believers, believe in what has been revealed...” (Q. *Al-Nisā’* 4: 162), and “Of all His servants, only those who are endowed with knowledge (*‘ulāmā’*) fear Allāh...” (Q. *Fāṭir* 35: 28). The group subscribing to the opposite view argues that Iblis knew Allāh (S.W.T) and had no doubts about His absolute oneness, the reality of the resurrection, Paradise and Hell. Yet he preferred to be condemned to Hell and bear the wrath of Allāh (S.W.T) for refusing to bow down to Adam when ordered to do so by Allāh (S.W.T). Similarly many of the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) – Jews and Christians – during the time of the Prophet knew the truth of the Qur’ān recited to them and recognized the authenticity of Prophet Muḥammad (Ṣ.‘A.W). In spite of that knowledge, they decided to reject the Qur’ān and the prophethood of Muḥammad (Ṣ.‘A.W). Thus they were judged as *Kāfirūn* (rejectors, disbelievers) in the Qur’ān, not on account of ignorance or being led astray, but on account of their jealousy and determination to oppose the truth.

Ibn al-Qayyim says that both sides have adduced strong arguments to justify their respective stands, but in his opinion, if knowledge is seen as absolutely and necessarily productive of right guidance then the second group is right. But if knowledge is seen as causing

and requiring right guidance, but due to some obstacles it fails to fulfil the requirement then the first group is right. To Ibn al-Qayyim there are several reasons why knowledge falls short of guiding the servants of Allāh (S.W.T) to the truth. Some of these reasons include: a) weakness in one's knowledge of the above matter; b) the heart has become hardened due to lack of purification; c) the presence of pride and jealousy in the heart as was the case of Iblīs; d) obstruction from powerful rulers or oppressive authorities; e) obstruction due to one's base desires or self-centred wealth considerations; f) love of or attachment to one's family, relatives and tribes; g) love of one's dwellings or country; h) perception that believing in Islam or following the Prophet means rejection or insult to parents or forefathers; i) the people that one hates have embraced Islam, thus giving rise to the attitude of not wanting to be associated with the hated people though one knows the truth of Islam. This was the case of the Jews and the Anṣār who embraced Islam earlier than other people in Madīnah; j) obstruction due to the strong influence of tradition or customs which are deeply entrenched in the life and personality of a person.²⁶

C. True Knowledge is the Way to Certainty (*yaqīn*)

Just as true knowledge is a guide to right faith – as indicated in the Qur'ān – it is also a path to certainty which is the opposite of conjecture (*ẓann*) and doubt (*shakk*). The certitude of faith in Allāh (S.W.T), His signs, and meeting Him in the Hereafter is what the believer strives to attain. He or she can arrive at this stage of faith through sound knowledge and deep engagement in it to the point that it removes all traces of ignorance, conjecture and doubt. The Qur'ān describes “the people endowed with certainty” (*qawm yūqīnūn, al-mūqīnūn, hum yūqīnūn*) as those who clearly recognize the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) as manifested in the physical world and

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 111-114.

in the human selves, and who believe with absolute certainty in Allāh’s revelations, in the existence of that which is beyond human perception (*al-ghayb*) and in the Hereafter. They are praised in the Qur’ān as being on true guidance (*hudan*) from their Sustainer and as “those who will prosper” (*al-mufliḥūn*).²⁷

It is well-known, explains al-Qaraḍāwī, that Satan fights against the believing human being using two principal armies, “the army of carnal desires” (*jund al-shahawāt*) and “the army of doubts” (*jund al-shubuhāt*). Through carnal desires, Satan corrupts man’s character and deeds, while through doubts he corrupts man’s faith and thought. The believer has to oppose these Satanic invasions by using two fundamental weapons – the weapon (*silāḥ*) of self-restraint or self-control (*al-ṣabr*) to overcome desires and the weapon of certainty (*silāḥ al-yaqīn*) to overcome doubts.²⁸ Drawing upon the insights of Ibn al-Qayyim and Sufi masters, as laid out in his book *Madārij al-Sālikīn* (The Ways of Those Who Follow the Spiritual Path), it is made clear that certainty is to faith what the spirit is to the body, and as one of the fruits of knowledge, certainty is “the greatest life of the heart” (*a’zamḥayāt al-qalb*). When the heart is engulfed in certainty, it will be filled with light, gratitude to Allāh (S.W.T), and love of Allāh (S.W.T). Certainty and love are the pillars of faith, from which all good deeds flow. When both become weak, then the deeds become weak, but when both are strong then the deeds would become strong.

Certainty, as revealed in the Qur’ān, consists of three levels – the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*),²⁹ the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*)³⁰ and the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).³¹

²⁷ See Q.*Al-Jāthiyah* 45: 4, 20, 32; Q.*Al-Dhāriyat* 51: 20, 21; Q.*Al-An‘ām* 6: 75; Q.*Al-Baqarah* 2: 2-5.

²⁸ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-‘Aqlwa al-‘Ilm*, p. 116.

²⁹ Q.*Al-Takāthur* 102: 5.

³⁰ Q.*Al-Takāthur* 102: 7.

- a. The knowledge of certainty is a deep knowledge that is not filled with doubts, forgetfulness or negligence. It is the believer’s knowledge or the knowledge-laden faith of the God-fearing servants who are praised by Allāh (S.W.T) in the Qur’ān. Although its grades vary, it can be increased and strengthened by efforts, proofs and acts of obedience to Allāh (S.W.T).
- b. This degree of *‘ayn al-yaqīn* is higher than the first and the difference between the two is the difference between seeing and hearing a true report. This is the degree of certainty in which Prophet Abraham (‘A.S) aspired to achieve when he requested Allāh (S.W.T) to show him how Allāh (S.W.T) would revive the dead.³² It was also in this degree of certainty that Prophet Muḥammad (Ṣ.‘A.W) was able to witness the realities of the realm beyond the reach of human perception, including seeing Angel Jibrīl during his Ascension (*mi‘rāj*) experience.³³
- c. The degree of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* which is above the other two mentioned above. If the first degree is associated with listening or receiving “true information” (*khabar ṣādiq*) and the second is associated with witnessing (*mushāhadah*) and seeing (*‘iyān*), then the third degree is comparable to actual touching (*lams*) and tasting (*dhawq*). Ibn al-Qayyim compares the three degrees to man’s knowledge of Paradise and Hell. Knowing or being told about both of them belongs to *‘ilm al-yaqīn*. When both places are being shown to human beings who can see what is inside both of them, that belongs to the degree of *‘ayn al-yaqīn*. But when the people of Paradise are brought into Paradise and the people of Hell are brought into it, that experience represents *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*.

³¹ Q.*Al-Wāqī‘ah* 56: 95.

³² Q.*Al-Baqarah* 2: 260.

³³ Q.*Al-Najm* 53: 11-18.

D. The Censure Against Ignorance (*al-Jāhiliyyah*)

As a logical consequence of the preeminent position bestowed by the Qur'ān upon knowledge and people endowed with knowledge, the Qur'ān views ignorance with approbation and censure. Four types of ignorance are highlighted in the Qur'ān. The first is the ignorance of the correct religious belief (*jāhiliyyat al-'aqīdah*),³⁴ the second is the ignorance manifested in behaviour (*jāhiliyyat al-sulūk*),³⁵ the third is the ignorance of correct morality (*jāhiliyyat al-akhlāq*),³⁶ and the fourth is the ignorance of the true law and governance (*jāhiliyyat al-ḥukmwa al-siyāsah*).³⁷

The Qur'ān strongly urges that the people of ignorance (*al-jāhilūn*) be shunned for the above reasons and for a) making fun of fundamental religious issues as shown in the attitude of the ignorant Jews toward Moses' commands;³⁸ b) deliberating crucial matters based on emotional considerations rather than based on sound knowledge and objective analysis;³⁹ c) clinging stubbornly to false beliefs and deviant practices despite being told the truth and reminded repeatedly by the Prophets and Messengers of Allāh (S.W.T)⁴⁰; and d) committing acts of disobedience, opposition and defiance against Allāh (S.W.T).⁴¹ Those who have achieved the perfection of knowledge (*kamāl al-'ilm*), according to Ibn al-Qayyim, do not commit acts of disobedience against Allāh (S.W.T) because they know that Allāh (S.W.T) sees them and are fully aware of the consequences of their sins and the negligence of their hearts.⁴²

³⁴ See Q. *Āl-'Imrān* 3: 154.

³⁵ See Q. *Al-Aḥzāb* 33: 33.

³⁶ See Q. *Al-Fath* 48: 26.

³⁷ See Q. *Al-Mā'idah* 5: 50.

³⁸ See Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 67.

³⁹ See Q. *Hūd* 11: 45-47.

⁴⁰ See Q. *Al-Naml* 27: 55; Q. *Al-Aḥqāf* 46: 22-23; Q. *Al-A'rāf* 7: 138-139; Q. *Al-An'ām* 6: 111.

⁴¹ See Q. *Al-An'ām* 6: 54; Q. *Al-Nahl* 16: 119.

⁴² Al-Qaradāwī, *al-'Aqlwa al-'Ilm*. p. 135.

The worst form of ignorance is the compounded ignorance (*al-jahl al- murakkab*), whereby the ignorant person is not aware that he is ignorant and therefore is not keen to learn because he believes that he is knowledgeable. According to al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad human beings are of four types.

The first is the one who knows and knows that he knows. This is a person of knowledge, therefore follow him. The second is the one who knows, and does not know that he knows. This person is asleep, so wake him up. The third is the one who does not know, and he knows that he does not know. This person is ignorant, so teach him. The fourth is the one who does not know, and he does not know that he does not know. This person is lost, so leave him.⁴³

The Qur'ān associates the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) with the last type of ignorance for they believe that they are doing good deeds whereas, in fact, they are causing a lot of destruction.⁴⁴ Similarly some of the disbelievers (*kuffār*) contend that they are doing good when, in actual fact, their deeds are leading people astray.⁴⁵ This is why the one who brings about unlawful innovation (*bid'ah*) is worse than the one who merely commits sins or disobeys Allāh (S.W.T). For the sinner or the disobedient person (*'āṣī*) knows that he or she is disobeying Allāh (S.W.T) and one can expect he or she to repent to Allāh (S.W.T). As for the unlawful innovator who thinks that he or she is getting closer to Allāh (S.W.T) through the acts of unlawful innovation, it is inconceivable that he or she would repent.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., p. 136.

⁴⁴ See Q.*Al-Baqarah* 2: 11-13.

⁴⁵ See Q.*Al-Kahf* 18: 103-104.

⁴⁶ Al-Qaraḏāwī, p. 137.

F. The Types of Knowledge Censured in the Qur'ān

1. The first type of knowledge which is censured by the Qur'ān is “harmful knowledge” (*al-‘ilm al-dārr*). This is the opposite of “useful knowledge” (*al-‘ilm al-nāfi‘* or *al-ma‘rifah al-mufīdah*) which is urged by the Qur'ān for man to acquire. Among the harmful knowledge rejected in the Qur'ān are black magic or witchcraft and astrology, the former being used for evil purposes while the latter makes the false claim of knowing or foretelling the future which rightly belongs to the realm of Divine knowledge.⁴⁷ This censure does not include, says al-Qaradāwī, the scientific method of weather forecasting which is based on the study of “the conventions of Allāh in the universe” (*sunan Allāh fī al-kawn*) and the laws of cause and effect. Astronomy, which is useful for mankind, is not censured as it is a scientific discipline in which Islamic civilization excelled.⁴⁸
2. The act of hiding or concealing true knowledge as was done by the Jews and Christians who knew about the forthcoming advent of Muḥammad (Ṣ.‘A.W) and the truth of the Qur'ān, and decided to conceal that knowledge out of envy or selfishness.⁴⁹
3. Knowledge of the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) or revelation which is not practiced or followed by the one who is given such knowledge who decides to follow, instead, what is dictated by base desires or insinuated by Satan is compared to a dog which lolls out his tongue, whether or not he is being attacked or left alone.⁵⁰
4. Materialistic knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-maddī*) which dazzles the knowers and veils them from believing in Allāh’s revelations and from following the Messengers of Allāh(S.W.T). The Qur'ān says that “.... they exulted in such knowledge (and skill) as they

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 138-142. See Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 102; Q. *Al-Falaq* 113: 1-4.

⁴⁸ See Q. *Yūnus* 10: 5; Q. *Al-An‘am* 6: 97; Q. *Al-Isrā’* 17: 12.

⁴⁹ See Q. *Āl‘Imrān* 3: 187; Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 146, 159-160.

⁵⁰ See Q. *Al-A‘rāf* 7: 175-176.

had,”⁵¹ and scoffed at the clear signs of Allāh (S.W.T) brought by the Messengers. Their exultation in their materialistic knowledge blinded them to the Prophetic knowledge (*‘ilm al-nubuwwah*) and the wisdom of Divine revelation.

5. Knowledge of the exterior and visible dimension of the life of this world resulting in forgetting or neglecting the Hereafter and all that it demands. When the Qur’ān says that “They know (*ya‘lamūn*) but the exterior and visible dimension (*ẓāhiran*) of this worldly life (*min al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*) but are heedless of the (end of things in the) Hereafter”,⁵² it means that such people - do not really know, for it precedes the statement with “but most people do not know” (*walākinna akthara al-nāslāya‘lamūn*).⁵³
6. Knowledge which deludes the one possessing it with worldly fortune and authority, making him or her to forget that it is Allah’s grace and generosity which make such bounty available to him or her. This egocentric attitude is expressed in the following words of the Qur’ān:

“*Qālainnamāūtītuhū‘alā‘ilmin‘indi*” (He said: ‘This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have.’)⁵⁴

G. The Comprehensiveness and Variety of Knowledge in the Language of the Qur’ān

The knowledge which is alluded to in the Qur’ān includes a wide variety of knowledge with subject matters ranging from transcendental realities, man, the universe, nature, the Hereafter, history, etc., and the means to attaining such knowledge include the senses, empirical methods, the intellect and rational proofs, Divine revelation, intuition and Prophethood. Just as it

⁵¹ See Q. *Ghāfir* 40: 82-83.

⁵² Q. *Al-Rūm* 30: 7.

⁵³ Q. *Al-Rūm* 30: 6.

⁵⁴ Q. *Al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 78.

is not true that knowledge, as assumed by many people in the West, is confined to what can be established by scientific observation and experimentation, so it is also incorrect to think, as some pious Muslims do, that “knowledge” in the Qur’ān implies only “religious knowledge” (*al-‘ilm al-dīnī*). There are several instances in which the word *‘ilm* or its derivatives refers to non-religious knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the workings of the physical universe (*al-‘ilm al-kawnī*) as well as knowledge regarding man and his culture (*‘ulūm al-insān*). For example, the verse which ends with the statement, “*innamā yakshsha Allāha min ‘ibādihi al-‘ulamā*” (verily only the learned among His servants fear Allāh) is preceded by a long description dealing with natural processes and the wonderful variety of living things surrounded by the myriad of colours in their natural mountainous settings:

Do you not see that Allāh sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of colour, and black intense in hue. As so among men and crawling creatures and cattle are they of various colours. Truly only the learned (*‘ulamā*) among His servants fear Allāh.⁵⁵

The word *‘ulamā*’ in the above verse, asserts al-Qaraḍāwī, does not refer only to the scholars of religion (*‘ulamā’ al-dīn*) or the jurists of Divine law, with due respect to their noble status. They are the people who know the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) and discover His laws as operating in the sky, vegetation, mountains, human beings, cattle and other animals. They are those who know the greatness of Allāh (S.W.T) through the various physical, natural and human sciences. Through the knowledge of these sciences they come to know the power and wisdom of Allāh (S.W.T) which leads them to the state of awe and utter dependency on the mercy and

⁵⁵ Q.Fāṭir 35: 67-68.

compassion of their Sustainer.⁵⁶ In many instances the use of the verb “*ya‘lamūn*” (“they [plural] know”) or “*ta‘lamūn*” (“you [plural] know”) in the Qur’ān refers to a general quality of human intellectual cognition which is conscious and heedful of wider implications and a rightly guided comprehension of things. It does not mean that they have attained a specific kind of sciences of religion (*‘ulūm al-dīn*) or sciences of the world (*‘ulūm al-dunyā*).⁵⁷

However, The Qur’ānic statement “But most of the people do not know” or “But most of them do not know” or “No, most of them do not know” refers to the people’s lack of “the true knowledge “(*al-‘ilm al-ḥaqīqī*) of the matters or issues referred to by the Qur’ān in the particular verse. Most of these issues have to do with man’s perception of Divine power, Divine knowledge of the Last Day, the true “friends” of Allāh (S.W.T), the nature of Allāh’s promises, and the true nature of transcendent realities.⁵⁸

It should be noted that knowledge may be divided into three levels: highest, middle-most and lowest. The lowest level knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-asfal*) involves the use of bodily organs in physical activities such as horse riding, touring, tailoring, etc. The highest level knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-a‘lā*) is the knowledge of religious truths which can only be obtained through what Allāh (S.W.T) has revealed in His scriptures, whose authenticity is preserved, and to His Prophets. The middle-most level knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-awsat*) refers to sciences of the world or of religion which are considered as obligatory upon some members of the Muslim community (*farḍ kifāyah*), otherwise the whole community will be committing a sin of omission. Imām Al-Ghazālī and others like him among the religious scholars of the community have maintained that

⁵⁶ See also Q.*Al-Naml* 27: 50-52.

⁵⁷ See also Q.*Al-A‘rāf* 7: 28, 32; Q.*Al-An‘ām* 6: 105, 143, 144; Q.*Al-Tawbah* 9: 6, 93; Q.*Al-Baqarah* 2: 23; Q.*Al-Rūm* 30: 59.

⁵⁸ Al-Qaradāwī, *al-‘Aqlwa al-‘Ilm*. pp.154-160.

the acquisition of knowledge of various technologies or industries which are required or necessary for the wellbeing or progress of the community as a whole is *farḍ kifāyah*.

Many Qur'ānic verses point and makes references to several types of industry involving the use of iron for military and civil purposes,⁵⁹ fruits for consumption and commercial purposes,⁶⁰ animal skins and hairs for a variety of purposes,⁶¹ ship building⁶² and ornamental business,⁶³ construction of buildings⁶⁴ and construction of great dams.⁶⁵ Al-Qaradāwī says that in this era of technological, biological, communication and information revolutions, it is incumbent upon the Muslim *Ummah* to play its roles in these revolutions, particularly when Islam makes it a duty for the *Ummah* to be leading the caravan (*fī muqaddimah al-qāfilah*) and not to be at the tail end of it.⁶⁶

Of the obligatory knowledge which every Muslim is required to know, the most important of them all is the knowledge of Allāh (S.W.T) and His attributes. The Qur'ān is replete with verses enjoining human beings to have that knowledge which is linked with the knowledge of the message and the mission of the Messenger as they constitute the most important foundations of the Islamic creed. Included in the message brought by the Messenger is the knowledge of man's ultimate destination being the Hereafter. The way human beings conduct their life in this world will determine how they will fare in the eternal life of the Hereafter. Human beings therefore need to know the consequences of human life which is oriented solely to this fleeting world so that they will not fall into the worldly traps which will bring misery to them in the final destination. Thus the Qur'ān repeatedly warns and reminds human beings of the

⁵⁹ See Q. *Saba'* 34: 10-11.

⁶⁰ See Q. *Al-Nahl* 16: 67.

⁶¹ See Q. *Al-Nahl* 16: 80.

⁶² See Q. *Al-Mu'minūn* 23: 27.

⁶³ See Q. *Al-Nahl* 16: 14.

⁶⁴ See Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 127.

⁶⁵ See Q. *Al-Kahf* 18: 96.

⁶⁶ Al-Qaradāwī, *al-'Aqlwa al-'Ilm*, p. 161.

allurements and deceptive attractions accompanying a secular-oriented way of life, which is contrary to the life of the true servants and vicegerents of Allāh (S.W.T). One of those warnings reads as follows:

Know you (all), that the this-worldly life is but a play and a passing delight, and a beautiful show and boastful vying with one another, and rivalry among yourselves in respect of multiplying wealth and children. Its parable is that of (life-giving) rain: the herbage which it causes to grow delights the tillers of the soil, but then it withers and you can see it turn yellow and in the end it crumbles into dust. But (the abiding truth of man's condition will become fully apparent) in the Hereafter, (either) severe punishment or forgiveness of Allāh and (His) Good Pleasure: for the this-worldly life is nothing but an enjoyment of self-delusion.⁶⁷

The knowledge of Divine Laws comes after the knowledge of the religious creed, just as the fundamental principles precede the subsidiary details. Likewise the rules governing life in the Hereafter are given precedence over the rules of this world. Al-Qaradāwī laments the tendency of Muslims nowadays to be more concerned with detailed juristic rules in their practical life vis-à-vis the more important and more urgent general issues.⁶⁸

As for branches of knowledge which are not to be pursued by the believers, these include things or matters which are beyond the capability of human senses or reason to know such as the “world of the unseen” (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) the true nature of the Divine Essence (*ḥaqīqat al-dhātāl-*

⁶⁷ Q. *Al-Hadīd* 57: 20. See also Q. *Hūd* 11: 15; Q. *Al-Ra‘d* 13: 26, 34; Q. *Ibrāhīm* 14: 3; Q. *Al-Nahl* 16: 107; Q. *Al-Kahf* 18: 28, 45, 46, 104; Q. *Al-Ankabūt* 29: 64; Q. *Luqmān* 31: 33; Q. *Fāṭir* 35: 5; Q. *Al-Zumar* 39: 26; Q. *Ghāfir* 40: 39; Q. *Al-Shūrā* 42: 36; Q. *Al-Jāthiah* 45: 35; Q. *Muḥammad* 47: 36; Q. *Al-A‘lā* 87: 16.

⁶⁸ Al-Qaradāwī, *al-‘Aqlwa al-‘Ilm*. p. 171.

ilāhiyyah), the Hour of the Last Day, the true nature of the spirit (*al-rūh*) and the future fate of humans.⁶⁹

H. The Formation of Scientific Mentality (*al-‘aqliyyah al-‘ilmiyyah*) in the Qur’ān

In rejecting “the superstitious mentality” (*al-‘aqliyyah al-khurāfiyyah*), “the blind-imitation mentality” (*al-‘aqliyyah al-muqallidah*) and “the desire-heeding mentality” (*al-‘aqliyyah al-muttabi‘ah li-al-hawā*), the Qur’ān strongly urges the formation of “the scientific mentality” as can be deduced from the following principles:

- a. The rejection of conjecture (*ẓann*) in matters which require certainty, such as the fundamental beliefs upon which man’s worldview (*nazrat al-insānilā al-wujūd*) is built. For this reason the Qur’ān considers the beliefs of the polytheists as founded upon conjecture, not true knowledge.⁷⁰ The Qur’ān regards conjecture and surmise as the factors responsible for most people going astray from the right path,⁷¹ and for the belief that Jesus (on whom be peace) was crucified.⁷²
- b. The rejection of base desire and emotionalism as bases for grounding religious belief or making sound judgement or for arriving at knowledge.⁷³ The influence of desires emotions or sentimentality undermines the value of objectivity and neutrality required in pursuing scientific enquiry and judgements.
- c. The rejection of blind following or imitation of the false beliefs or practices of ancestors as clearly demonstrated in the objections of the Messengers of Allāh (S.W.T) against the claims of their people that they were following what their

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 172-185.

⁷⁰ See Q. *Yūnus* 10: 36; Q. *Al-Najm* 53: 28; Q. *Al-An‘am* 6: 148.

⁷¹ See Q. *Al-An‘am* 6: 116.

⁷² See Q. *Al-Nisā’* 4: 107-108;

⁷³ See Q. *Al-Najm* 53: 23; Q. *Ṣād* 38: 26; Q. *Al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 50; Q. *Al-Furqān* 25: 43-44.

ancestors had laid down for them.⁷⁴ Rejection of subordination to unjust, disbelieving and authoritarian power-holders as shown in the case of Moses (on whom be peace) and the wicked Pharaoh is also included by the Qur’ān because those disbelieving tyrants had used their power and authority to prevent people from knowing and following the true religion and the true knowledge contained in it.⁷⁵

- d. Rational observation (*al-naẓar al-‘aqlī*) as one of the means of arriving at the knowledge of Allāh (S.W.T) and faith in Him is emphasized in many verses of the Qur’ān. The Qur’ān exhorts the exercise of rational observation through such expressions as “Do you not observe...”, “Did they not observe...” , “Let man observe...”, “Then observe how...” thus making the human being, the life and variety of animals, the workings of the universe, human history, and the conventions of Allāh (S.W.T) in nature and history as the objects of man’s rational observation. Parallel to rational observation is the exhortation for human beings to exercise the “seeing” of things rationally (*al-ru’yah al-‘aqliyyah*), not the seeing with the physical eye (*ru’yat al-‘ayn*), to those objects as well as the natural wonders in the universe. The expressions used in the Qur’ān for this rational or intellectual vision are “Do they not look at...”, “Do you not see that...”, “See they not that...” with the implication that the sound rational vision or intellectual consideration would lead the rational human beings – without the negative influence of base desires or subjective

⁷⁴ See Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 170-171; Q. *Al-Mā’idah* 5: 104; Q. *Hūd* 11: 62, 109; Q. *Al-Zukhruf* 43: 22-24; Q. *Al-A’rāf* 7: 70; Q. *Hūd* 11: 87; Q. *Ibrāhīm* 14: 10; Q. *Al-Anbiyā* 21: 52-54.

⁷⁵ See Q. *Hūd* 11: 96-97; Q. *Al-Ahzāb* 33: 66-67, Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 166, 167; Q. *Saba’*, 34: 31-33; Q. *Al-A’rāf*, 7: 38-39.

emotional impulses – to the recognition of the transcendent power, will and wisdom of the One True God and Sustainer.⁷⁶

As for proofs (*barāhīn*) that human beings should consider in evaluating the truth claims of Divine revelation, the Qur’ān refers to the following types – the sensible or tangible proof (*al-burhān al-ḥissī*) obtained through the senses, the proof obtained by listening to or producing the revealed text (*al-burhān al-sam‘ī*), the proof of historical fact (*al-burhān al-ta’rīkhī*) and the rational proof (*al-burhān al-nazarī*).⁷⁷

- e. Due regard for the rules or conventions (*sunan*) of Allāh (S.W.T) in nature, human history and society which are, by nature, unchangeable is an indispensable feature of the scientific mentality which the Qur’ān values very highly.⁷⁸ The verses of the Qur’ān which speak of the “*sunnat Allāh*” not only affirm the immutability of those Divine rules but also emphasize the importance of recognizing moral causes in the fate of nations or communities and the reality of natural causes or forces behind what are normally regarded by some polytheists or superstitious people as supernatural phenomena resulting from the displeasure or caprices of some gods deities or evil spirits which need to be assuaged by special offerings or rituals. The early Muslims who rejected these superstitious beliefs and gave due regard to the scientific study of the laws of cause and effect were able to develop the natural and mathematical sciences which led to the growth of a flourishing knowledge-based civilization.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ See Q. *Al-Tāriq* 86: 5-7; Q. *‘Abasa* 80: 24-32; Q. *Al-Ghāshiyah* 88: 17-20; Q. *Qāf* 50: 6-8; Q. *Yūnus* 10: 101; Q. *Al-A‘rāf* 7: 185; Q. *Al-Rūm* 30: 9; Q. *Al-Naḥl* 16: 79; Q. *Al-Mulk* 67: 19; Q. *Yā Sīn* 36: 71-73; *Saba’*, 34: 9.

⁷⁷ See Q. *Al-Zukhruf* 43: 19; Q. *Al-Kahf* 18: 51; Q. *Al-Mulk* 67: 3-4; Q. *Al-Zukhruf* 43: 21; Q. *Āl‘Imrān* 3: 93; Q. *Al-Naḥl* 16: 36; Q. *Ghāfir* 40: 21; Q. *Al-Anbiyā’* 21: 24; Q. *Al-Naml* 27: 64.

⁷⁸ See Q. *Fāṭir*, 35: 32-33; Q. *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33: 38, 60-62; Q. *Al-Faṭḥ* 48: 22-23.

⁷⁹ Al-Qaradāwī, *al-‘Aqlwa al-‘Ilm*, pp. 279-282.

Muslim scholars in the natural and physical sciences may consider giving due attention to the advice of Professor Dr. ‘Abd al-Hāfiẓ Ḥilmī, a professor of biological sciences, which is quoted at length by al-Qaraḏāwī. Dr. Ḥilmī says that believing Muslim scientists are commanded to study the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in the universe. He agrees with Imām al-Ghazālī that specialization in these sciences is *farḍ kifāyah*. However what may be regarded in the old days as meritorious may today be regarded as a duty. The believing scientists are also obliged to enlighten others with their knowledge while those who are capable should use the modern sciences in commenting some of the verses of the Qur’ān. But knowledge by itself is not enough to bring about faith. It should be accompanied by a strong and sincere desire to know the Truth.

Relating the story of the Russian astronaut who was in outer space, Dr. Ḥilmī notes that the atheistic looking out from his space ship, said that he did not find God in the sky. However, when the Christian American astronaut saw the awe-inspiring phenomenon in outer space, he exclaimed that he was never as close to God as he was at that moment. Dr. Ḥilmī urges the natural scientists, especially if they are academics, to present their knowledge as springing from their *Tawḥīdic* faith and sense of moral responsibility to their countries and their environments. He believes that there are several topics and subject matters which, through their lectures and classes, could be communicated with humanistic or ethical nuances that can be captivating to both the mind and the heart of the students without falsifying or altering the nature of scientific data or knowledge. This is better than merely presenting them as “pages or chapters imported from the knowledge of the West” which may sound strange to the ears of their listeners in

Muslim societies. This can be done, says Dr. H̄ilmi, without in any way reducing the scientific integrity of the disciplines.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Al-Qaraḏāwī, *al-ʿAqlwa al-ʿIlm*, pp. 296-299.

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