Islamic Thought and its Contemporary Relevance

[A Discourse on Selected Issues]

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Mawdūdi's Approaches to Qur'ānic Exegesis

Md. Yousuf Ali

It is well established that early Muslim Qur'ānic exegetes developed methodologies dealing with principles, approaches, conditions, ways and perspectives of interpretation. They have ever since been concerned with presenting the Qur'ān as a book of guidance for humanity that is relevant to man's life within the parameters of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). There were two well-known methodologies used by early Muslim scholars, al-tafiṣr bi-al-maṯūr, and al-tafiṣr bi-al-ra'y of which the first was considered authentic and used by most while the second was used with some prerequisites and conditions. In addition, among the categories of exegetic classifications, classifications ranged from praiseworthy to those regarded as blameworthy. Qur'ānic exegesis continued also into the twentieth century by several Muslim exegetes, one of whom was Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdi (1321-1399/1903-1979).

Highly influential and prolific, Mawdūdi's ṭafḥūn al-Qur'ān uses both methodologies (al-tafiṣr bi al-maṯūr and al-tafiṣr bi al-ra'y) which greatly contribute to the articulation of Islamic revivalist thought and also influenced Muslim activists the world over ṭafḥūn al-Qur'ān is an exceptional tafiṣr considered also an encyclopedia of ideas and thoughts that presents the fundamental teachings of Islam. Its uniqueness is that it is an explanatory or interpretative exposition and not a literal translation of the Arabic. As such it retains continuity and conformity that preserves the theme of the verses and induces a reading towards Qur'ānic coherence, fluency and

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