

## *Editorial*

This issue coincides with several momentous events and trends in the world at large and Muslim nations. The heads or top representatives of the 57 Muslim-majority nations have held an extraordinary meeting at Makkah under the Organization of Islamic Conferences' (OIC) aegis. A major goal is to reactivate and empower the OIC so that it can actively help the ummah deal with its huge opportunities and challenges. Several salient issues were stressed: the need for closer interaction, collaboration, and internal reform leading to a peaceful, pluralistic, and moderate disposition of Islam and Muslims.

Muslim nations are trying to address their internal weaknesses and build upon their strengths. In terms of human and material resources, the Muslim world is composed of three kinds of countries: those with large populations and poor economies, small populations and rich economies, and with both fairly large populations backed by rich economic resources. They seem to believe that Iraq and Iran, the very backbone of the third category, are currently targeted for long-term occupation. They are exploring how to compensate for one another's drawbacks and reinforcing their assets.

The OIC declaration, hailed as a historic turning point, stresses that Muslims take responsibility for their present plight and stop blaming others. In addition, the organization will be renamed, get a new charter, and be run by mandatory contributions from member nations. It will also feature conflict-resolution and consensus-building mechanisms to resolve both minor and major conflicts, such as Palestine and Kashmir. The ummah and the world now wait to see whether such statements are more than rhetoric.

Concurrently, there is an increasing awareness of the futility of cardinal-directional conflicts and the "clash of civilizations" between the West and the East, or between the North and the South. Ever more Muslim and other intellectuals realize that the real confrontation is between powerful global forces of greed and exploitative profiteering on the one hand, and people of candor, conscience, and moral orientation on the other. Among the individuals and organizations in the latter camp, there is growing realization of the need for societal reform toward pluralism, learning from each other, collective and consultative decision making, basic freedoms for all, peace with justice, and institution building that is compatible with the speed, complexity, and magnitude of the emerging globalized world.

Serious efforts are afoot at the United Nations to fight “Islamophobia,” and we observe a powerful surge of inter-faith deliberations and activities all over the world, which continues to be miniaturized through the telecommunication revolution, globalized consumerism, commerce, climate concerns, democratization, and privatization.

Our own nation, prodded by the neo-cons who have landed it in a deep quagmire, now shows signs of appreciating the value of other alternatives to using starkly hard power to obtain its strategic objectives. In an attempt to utilize its soft power, it has launched a public relations pitch to improve its sinking image, especially among Arabs and Muslims. Let there be substantive policy changes to back up these image-making attempts!

Professional organizations of Muslims, like the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), need to reflect on their mission, goals, and objectives with a view to really contributing to the ummah’s efforts to relieve its situation. Also, they must evaluate the extent of their involvement by determining how many scholars, whether tangentially or directly associated with AMSS, have been consulted by those engaged in these deliberations.

It is gratifying that most of the recent AMSS conferences and issues of this journal have reflected these concerns. Worth mentioning are the special issues on “Islam & Women” and “Debating Moderate Islam.” Both the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and AMSS join the readers in commending the excellent efforts of Drs. Jasmin Zine and Katherine Bullock for the former, and of Dr. Muqtedar Khan for the latter.

These civil discourses have gone a long way in initiating civilizational dialogues on vital global concerns and in allaying people’s unfounded fears.

Where blind and naked ignorance  
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,  
On all things all day long.  
(Alfred Tennyson: “Merlin Vivien”)

Coincidentally, the above-mentioned quote seems to foretell the impact of both the dysfunctional aspect of the monopolist and propagandist media and of the corporatization of the post-modern academe. We might recall the influence on our own isolationist tendencies and ignorance of other regions and their cultures, of the social science and humanities literatures produced during the European colonial times, which highlighted intercultural differences more than the real commonalities of the entire human family.

Our contemporary academia is too preoccupied with post-modern over-relativism, where the serious search for truth seems to have been compro-

mised and rhetoric prevails. As a result, deconstructing discourses in terms of power words has assumed a hyperbolic significance instead of the comparative analysis of validity among contending perspectives. Muslim social scientists need to appreciate that more information and misinformation do not necessarily lead to knowledge. Deriving wisdom from a plethora of facts is becoming more challenging than ever before.

Hence, the need for illuminating knowledge with valid wisdom (considering the whole truth and nothing but the truth) and universal principles of fairness and justice for all; avoiding extreme and desperate measures in all affairs; and acquiring an acute sense of personal accountability for one's treatment of self, fellow human beings, all other life forms, and the physical environment. Contrast this with perspectives based on the caricatures of reality in John Locke's empiricism; René Descartes' separation of mind and body, and the absoluteness of mathematics (cf. Gödel's incompleteness theorem); Adam Smith's promotion of the evil of selfishness as a self-curing disease; Charles Darwin's smashing of a special human mission in life; Karl Marx's assassination of the human desire to own and the suppression of individual initiative; Sigmund Freud's total freedom from guilt; Ferdinand de Saussure's overemphasis on the role of symbols and language structures in capturing the truth; and Roland Garthe's, Jacques Derrida's, Michel Foucault's (following Nietzsche's *deicide*: death of God), and Julia Kristeva's declaration of the author's death. Obviously, each of these paradigms exaggerates only one dimension of truth, instead of capturing the whole truth.

The occurrence of so many "isms" of modernity in three centuries, and as many in the post-modern decades, indicates a confusing void in the intellectual scene as well as a continued subconscious search for the truth, for human nature cannot remain content without stable core values for too long. Let the balanced and comprehensive *tawhidi* perspective applied to various disciplines fill the void with such values.

We need to undertake, much more seriously, the task of re-activating and implementing the Islamization of Knowledge (IOK) project, one of the original missions of AMSS and IIIT. Regrettably, its implementation has been slow and spotty because Muslim governments either could not understand its significance or had other priorities. This educational movement is now more vital than ever in view of the high level of seriousness within the ruling Muslim elites, democratic or otherwise. In view of the OIC's extraordinary meetings in rapid succession, we believe that Muslim governments and intellectuals are now sincerely trying to address the dualism of educational institutions in their societies. This duality caused the IOK's founding

fathers (viz., Ismail al-Faruqi, Taha J. al-Alwani, AdulHamid Abu-Sulayman, and others) to see it as both the cause and the effect of the ummah's decline. They suggested tackling this problem with tremendous urgency. Who can deny the need for new curricular and instructional resources to meet the objectives of ummah's new reform movements?

Undoubtedly, theoretical discussions in times of crises are usually postponed or take a back seat to immediate problems of survival through defensive and apologetic literature. However, various ongoing projects are cut out for even crises-ridden professional organizations, for there is a constant need for demographic and psychographic data on their sponsoring and beneficiary communities to enable the latter to plan, design, develop, and evaluate their activities for further growth and development. Therefore, instead of remaining mired in image laundering, Muslims must help the ummah solve its problems and develop its organizations and institutions. They must balance the ivory tower research with collection, collation, and application of valid data in order to contribute to societal justice.

This issue includes Johannes Grundmann's translated article on "Shari`ah, Brain Death, and Organ Transplantation: The Context and Effect of Two Islamic Legal Decisions in the Near and Middle East." Grundmann analyzes the Muslim world's differential acceptance of decisions made by the Islamic fiqh academies of the OIC and the Muslim World League. The paper is quite timely, for with the rapidly developing fields of medical sciences, new issues are calling for collective ummatic *ijtihad*.

Md. Mahmudul Hasan, in his "The Orientalization of Gender," shows how western feminists have promoted an Orientalist-imperialist agenda of cultural onslaught directed against colonized people. He illustrates this assertion with the writings of many female authors of Indian origin. He thus exposes the hidden agenda of the so-called "sisters from the colonial communities, who are subtly trying to dilute Muslim women's commitment to their faith values.

Also included is David Perley's "Vagueness: An Additional Nuance in the Interpretation of Ibn `Arabi's Mystical Language." Perley asserts that the vagueness of Sufi terminology truly reflects the complexity of the metaphysical phenomena themselves and that Sufi dictions and modes of expression differ from those of analytic philosophers. The former is synthetic and experiential in nature, whereas those of philosophers are analytical.

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