

# Toward an Islamic Framework for Worldview Studies: Preliminary Theorization

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## **Abstract**

The paper examines the importance of designing a framework for studying worldviews within the parameters of contemporary Islamic thought. It briefly reviews both selected western and Islamic stances on worldview studies. The literature reveals that research on this topic and its application to different spheres has become a topic of some interest to many intellectual circles, particularly in the western context. Hence, the possibility of forming an Islamic civilizational framework for an inquiry into people's worldviews needs to be assessed.

This article follows a textual analysis and inductive approach to analyze the prospects of formulating an Islamic framework for research on worldviews and its applications. It concludes that western scholars have made considerable efforts in treating people's worldviews as a field of study, while Muslim scholars have not. In this respect, many western researchers have contributed to developing worldview studies as a separate field of inquiry, including the history of concept, subject matter, objectives, kinds, methods, and applications. Therefore, the need to enhance the Islamic input and research pertaining to this field by introducing an Islamic civilizational framework and approach of inquiry becomes apparent.

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## Introduction

As a term and concept, *worldview* is of some merit and interest to scholars, intellectuals, and ordinary people because it affects everyone's life from the simplest and daily forms to the more abstract and complicated ones. As a matter of fact, no one survives without a worldview, whether he/she is aware of it or not. One's worldview, whether religious, philosophical, scientific, atheistic, or otherwise, is a core contour of his/her life and existence. Notwithstanding the several definitions and connotations that may be attached to its literal and technical meaning, the concept of worldview begs further explanation and clarification, especially from an Islamic perspective.

People always demand answers to the ultimate and final questions of existence: the existence of God, life, the universe, and the unseen world. Indeed, continuous human endeavors and searches for authentic, systematic, rational, and objective responses to these ultimate questions have considerably enriched worldview studies. Some current studies, as shall be highlighted shortly, reveal an increasing interest on the part of scholars and researchers toward the different aspects of worldviews. One important aspect here is that each rational<sup>1</sup> person has a worldview according to which he/she understands himself/herself, his/her surroundings, and his/her relation to physical and non-physical realities. Given this important position and function of one's worldview vis-à-vis his/her existence, life, and destination, the question of worldview studies,<sup>2</sup> particularly within the Islamic intellectual framework, must be addressed.

Surveying the Islamic input and contribution to this field of inquiry reflects the scarcity and shortage of in-depth and objective research conducted by Muslims on worldview studies. This includes such related matters as the history of the concept, along with its linguistic and semantic development; epistemological construction; methods and tools of inquiry; and its application in different fields. Despite the few important works contributed by Muslim scholars, there is no separate field of inquiry on worldview studies. The present article aspires to scrutinize the importance of this field of inquiry and the urgent need to develop an Islamic civilizational framework with which to tackle all of its related concerns. In fact, many Islamic works of a general nature have dealt with various aspects of the Islamic worldview, which, if integrated and well organized, could form the initial framework for constructing a separate field of research on worldview studies.

The paper discusses briefly selected western<sup>3</sup> contributions to worldview studies, the Islamic input, and the urgency of establishing a suitable Islamic framework. Before any further discussion, however, it is important to clarify

just exactly what an Islamic worldview is all about. In general terms, a worldview may be defined as an individual's or a group's contemplation, perception, or concept of the world; a view or philosophy of life.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of these general statements, one may demarcate a worldview's substance as consisting of a vision of life, existence, and truth. Looking at this substance from an Islamic perspective reveals the essence of the Islamic worldview.

This paper posits that the Islamic worldview is the collective ummatic vision of existence through which Muslims interpret and provide answers to the ultimate questions about the Creator, the existence of the seen and the unseen worlds, the universe, life, humanity, prophethood, vicegerency, society, history, and the Hereafter. This vision's main objective, derived from the Qur'an through *ijtihad* (independent judgment), is to guide humanity to excel in all pursuits of life as God's vicegerent<sup>5</sup> on Earth. In this capacity, humanity has been entrusted with the responsibility of worship, *i`mar*, calling people to Islam (*da`wah*), being a witness to other civilizations, and serving as a leading role model in all pursuits of life.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, different aspects of this definition are given below.

### **Worldview Studies from Western Perspectives<sup>7</sup>**

The first thing to remember when constructing a sound framework for worldview studies is to delineate the boundaries and connotations attached to this particular term. As a concept, *worldview* has a history as both a term and an idea. Studying the history of this concept, as well as its semantic and conceptual construction, is an important step in theorizing a framework and a field of research. Accordingly, studying the term's definition, subject matter, objectives, methods of inquiry, and applications constitutes another crucial step toward developing worldview studies.

To begin with, a brief review of some western stances sheds a degree of light on this issue. Some of these studies examine the word's development<sup>8</sup> in literal, technical, and conceptual terms. David K. Naugle, in his *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, argues the need for specialized studies on the development of worldviews:

At the time of his Kerr Lectures in 1891, James Orr in *The Christian View of God and the World* could say of *Weltanschauung* that "the history of this term has yet to be written". Orr was surprised by the lack of attention given to this notion which had attained academic celebrity status in the second half of the nineteenth century. As he observed, within the last two or three decades the word has become exceedingly common in all kinds of books dealing with the higher questions of religion and philosophy –

so much so as to have become in a manner indispensable. Though it was one of the favorite terms of the day, much to the dismay of Orr and others, its philosophical history for the most part was unexplained territory.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of the shortage of studies pertaining to the history of *worldview* as a word and a concept, there seems to be an exception. According to Naugle, looking at worldview studies from a German perspective shows the increasing interest in specialized and in-depth works on the issue. According to him, this exception is evident in the case of those German-speaking scholars who have devoted themselves to developing disciplines of the history of words, concepts, and/or ideas:

Much energy has been devoted to the historical investigation of the German lexicon, and effort has provided a gold mine of information about the background and usage of crucial terms and concepts in the natural and social sciences, humanities, philosophy and theology. When *Weltanschauung* had reached its zenith in popularity in both common and academic discourse around the turn of the twentieth century, it initially began to receive noteworthy attention. That attention has continued right up to the present time.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, Naugle has made an important attempt to cite the contributions of western scholars<sup>11</sup> in general, and of German scholars in particular, to worldview studies. For instance, he cites several German studies that he claims have influenced the development of studying *worldview* as a word and an idea.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, this term and concept is used in various European languages.<sup>13</sup> In his lengthy survey of the concept's usage in the European, English, and Anglo-American contexts, he concludes:

Since its inception in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in 1790, the notion of *Weltanschauung* (worldview) has become one of the central intellectual conceptions in contemporary thought and culture. Though the history of the term has for the most part been neglected in the English-speaking world, scholars in the prodigious German enterprises of word history and the history of ideas have thoroughly investigated its background ... though this fascinating notion has its roots sunk in German soil; its rapid transcontinental transplantation manifests the amazing fertility of the concept ... No wonder, then, that within seven decades of its birth it entered the Anglo-American discourse and became as fruitful across the channel and overseas as it had been on the European continent.<sup>14</sup>

This account on the concept's development within the western context shows, first of all, some western scholars' increasing interest in worldview

studies. Second, it reveals the different connotations and meanings attached to the concept in different western settings and contexts.

Worldview studies have clearly gained momentum within several western intellectual circles, for they have become an important area of research that contributes to the development of many disciplines. In addition, their application and impact appear to be increasing within the contemporary western body of knowledge. As a matter of fact, this topic has become more crucial in studies pertaining to natural, human, social, and criterion-based sciences. Moreover, many other segments of the western community see in worldview studies an important research theme. The resulting huge number of works, books, websites, seminars, and workshops reveal this increasing interest and its implications for thought and life.

### **Worldview Studies from an Islamic Perspective**

The previous section briefly summarized the development of worldview studies within the western conceptualization frame of reference. It also concluded that worldview research, particularly in the German context, has made tremendous efforts in constructing methods to study the development of the history of words as terms and concepts. Hence, there is a need to examine this concept's development in non-western milieus and cultural frameworks. Indeed, studies in Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism,<sup>15</sup> and other religions/philosophies would shed some light on this concept's development and associated meanings in different traditions and cultures. However, the present study is restricted to this concept's development within the Islamic tradition and context.

First, there is shortage of studies on the development of worldview studies from both a historical and a conceptual perspective within the Islamic context. As a matter of fact, no specific discipline deals mainly with the history of worldview research as well as its conceptual construction and development from an Islamic perspective. Accordingly, classical Islamic texts and works reveal no specific branch of knowledge called "worldview studies." Such concepts as *al-tatawwur al-Islami*, *al-ru'yah al-kawniyah*, *al-madhhabiyah al-Islamiyah*, *al-marji'iyah al-Islamiyah al-'ulliyah*, and similar contemporary concepts were not even present in the classical texts and literature. For instance, most of the classical Arabic-language dictionaries define such terms as *tatawwur*, *ru'yah*, and *madhhabiyah*, but in a different context and for a different purpose. There is no trace of such combined words as *al-tatawwur al-Islami* or *al-ru'yah al-kawniyah*. In the same breath, referring to works on theology, the science of *'aqidah*, Islamic

philosophy, and jurisprudence did not suggest the use of these combined words to describe the concept and its meaning as they appear in contemporary works. The terms used, such as *maqalat al-Islamiyin*, *ʿaqidah*, *ghaybiyat*, and *imaniyat*, do not contain the same connotations and broader perspective and conceptualization of *worldview* as portrayed in some contemporary studies.

Second, referring to contemporary and recent Muslim contributions to worldview studies reveals the kind of efforts undertaken to construct a discipline dealing with worldview matters, be they the subject matter, developments of word and concept, objectives and methods, or tools for studying the worldview issues embedded therein. In general, no specific branch of research deals with the concept's historical development in contemporary Muslim scholarship.<sup>16</sup> The major works focus mainly on issues and topics usually discussed in worldview studies, but not on its historical development and conceptual construction. In fact, many works do not even contain a specific reference to *Islamic worldview* or its conceptual development and applications; however, several works do cover the main topics falling under that term.

In this respect, Muslim scholars of the last two centuries attempted to discuss many topics and issues that may be considered as part and parcel of the subject matter of the Islamic worldview, but not specifically under the heading of "worldview studies." Such topics as defining *worldview*, Islam, *iman*, *ihsan*, Islam as a way of life, *tawhid*, creation, prophethood, eschatology, the seen and unseen worlds, God, humanity, life, and vicegerency were dealt with in various works. But until the appearance of specific works, among them Sayyid Qutb's<sup>17</sup> (d. 1966) *Characteristics of the Islamic Worldview*,<sup>18</sup> no specific attempts under the category of "Islamic worldview studies" appeared.

However, historically speaking, several worldview topics and issues were examined by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), Muhamad `Abduh (d. 1905), Rashid Rida (d. 1935), Wali Allah al-Dahlawi (d. 1176), Said Nursi (d. 1960), and many others. Even though most of them did not deal conceptually and historically with the development of *Islamic worldview* as a concept, they did provide many ideas and insights about its multifaceted aspects. Sayyid Qutb was the first one to produce a quasi-systematic work on the Islamic worldview.<sup>19</sup> Despite the ideological touch that colored his effort, he can be considered as of the main initiators of worldview studies in the Muslim world.

In another sense, one may refer to another group of scholars who dealt directly with the issues of the Islamic worldview as a separate field of study,

as opposed to its inception and development as a concept. Among these scholars are Abul A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979),<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938),<sup>21</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadawi (d. 1999),<sup>22</sup> Malik Bennabi (d. 1973),<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (d. 1980),<sup>24</sup> Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari (d. 1979),<sup>25</sup> Abdul Hameed Siddiqi and Muhammad Saeed Siddiqi,<sup>26</sup> Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1996),<sup>27</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi,<sup>28</sup> Said Ramadan al-Buti,<sup>29</sup> Muhsin Abd al-Hamid,<sup>30</sup> Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (d. 1986),<sup>31</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr,<sup>32</sup> Wahiduddin Khan,<sup>33</sup> Rafiuddin Mohammad,<sup>34</sup> Muhammed Hamidullah,<sup>35</sup> Fazlur Rahman,<sup>36</sup> Seyyed Muhammed Naquib Al-Attas,<sup>37</sup> Abdul Wahid Hamid,<sup>38</sup> Hammudah Abdlatif,<sup>39</sup> Alpaarslan Acikgenc,<sup>40</sup> Abd al-Rahman Azzam,<sup>41</sup> S. D. Islahi,<sup>42</sup> Jafar Wafa,<sup>43</sup> Mohd. Kamal Hassan,<sup>44</sup> Fareed Ahmad and Saiyad Salahuddin Ahmad,<sup>45</sup> and others.<sup>46</sup>

Critical studies<sup>47</sup> of various works on worldview studies show the intensity that Muslim scholars are applying to research in this area. However, there is still no separate branch of knowledge or discipline that specializes on issues pertaining to the Islamic worldview, such as its subject matter, objectives, methods or tools of analysis, and its applications to different disciplines. Most of the above-mentioned works deal with worldview issues in general terms and so are neither systematic nor objective inquiries. Thus, a more comprehensive framework and approach in a well-organized body of research needs to be developed.

## **Toward an Islamic Civilizational Framework**

Dealing with the worldview studies' framework requires, among other things, a thorough study of the worldview in question: its subject matter, scope, kinds, objectives, tools of analysis, methods of inquiry, epistemology, theories, answers to ultimate questions, and applications. In addition, an extensive study of the existing literature and contributions is a priority, as is the analysis of the concept's history and its semantic connotations and evolution.

On the other hand, the framework should be able to scrutinize the principles and patterns governing the analysis of worldview issues as well as the different concepts and subconcepts enabling its construction of meanings and answers. A worldview's characteristics and its determining indicators also need to be analyzed. A comprehensive study of the relevant psychosocial, sociopolitical, and cultural factors that bear heavily on any worldview analysis require attention as well.

However, this section restricts itself to mentioning some important concepts and aspects that must be considered when developing an Islamic

framework. I shall analyze the importance of the concept of seen and unseen worlds, which paves the way for an integrated structure of knowledge; the concept of vicegerency, which leads to a balanced structure of civilization; and the concept of trial, which reflects the essence of life and the importance of the Hereafter in a Muslim's existence and mission.

### *The Concept of Seen and Unseen Worlds*

A major theme in the Islamic framework is the principle of integration between seen and unseen knowledge. This sense of integration provides a knowledge structure that reflects the presence of unseen knowledge within the context of seen realities and experience. Within the Islamic framework, unseen knowledge is positioned in the center of all intellectual activities and efforts, thereby leading to a worldview that is oriented toward revelation. In other words, all answers to the worldview's ultimate questions stem from a revealed source (i.e., the Qur'an).

This centrality of revealed knowledge gives birth to a worldview that is, on the one hand, guided by the word of God and, on the other hand, provides the mind and human experience with a flexible framework to exert effort and generate new ideas and views.

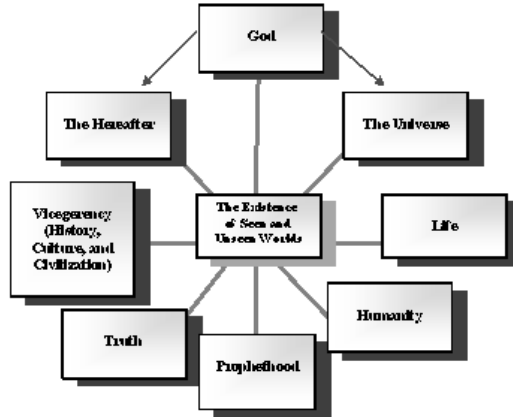
Obviously, the Islamic worldview refers to one of the most comprehensive and all-encompassing visions of life, one that deals with a wide range of issues and problems connected with existence and life. Indeed, it is a comprehensive, integrated, and consistent structure of knowledge pertaining to the seen and unseen realms.

In general, its subject matter revolves around the following major issues: knowledge of God's existence, the universe, life, humanity, angels (seen and unseen worlds); prophethood, revelation, scriptures, miracles, and guidance; the belief system, the Shari'ah, ethics, and wisdom; pre-measurement and predestination; the patterns and laws of God in history, society, and the cosmos; vicegerency, method, trust, trial, *a`mal*, *da`wah*, *`umran*, and *tamaddun*; death and life; history; and the Hereafter, accountability, Heaven, and Hellfire (eschatology).<sup>48</sup>

The Islamic worldview perceives existence<sup>49</sup> as one of its main aspects. Indeed, the concept of seen and unseen worlds and their implications for humanity in this life and the Hereafter capture the Muslims' attention. Hence, any discussion on this topic begins by clearing away any confusion associated with existence. Existence, understood in a comprehensive and integrated manner that includes both seen and unseen perceptions and knowledge, entails several important aspects, as shown in figure 1:



FIGURE 1: THE CONCEPT OF EXISTENCE.



As stated above, knowledge about existence refers to God's existence as the prime cause of creation, including the existence of the universe, life, humanity, prophethood, truth, history, and the Hereafter. Figure 1 expresses the Islamic worldview's position and function as regards the Muslims' existence and life. Indeed, it is located at the very core of humanity's interest and concerns in this world. Therefore, if this worldview entails existence in this total meaning, then any study of it should analyze the different aspects of existence. In addition, undermining any of the above aspects of the meaning and implications of existence would present an incomplete picture of this worldview. Hence, consistent and objective answers pertaining to the ultimate questions mentioned above constitute the core areas of Islamic worldview studies in general, and of research in particular.

On the other hand, one should also approach the concept of existence from a comprehensive point of view. Consequently, it should not be understood only to mean the mere "being" and creation of things or creatures (e.g., humanity, the universe, and life) but also the wisdom, processes, laws and patterns, objectives, roles and functions, and the ultimate destination of existing things and creatures. Bearing this in mind helps us to understand the importance of the integrated knowledge of existence in studying the Islamic worldview and ensures a more comprehensive evaluation of its nature, characteristics, and functions in individual and collective life.

For instance, dealing with humanity's existence should include not only a person's being and shape, but mainly his/her creation process, objectives in life, position in the universe, qualifications and abilities, attributes and faculties, and his/her destination and journey in this life as well as in the Hereafter. Moreover, humanity's existence deals with the existence of human culture,

civilization, history, ideas, and achievements in time and space. Seemingly, the existence of life or the universe should also be seen as something having meaning and purpose. In this regard, one should look at the existence of things and the norms governing their course and destiny. In the same breath, when one discusses God's existence one asks about His nature, attributes, names, evidence of existence, miracles, acts, and relation to creation.

Seen from a comprehensive viewpoint, the Islamic worldview appears to be a very comprehensive structure of knowledge that deals with existential, cosmological, epistemological, theological, legal, moral, ethical, and civilizational issues. Therefore, any approach to its study should take into consideration all of its diversified components in order to deal fairly with its inclusive nature. This all-inclusive nature is reflected in the wide range of questions that are usually raised when discussing the Islamic worldview. Among the main questions are the following:

Who and where is God? What are God's names and attributes? How is God related to His creation? What is the evidence for His existence? Does God communicate with people, and if He does, how does He do it? Is God a human being? Does He have a human or another shape? Is humanity allowed to talk about God and relate itself to Him? Why is God not visible? Can a person see God in the life to come?

Why and how was the universe created? Is it governed by laws? Who created the universe, and when? Of what is the universe made? Is its size increasing or decreasing? Does it contain signs of God's existence? What is the end of the universe, and when will it come? Why are there natural disasters and phenomena? How can humanity relate itself to the universe? To what extent is the universe friendly to humanity?

Are there any laws and patterns in life and, if so, what are they and can one discover them? Why is there order in life? Can one use the laws and patterns of the universe, life, society, and history to interpret existence and one's role therein? What is life? When and why was it created? Is there any life after death? If so, what is its nature and are the laws of this life applicable to the life of the Hereafter? Do Hellfire and Paradise exist and, if so, what are their natures? Can humanity know what will happen in the Hereafter?

Who am I, and how was I brought into this world? Who gave me life and shaped me in this way? From where do I come, and what am I supposed to do in this world? Why and how should I relate to fellow human beings and other creatures? What am I supposed to worship, and why? Where am I going, and what will be my end and final destination? How am I supposed to use my time, health, and faculties? How do I differentiate between good and evil? Why do innocent people suffer? Why do people think the way they

do and not in other ways? Why are there wars and corruption? What is human nature? Is it created or acquired, and why is it the way it is? Can humanity change its nature?

Did God send guidance? If so, why did He do so? Who is a prophet and a messenger? Are these people human beings or God? Why did God select people to be prophets and messengers, and what does He expect them to do? What are their miracles and proofs? What is scripture, and why did God reveal it?

Why did God make humanity His vicegerent? What does *vicegerency* mean? What are the main qualities of a vicegerent? How is this task carried out, and what are the means and tools to accomplish this goal? What are the sources of knowledge? Does the unseen world exist? If it does, why does it and how can one prove its existence? Can the human mind discover the unseen world, know anything about it, rationalize and empirically prove such knowledge?

What is right and what is wrong? How do I judge others' behavior and actions, determine what is beneficial and what is harmful, moral and immoral? Who should determine ethical and moral values, and why should humanity abide by them? What are the boundaries and limitations of sexual relations? Are all sexual acts moral? Is killing other people a moral act?

What is predestination and why was it created? Can anyone know his/her destiny? Why is predestination unknown to humanity? If predestination exists, can humanity really be free? Is there any contradiction between free will and predestination? Who decides the fate of people? Is predestination just and fair? Is there any wisdom in it?

What is civilization? How should people build it and why should they strive to do so? Why are there conflicts among civilizations? What are the conditions for coexistence and dialogue among them? How does one judge a civilization's progress or decline? What is death? Why was it created and what purpose does it serve? What causes death? What is a person's destination after death? Where do one's spirit and body go after death? What happens after death? Is there any lasting life after death?

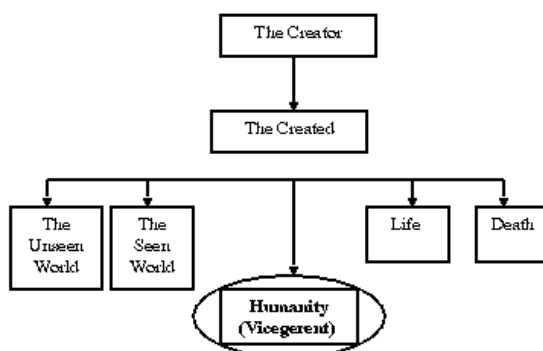
A deeper assessment of the above sets of questions shows the comprehensive and all-encompassing structure of the knowledge associated with the Islamic worldview. Indeed, all of these questions should be answered in a consistent, systematic, organized, and correct way in order to construct a worldview that merits attention and can address human problems and concerns. Fortunately, the Islamic worldview has a very authentic, original, and revealed source, namely, the Qur'an, that answers these ultimate questions. At this juncture, one should view the Islamic worldview as a comprehensive

and consistent structure of knowledge that is essential and vital both for humanity's understanding of itself and its surroundings, as well as for succeeding in its mission as God's vicegerent and conveyer of revealed guidance to humanity.

### *The Concept of Vicegerency (Istikhlaf)*

The other leading concept within the Islamic framework of worldview studies is humanity's status as God's vicegerent, namely, the idea of vicegerency. Figure 2 clarifies the relationship between the Creator and His creation and underscores humanity's position as God's vicegerent.

FIGURE 2: THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION.

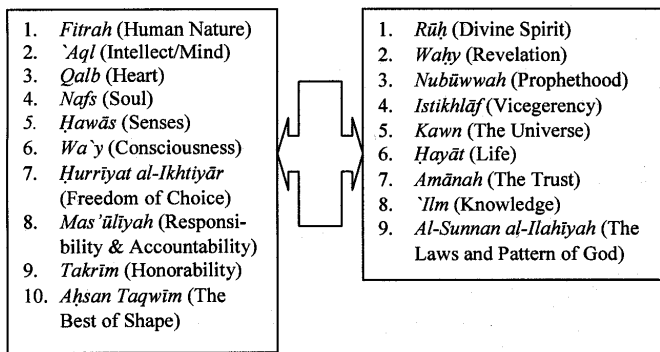


Within the Islamic framework, the conceptualization of the Islamic worldview begins from the key concept of the existence of one Creator, namely, God. This concept is called *tawhid* (the unity of God<sup>50</sup>) in all of its aspects and dimensions. The entire vision of existence or creation, which includes the creation of the unseen and the seen worlds as well as the creation of life and death, stems from this key understanding.<sup>51</sup> In fact, God's creation of the world revolves around one central theme: humanity as the best creature and the most intelligent member of creation. Thus, the creation of the universe, life, and death are all meant for humanity, who was created for trial and test. Thus, humanity has certain God-given faculties, qualifications, bounties, and gifts that enable it to assume this responsibility.

Indeed, God has empowered humanity with the faculties and qualifications needed to serve as His vicegerent. Among these faculties and qualifications are the following: human innateness, intellect,<sup>52</sup> heart, soul, senses, freedom, responsibility, honorability,<sup>53</sup> the best shape,<sup>54</sup> and consciousness. "Furthermore, man is blessed with all those powers, capacities and faculties

– physical, mental and moral – which he requires in his struggle for life.<sup>755</sup> Eventually, all of these inherent God-given faculties and abilities are crucial to humanity’s life and function as His vicegerent. In addition, God provided humanity with many bounties and empowered it with gifts so that it could bear this trust. These bounties include a divine spirit, revelation and guidance, prophethood, method of vicegerency, the universe and its resources, the lifespan of an individual and a group, knowledge of the names of things, and the laws and patterns of God. Thus, humanity is fully ready to assume this responsibility.<sup>56</sup> “And He it is who has made you vicegerents to inherit the earth” (6:165) and “Behold, I am about to establish upon Earth a vicegerent” (2:30). Figure 3 indicates these God-given faculties and bounties:

FIGURE 3: HUMANITY’S FACULTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS.

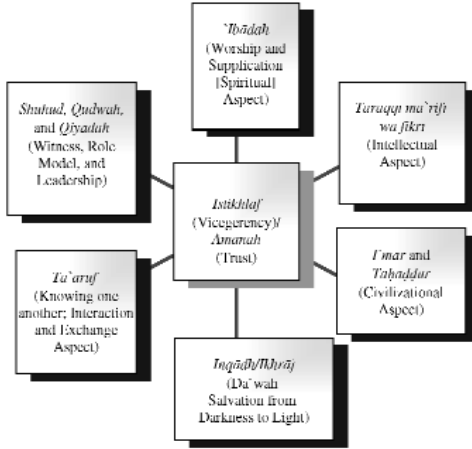


Having discussed humanity’s qualifications and responsibility as God’s vicegerent, I now shed some light on the nature of this work and mission. Figure 4 shows vicegerency’s main aspects, among them the dimension of worship<sup>57</sup> and spiritual development, intellectual and knowledge development,<sup>58</sup> civilizational development,<sup>59</sup> salvation,<sup>60</sup> preaching<sup>61</sup> and enlightenment development, knowing one another<sup>62</sup> and the exchange of values, cultures, wisdom and expertise, being a witness<sup>63</sup> over others and a role model,<sup>64</sup> and leading the affairs of nations and civilizations.

### *The Concept of Testing (Ibtlaʿ)*

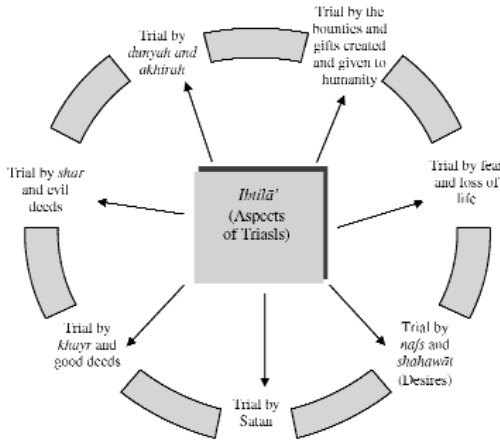
Clearly, humanity was created to serve as God’s vicegerent and thus has been blessed with many inherent faculties, qualifications, bounties, and gifts. In all of the activities that reflect the meaning of vicegerency within the Islamic worldview, human beings undergo testing and trials to determine whether they will succeed or fail in their mission, which revolves around meeting the

FIGURE 4: THE MAIN DIMENSIONS OF VICEGERENCY.



Creators' conditions. In this respect, testing, as mentioned in the Qur'an, becomes the cornerstone of this endeavor. In other words, human beings are tested by the things or bounties they have been given. Figure 5 presents the Islamic view of this concept.

FIGURE 5: THE CONCEPT OF TESTING.



Therefore, it is important to find the link and relationship between the concepts of vicegerency and testing in order to understand humanity's real place and purpose in this world. Indeed, the Islamic worldview elevates humanity to a very crucial position in the order of creation. The numerous injunctions and teachings pertaining to humanity in the Qur'an and the Sunnah reflect this merit and position. On the same line of argument,

Toshihiko Izustu aptly indicates that “Man, his nature, conduct, psychology, duties, and destiny are, in fact, as much a central preoccupation of the Qur’anic thought as the problem of God Himself.”<sup>65</sup>

The concept of testing<sup>66</sup> or trial is one of the Islamic worldview’s most important aspects. The Qur’an states: “That which is on Earth We have made but as a glittering show for Earth, in order that We may test them – as to which of them are best in conduct” (18:7). One cannot imagine or analyze the issues of existence and vicegerency without a clear reference to this concept. Indeed, it is part and parcel of the entire Islamic view of human existence and its purpose. Thus, one should perceive this concept accordingly and situate it in its proper position within the Islamic worldview. In fact, within the Islamic frame of reference, the concept of trial consists of such aspects as testing by good and evil,<sup>67</sup> bounties<sup>68</sup> and gifts, prosperity and adversity,<sup>69</sup> desires and grip,<sup>70</sup> Satan, as well as fear and shortage in terms of food, money, and loss of life.<sup>71</sup>

Obviously, there is a link between the concepts of the Creator, creation, humanity, vicegerency, and trial. Indeed, for humanity to undertake its mission and meet the conditions of testing in its total and integral meaning, human beings need a worldview or a vision of life that provides them with answers to the ultimate questions and guide them on the path of realizing their purpose as God’s vicegerent on Earth. From an Islamic perspective, Islam provides this vision of life and sets the rules, principles, and guidelines so that humanity can succeed in this endeavor. In other words, the Qur’an provides the necessary worldview to achieve this end, for one of its objectives is “to guide human beings towards what is beneficial<sup>72</sup> for them, to teach them the facts of existence, and to preach wisdom, mercy and compassion.”<sup>73</sup>

### *A Vision of Life and Perfection*<sup>74</sup>

The previous section showed the importance of the Islamic worldview as a comprehensive structure of revealed knowledge that integrates both seen and unseen knowledge and truths. As a structure of integrated knowledge, this worldview by its very nature engenders a vision of life that creates a sense of comprehensive understanding vis-à-vis creation and its purpose. It also imparts to humanity the sense of integrality and responsibility toward one’s self and surroundings. Indeed, this vision empowers humanity with the necessary answers that each person requires by offering the guidelines and orientations needed to function as God’s vicegerent. This vision tells humanity about its creation, abilities, limitations, purposes, horizons, and destination;

provides a system of belief, law, and ethics; and outlines an approach to life and progress. As a vision of life, the Islamic worldview provides motivation and incentives designed to encourage Muslims and help them succeed as vicegerents.

No less important are the following aspects of the Islamic worldview as a vision of life. First, it tells humanity about the cosmos and cosmological truths and patterns and spells out the assumptions as well as the facts about existence, the creation of the cosmos, and the laws and norms that govern its movements and functions. Second, it explains the epistemological rules and principles that need to be considered when dealing with issues related to existence and life. In this regard, the Islamic worldview helps humanity learn more about the knowledge of the seen and unseen worlds, the sources of knowledge, the power of reason and its limitations, the tools and means of acquiring knowledge, the purpose and function of different types of knowledge, and the methods and ways of obtaining and then implementing knowledge in the pursuit of human progress and perfection.

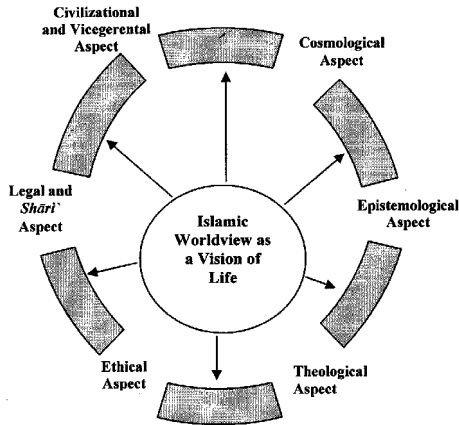
Third, the Islamic worldview explains theological matters pertaining to the belief system and matters of faith and worship. Fourth, it explains the ethical system necessary for attaining and then maintaining balance and stability in human life. It tells about the values, virtues, and morals required for human satisfaction, happiness, and perfection. Fifth, it provides the legal and legislative injunctions needed to run human affairs and judge human acts. Sixth, the Islamic worldview provides humanity with a civilizational vision that helps its members achieve excellence and perfection in their material, social, cultural, economic, political, and aesthetical endeavors. Seventh, it teaches Muslims that:

Everything that happens in the world does so by His commands, by His action. From the movement of protons and electrons in an atom to that of the galaxies, from the growth and development of amoeba to the psychic processes of man – every event happens by His knowledge, His design, His efficiency, and does so in fulfillment of His purpose. The world in which the Muslim lives is truly an enchanted world.<sup>75</sup>

The main aspects of the Islamic worldview as a vision of life are illustrated below. This vision of life provides humanity with the cosmological, theological, epistemological, ethical, legal, and civilizational orientations that will enable human beings to live with a vision and use it to realize their purpose: to serve as God's vicegerent.



FIGURE 6: THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW AS A VISION OF LIFE.



## Conclusion

To recapitulate, one may emphasize the urgency of designing an Islamic framework for studying various worldviews. In this respect, the Islamic input opens new horizons for this field by widening its scope and relating them, on the one hand, to revelation without undermining human abilities and the power of reasoning and, on the other hand, reflecting the Islamic vision of life's social and civilizational aspects.

## Endnotes

1. For further explanation, refer to Gary Jason, *Critical Thinking: Developing an Effective Worldview* (Belmont: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2001).
2. My purpose is not to provide an extensive account of all of the studies and views dealing with the development of worldview studies, but to introduce briefly some of them from a western perceptive.
3. This might include the contributions made by various European and American scholars.
4. For definitions of *worldview* from a western perspective, refer to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) for the term *Weltanschauung*; Anthony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1979) for the word *Weltanschauung*; *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) for the term *worldview*; Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), the term *Weltanschauung*; Dewitt Richard, *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science* (UK: Cornwall:, Blackwell, 2004); Dockery David and Thornbury

- Gregory Alan, *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002); James Sire, *In The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 17; David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 64-65.
5. Qur'an 2:31: "And when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth,' they asked: 'Will You place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? – and we glorify You with Your praise and extol Your holiness.' He answered: 'I know what you know not.'"
  6. For more details, see Abdelaziz Berghout, "Worldviews and the Minds They Build: With Reference to the Vicegerental Mind of Islam," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 3, no. 2 (December 2006). Published by the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, the International Islamic University Malaysia.
  7. I mention only selected studies from different western countries, such as Germany, the United Kingdom and France. I intend to provide an extensive work on western worldview studies, as this paper focuses more on the Islamic contribution. The present paper relies mainly on the work done by such scholars as David Naugle. The Islamic conception of worldview study development will be discussed in other articles.
  8. For a better assessment and interpretation of *worldview* within the western context, refer to Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization, Comprehensive Volume*, 4th ed. (USA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2000).
  9. Naugle, *Worldview*, 55.
  10. *Ibid.*, 56.
  11. Naugle highlights the contributions of selected scholars from different perspectives, including Protestant evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism. He also includes contributions from the German-, French-, and English-speaking world.
  12. Among others, he mentions Albert Gombert's work on the discipline of *Wortgeschichte* (1902 and 1907), Alfred Gotzke's work on his "Euphorion-Artikel," the work of Franz Dornseiff (1945-46), and the work of Helmut G. Meier in his doctoral dissertation "Worldview: Studies towards a History and Theory of the Concept," along with the guide book on worldviews that contained Werner Betz's "Toward a History of the Word Weltanschauung" and the work of Andreas Meier in an article published in 1997. Quoted in Naugle, *Worldview*, 57.
  13. Among others, the following works may be cited: Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation" and the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1799), A. W. Schlegel (1800), Novalis (1801), Jean Paul (1804), G. W. F. Hegel (1806), Joseph Gorres (1907), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1815). Furthermore, one should underscore the fact that the term *worldview* made its way to various European dictionaries, for example, the Italian *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (1958), the French *Dictionnaire Alphabetique et Analogique de la Langue Francaise* (1994), the French *Philosophical Dic-*

tionaries (1930), the *Nouveau Vocabulaire Philosophique* (1956), *Vocabulaire de la Philosophie* (1957), and the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Philosophique* (1962). In addition, this term has found its route into the literature and dictionaries of the English-speaking world: the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995), the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1994), the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1995), *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (1979), and *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998). See Naugle, *Worldview*, 63.

14. *Ibid.*, 66-67.
15. See Gwilym Beckerlege, ed. *The World Religions Reader*, 2d. ed. (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 1998), 4-71, 201-84, and 387-404.
16. There might be many other works of which I am not aware, as the contemporary Muslim works are rather numerous.
17. See Seyyid Qutub, *This Religion of Islam* (Egypt: al-Manar Press, 1967) and *The Characteristics of the Islamic Concept* (Delhi: Hindustan, 1984).
18. His main focus was not to provide a conceptual and methodological study of how the concept of *worldview* developed or its history in the Islamic context; rather, it was an ideological study of the Islamic worldview's teachings.
19. See Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, Khurshid Ahmad, tr. and ed. (Pakistan: The Islamic Foundation A.S. Noordeen, 1979).
20. See Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 1st ed., Saeed Sheikh, ed. and ann. (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986).
21. Abul Hasan Ali Nadawi, *Islam and the World*, 2d ed., M. Asif Kidwa'i, tr. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1973).
22. Malik Bennabi, *The Question of Ideas in the Muslim World*, Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, tr. and ann. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2003).
23. Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, *Our Philosophy*, tr. Shams C. Inati, (London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1989).
24. Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari, *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought: God, Man and the Universe*, tr. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1985) and *The Human Being in the Qur'an* (Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization, 1983).
25. Abdul Hameed Siddiqi and Muhammad Saeed Siddiqi, *The Islamic Concept of Religion and Its Revival*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1980).
26. Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Al-Mahawir al-Kamsah li al-Qur'an* (Eygpt: Dar al-Wafa', 1989).
27. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Khasa'is al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1989) and *Introduction to Islam*, rev. Muhammad Higab (Cairo: Islamic Inc. Publishing and Distribution, 1997).
28. Said Ramadan al-Buti, *Kubra al-Yaqiniyat al-Kawuniyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'asir, 2001).
29. Muhsein Abdulhamid, *Al-Madhdhabyah al-Islamiyah* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1996).

30. Al-Faruqi's works are very instrumental and contribute immensely to the development of worldview studies as an Islamic field of research. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982) and *Islam and Culture* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1980).
31. Seyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: George and Unwin, 1972).
32. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Islam Rediscovered: Discovering Islam from Its Original Sources* (India: Goodword Books, 2001).
33. Rafiuddin Mohammad, *Facets of the Islamic Worldview* (Pakistan: Zareen Art Press, 1983).
34. Muhammed Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam* (Kuwait: International Islamic Book Center, 1959).
35. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1994) and *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
36. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1994) and *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995).
37. Abdul Wahid Hamid, *Islam: The Natural Way* (London: MELS, 1989).
38. Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Kuwait International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, 1987).
39. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Science: Towards a Definition* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996).
40. Abd al-Rahman Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*, tr. Vincent Sheean (London: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993).
41. S. D. Islahi, *Islam at a Glance*, tr. M. Zafar Iqbal (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1981).
42. Jafar Wafa, *The Immutable Message*, 1st ed. (Karachi: Sulaiman Nadvi Study Circle, 1999).
43. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, *The Islamic Worldview, Towards a Positive Islamic World-View: Malaysian and American Perceptions*, eds. Abdul Monir Yaacob and Ahmad Faiz Abdul Rahman (Kuala Lumpur: IKIK, 1994).
44. Fareed Ahmad and Saiyad Salahuddin Ahmad, *God, Islam, and the Skeptic Mind: A Study on Faith, Religious Diversity, Ethics, and the Problem of Evil* (Berlin and Kuala Lumpur: Blue Nile Publishing, 2004).
45. This list is not exhaustive. For example, many Arabic-language books deal with various aspects of worldview but under the title of "Islamic culture." Most of them deal extensively with various systems (e.g., belief, social, economic, ethical, and Shari'ah).
46. See Mohammad Rafi-ud-din, *Facets of the Islamic Worldview* (Lahore: Islamic Education Congress, 1983).

47. For more details on these principles, see Khan, *Islam Rediscovered*, 7-100; Rahman, *Major Themes*, chapters 1-7; Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), parts 1-4; and Islahi, *Islam at a Glance*, 7-165.
48. For further in-depth work on the issue of existence, see Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Degrees of Existence* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, Art Printing Works Sdn. Bhd, 1994), 1-58.
49. Al-Faruqi argues: "The relevance of Allah to man is not only metaphysical, explaining the cosmos and all that happens within it. It is equally axiological, explaining the good and the beautiful. The will of God is what ought to be. From it springs every value." See his *Islam and Culture* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1980), 12.
50. See Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, 1-25.
51. Qur'an 67:1-2: "He Who has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test and thus show which of you is the best in conduct."
52. Al-Faruqi argues: "The Muslim is a person conscious of his capacity to know the truth. Islam has taught him that God has endowed him with his senses, his understanding, memory and reason; and he is conscious of them as faculties of knowledge whose reports are trustworthy." See his *Islam and Culture*, 14.
53. Qur'an 17:70: "Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam."
54. Qur'an 95:4: "We have created humanity in the best of molds."
55. Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, new rev. ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Zafar Sdn. Bhd., 1992), 34.
56. Qur'an 31:20: "Are you not aware that God has made subservient to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and has lavished unto you His blessings, both seen and unseen?"
57. Qur'an 51:56: "I have only created jinns and humanity that they may worship Me" and Qur'an 12:76: "We raise to degree of wisdom whom We please: But over all endued with knowledge is One, the All-knowing."
58. Qur'an 20:114: "High above all is Allah, the King, the truth. Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed, but say: 'O my Lord, advance me in knowledge.'"
59. Qur'an 11:61: "It is He Who has produced you from the earth and settled you therein" and Qur'an 28:77: "But seek, with the wealth which Allah has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget your portion in this world. But do good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not occasions for mischief in the land."
60. Qur'an 3:103: "And hold all together, by the rope which Allah stretches out for you, and be not divided among yourselves. Remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you, for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace you become brethren. You were on the brink of the Pit of Fire, and He saved you from it."

61. Qur'an 16:125: "Invite all to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching. Argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious, for your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path and who receive guidance."
62. Qur'an 49:13: "O humanity, We created from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other, not so you may despise each other. Verily the most honored of you in the Sight of Allah is the one who is the most righteous."
63. Qur'an 2:143: "Thus have We made of you an ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves."
64. Qur'an 3:110: "You are the best of peoples evolved for humanity, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah."
65. Toshihiko Iztusu, *God and Man in the Qur'an* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 75.
66. Qur'an 5:48: "But He willed it otherwise in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you" and Qur'an 47:31: "And most certainly We shall try you all, so that We might mark out those of you who strive hard in Our Cause and are patient in adversity. For We shall put to a test the truth of all your assertion."
67. Qur'an 21:35: "Every soul shall have a taste of death, and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To Us must you return."
68. Qur'an 18:7-8: "Behold, We have willed that all beauty on earth be a means by which We put all people to a test, showing of them are best in conduct. Verily, in time We shall reduce all that is on it to barren dust."
69. Qur'an 7:168: "We have tried them with both prosperity and adversity."
70. Qur'an 25:43: "Have you ever considered the kind of man who makes his own desires his deity?"
71. Qur'an 2:155: "Be sure that We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits of your toil. But give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere."
72. See Qur'an 2:31-37; 41:11; 17:9-10; 10:57, and 17:105.
73. Mahmoud Abu Saud, *The Concept of Islam* (Plainfield, IN: American Trust Publications), 86.
74. See Muhammed Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam* (Kuwait: International Islamic Book Center, 1959), 99-126.
75. Al-Faruqi, *Islam and Culture*, 12.