Abul-A'la Mawdūdī (1903-79) was a leading Muslim scholar of the twentieth century. He has written extensively on a variety of Islamic subjects. He wrote in Urdu, but his works, quite a few of which have been translated into other languages, have exercised deep influence on educated classes, especially the youth, in many parts of the Muslim world. Though essentially a scholar of the traditional mold, Mawdūdī, unlike many other Muslim scholars, is alive to the problems of modernity as they confront the Islamic

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1 Mawdūdī was born at Aurangabad (Deccan, India). After several years of religious education, he started his career as a journalist at the age of fifteen, becoming, in 1921 and 1925 respectively, the editor of Al-Muslim and Al-Jam'iyyat, biweekly Urdu organs of a major organization of Indian Muslim scholars. At the suggestion of the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), Mawdūdī in March 1938 moved to Pathankot (East Punjab, India) in order to start work on the recodification of Islamic law. But Iqbal, from whom the chief support for the project was to come, died in the following month, and the project never got off the ground. In 1941 Mawdūdī founded the Jama'at-i Islami (Islamic Party) with the aim of bringing about social change in accordance with Islamic principles. In 1947 Pakistan came into being and the Jamaat headquarters were moved to that country. The Jamaat turned political in 1957 and Mawdūdī continued to lead it until 1972, when he had to resign on account of bad health. Although he was politically active for a long time, Mawdūdī is best known as a thinker and writer. A number of biographies of Mawdūdī have been written, most of them in Urdu and practically all of them of poor quality. For a brief life-sketch of Mawdūdī in English, see Kurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari's, Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdī: An Introduction to His Vision of Islam and Islamic Revival, Kurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds.), Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honor of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdī (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1979), pp. 360-65).

2 For a list of Mawdūdī's writings, see Ahmad and Ansari, pp. 3-10.

3 Few modern Muslim writers have been translated into so many languages. Mawdūdī's short Dīniyat (available in English as Towards Understanding Islam [rev. ed.; Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1980]) has alone been rendered into more than twenty languages.
world. It is this combination of the traditional and modern strains, and his skillful exposition of Islam, that makes him one of the most widely read Muslim authors of today.

*Tafhim al-Qur`an*, a six-volume commentary on the Qur`an, is Mawdūdi's *magnum opus*. It is not only a treasury of information, it is also a distillate of Mawdūdi's thought. In writing *Tafhim*, as he says in the Preface to the book, Mawdūdi has in mind the needs of those educated laymen who wish to understand the message of the Qur`an but lack access to the original Arabic sources on the subject; the word *tafhim*, which means "to make someone understand," aptly describes the nature of the book. The following pages analyze some of the features of the work.

A Modern Commentary

Even a cursory reading of *Tafhim* would show that the work is a "modern" one. Most Urdu Qur`an commentaries present a "traditional" look in that they lack methodical arrangement of material. *Tafhim* seems to satisfy many of the formal requirements one expects a book of this kind to meet. A typical page of *Tafhim* is divided into three portions: one for the Qur`anic text; one for the translation; and one for notes. It is thus possible to read the translation uninterruptedly—a convenience appreciated by those familiar with the irksome pattern of interlinear Urdu translations of the Qur`an. The translation is presented in logical paragraphs. Occasionally, extended quotations are set off from the main text, even given in smaller print. Each volume has a detailed analytical index of subjects treated in the notes. There are 32 maps of historic routes and important geographical locations, and 12 black-and-white photographs, most of them of buildings of Thamudan style of architecture. There are copious cross-references.

Again, most of the Urdu Qur`an commentaries employ a highly Arabicized and Persianized idiom that proves to be prohibitive to most common readers. *Tafhim* is written in a style that an average reader not only finds comprehensible, but also delightful. *Tafhim* has been called the first best-selling Urdu

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4 It may be mentioned here that Mawdūdi commands a masterly prose style. Unfortunately, however, the English translations of his works fail to capture this. This is all the more unfortunate because it is these English translations that have often served as the base language for the translation of Mawdūdi's works into other languages.

5 Abū l-`A`īl Mawdūdi, *Tafhim al-Qur`an* (6 vols.; Lahore, 1949-72). An incomplete translation of *Tafhim* (up to S. 17) is available in English under the title of *The Meaning of the Qur`an*, tr. Ch. Muhammad Akbar, 6 vols. [vols. 5-6 edited by A. A. Kamal]; Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1967-72. Unless otherwise stated, all references to Mawdūdi in this article are to *Tafhim* (Urdu edition), with only the volume number and page(s) given.

6 1.6.
Qur'an commentary, and the main reason for its popularity is the limpid beauty of its style.

Above all, *Tafhim* is modern in that its author evinces an awareness of the situations and problems of the present age. On quite a few occasions Mawdudi cites, in support of his interpretation of Qur'anic verses, recent researches in the fields of physics, medicine, and archeology. And, as a study of *Tafhim* shows, its author addresses himself to many concerns and questions that a twentieth-century reader—Muslim or non-Muslim—of the Qur'an is likely to have.

**Translation**

In the Preface* to *Tafhim*, Mawdudi says that he has attempted to make an interpretive translation of the Qur'an. Most of the Urdu translations of the Qur'an are literal and, as such, suffer from a number of drawbacks: they fail to convey in any degree the beauty and eloquence of the original; they disregard the fact that the Qur'anic style is that of an orally delivered discourse, and not of a written treatise; they fail to suggest the context and environment in which any given sura was revealed; and they do not adequately bring out the special meanings the Qur'an assigns to many words. Mawdudi writes:

> It is with a view to rectifying these shortcomings of a literal translation (lafzi tarjamah) that I have adopted the method of interpretive rendering (tarjumani) of the Qur'an. Instead of supplying a word-for-word translation, I have endeavored to convey in Urdu, with the utmost possible accuracy, the sense I gather from a Qur'anic verse and the impression the verse makes on my mind. Avoiding literalism, I have tried to render the flawless Arabic of the original into flawless Urdu; to bring out in written language, in an un-

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* It should be pointed out, however, that Mawdudi cites scientific researches for illustrative purposes only. That is, he cites such findings to substantiate Qur'anic interpretations he has reached on extra-scientific grounds, but these findings do not form in him, as they do in some other Muslim scholars, the staple of Qur'anic exegesis. He may be contrasted, for example, with the Egyptian Qur'an commentator, Tahtawi Jawhari (1870-1940), author of *Al-Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (26 vols. in 13, 2nd printing; Tehran: Intishah-i Af-tab, 1931). Jawhari believes that one of the primary aims of the revelation of the Qur'an was to motivate Muslims to study the natural sciences and make advancement in scientific fields ranging from botany and zoology to oceanology and astronomy. For a brief introduction to Jawhari's approach to the Qur'an, see his *Al-Qur'an wa l-'Ulum al-'Asriyya* (2nd printing; Egypt: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi), 1951.

* I have translated *dibachah* "preface." Mawdudi also writes a *dibachah* to each sura, but there it is more appropriately translated "introduction," for that, in fact, is the nature of such *dibachahs.*

*1,6-10.*
constrained manner, the unbroken continuity of the oral communication; and to reproduce not only the meaning and message of the Qur’an, but, as far as possible, the power and magnificence of the Qur’anic language as well.¹⁰

Mawdudi’s is admittedly the most readable Urdu translation so far. An authority on the Urdu language and a great stylist. Mawdudi was ideally suited to the task. He has succeeded, better than anyone, in capturing in Urdu the vigor and eloquence of the Arabic original. We will distinguish three characteristics of his translation.¹¹

First, the translation is expository. Sometimes in parentheses but usually woven into the translation itself we find interpretive material. Such material is used by Mawdudi to accomplish several purposes, for example, to expound Qur’anic laconicism: S. 8:19, *wa in ta‘ūdū na‘ud*, “But if you turn around and repeat the blunder, we will repeat the punishment” (cf. Arberry, “But if you return, We shall return); to explain expressions with special meanings: S. 14:5, *wa dhakkarhum bi ayyām Allāh*, “And advise them by relating to them the significant events in the divine annals” (cf. Arberry, “and remind them thou of the Days of God); to supply the definite and the concrete for the indefinite and the abstract of the original: S. 1:63, *wa‘adhkurū mā ḥāfi*, “And keep in mind the laws and injunctions inscribed in it” (cf. Arberry, “And remember what is in it”); and to indicate the particular dimension of meaning of a verse, or a part of it, might have in a particular context: S. 2:220, *inna Allāh ‘azīzun ĥakīmūn*, “But, besides possessing power and authority, He is All-Wise” (cf. Arberry, “Surely, God is All-mighty, All-wise”).

Mawdudi’s expository technique certainly works well and is largely responsible for the high degree of readability of *Tafsīr*. It is not without its problems, however. For one thing, there is the risk of overplay. For instance, S. 2:178, *al-ḥurre bi al-ḥurri wa al-abdu bi al-‘abdī wa al-unthā bi al-unthā*, is clear enough as “freeman for freeman, slave for slave, female for female” (Arberry), but Mawdudi’s “If a freeman has committed the murder, then the freeman should be punished; if a slave is guilty of murder, then . . .” is needless-

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¹⁰ I.10-II.

¹¹ I have given my own translation of the examples cited below. Since the examples are meant to illustrate aspects of Mawdudi’s Urdu translation, in rendering them I have generally tried to stay close to the Urdu text. I have also provided A. J. Arberry’s translation of the examples given (The Koran Interpreted (2 vols. in 1, 5th printing; New York: MacMillan, 1973). This I have done not with a view to judging the merit of the one translation relative to the other, but in order to enable the reader to appraise Mawdudi’s translation with reference to a standard English translation that seeks to ensure fidelity to the Qur’ānic text. In other words, I have used Arberry’s translation as a “control.” For the translations, volume and page(s) from Mawdudi or Arberry are not given.
ly drawn out and smacks of what Fowler has called “elegant variation.” Also, sometimes Mawdūdī incorporates into the translation material that does not rightly belong there. S. 37:49, *ka annahunna baydun maknīnun*, is rendered by him as: “[women who are] delicate like the pellicle concealed under the shell of an egg.” Now the verse is saying no more than “as if they were carefully preserved eggs.” But to maintain, as does Mawdūdī on the basis of a *hadith*, that the reference here is to the pellicle of an egg, and to translate accordingly, is to exceed one’s limits as translator.

Second, in translating Qur’ānic idioms and idiomatic expressions, Mawdūdī tries to provide equivalent Urdu idioms and idiomatic expressions. The thin film covering a datepit is called *qīmīr* in Arabic, and the idiom *la yamliku qīmīr* means “he possesses nothing,” that is, not even a *qīmīr*. The idiom occurs in S. 35:13, and the Arberry translates it “those... possess not so much as the skin of a date-stone.” Mawdūdī’s rendering is: “they do not own so much as a blade of straw (par-i kāh).” S. 68:42 speaks of the panic that will occur on the Last Day, and reads: *yawma yakshafu ‘an sāqin*. Arberry’s “Upon the day the leg shall be bared” is accurate but does not help the reader. Mawdiidi translates: “The day people shall have a hard time of it.” S. 23:82 contains the words *idhaa——kunnī turāban wa ‘izāman*. Arberry’s “when we are... become dust and bones” is faithful to the Arabic and clear in meaning. Mawdūdī’s translation is less faithful to the Arabic but gains in idiomatic force: “when we are... reduced to a bunch of bones (*hadiyyon kā pinjar)*.” And sometimes Mawdūdī achieves a happy synthesis of the literal and the idiomatic. S. 21:15 ends with *ja’alnāhum hasīdan khāmidina*, which is rendered by Mawdudi as: “until we mowed them down, and not a spark of life was left in them” (cf. Arberry, “until We made them stubble, silent and still”). Sometimes, however, Mawdūdī’s quest for Urdu parallels does not produce propitious results. To give only one example, he translates S. 74:52, *suhufan munashsharatana*, “open letters,” which considerably waters down the Arabic

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13 According to another Pakistani exegete, Amin Ahsan Islāhī (b. 1906), the reference is to the eggs of an ostrich. The yellowish-white eggs, Islāhī says, are jealously guarded by the ostrich, and the Arabs likened a chaste and cream-complexioned woman to them. *Tadabbur-i Qurān* (8 vols.; Lahore, 1967-80), V,465. We may note that the pre-Islamic Arab poet, Imru’ al-Qays in his *mu`allaqah* (suspended ode) compares a woman to “the maiden egg of an ostrich, an egg that is cream-colored and has been nurtured by pure, unsullied water.” Abū-Zakariyyā Yahyā ibn ʿAlī al-Khatīb al-Tibrīzī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣāʾ id al-`Asr*, ed. Muhammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (2nd printing; Egypt: Muḥammad ʿAlī Şabiḥ wa Awlādūhū, 1964), p. 97.

14 IV,287-88, n. 30.
expression (cf. Arberry, “scrolls unrolled”). In general, however, Mawdūdi’s treatment of Qur’anic idioms and idiomatic expressions is very skillful and constitutes one of the strengths of Tafhim al-Qurān.

Third, Mawdūdi often tries to combine in translation the several meanings or shades of meaning a word might have. The yanābī’ of S. 39:21 is “springs” in Arberry; in Mawdūdi it is “creeks, fountains, and rivers.” S. 68:25 contains the word hard, which, according to Mawdūdi, has three meanings: “to withhold something from someone,” “to resolve to do something,” and “to act swiftly.” The sentence wa ghadaw ‘alā hardīn qādirīna is translated by Arberry: “And they went forth early.” Mawdūdi translates: “Having resolved not to share it [garden produce] with anyone, they went forth in haste early in the morning.” An inclusive translation of this kind has the advantage of presenting before the reader the full range of a word’s meaning. At the same time it runs the risk of losing the raciness of the original and becoming all too cumbersome. S. 102:1 consists of only two words, alhākum al-takāthuru, and Mawdūdi’s translation robs it of much of its incisiveness: “Your ambition to multiply your worldly possessions, in competition with one another, has made you heedless” (cf. Arberry, “Gross rivalry diverts you”). Moreover, the different meanings of a word may not all be intended in every case and a combination of them might prove to be infelicitous. S. 53:61 is wa antum sāmiḍūna. Trying to accommodate the two meanings usually given of sumūd, “to put something off” and “to engage in singing and playing music,” Mawdūdi translates the verse: “and you put these [matters] off by busying yourselves in singing and playing music.” It is quite unlikely that the two meanings are simultaneously intended in the context (cf. Arberry, “while you make merry”).

And yet the merits of Mawdūdi’s translation would seem to far outweigh the imperfections. It was Mawdūdi’s objective to prepare a lucid and self-explanatory translation of the Qurān, and, speaking overall, Mawdūdi achieves this objective with remarkable success.

Introductions to Suras

In the Preface to Tafhim, after defending his method on interpretive translation, Mawdūdi writes:

Moreover, in order to fully understand the Qur’ān, it is imperative to keep in mind the background to its verses. Since it was not possible to present this background in the translation, I have provided, to each sura, an introduction in which I have tried to show, after

15 VI,63, n. 15.
16 V,224, n. 54.
17 Diḥāchah. See n. 8 above.
thorough research, under what circumstances it was revealed. I have tried to determine what phase the Islamic movement was passing through, what needs and requirements the movement had, and what problems it faced at the time of a given sura's revelation.\textsuperscript{18}

The introductions discuss the chronology of the suras, provide a historical background to the suras, and offer analyses of the suras.

While sufficient historical information is available for the purpose of determining the chronology of the Medinan suras, there is, Mawdūdī says, only one way of arriving at the chronology of the Meccan suras: by studying the internal evidence of these suras and checking it for verification against Muhammad's (SAAS) life. Using this method, Mawdūdī makes a quadripartite division of the Meccan suras,\textsuperscript{19} and then tries to fix the period of each of them. It is notable that, to Mawdūdī, the internal evidence of a sura is an important determinant of chronology not only when the relevant historical information is lacking,\textsuperscript{20} but often also when such information is available.\textsuperscript{21} According to Mawdūdī, the study of a sura's contents helps one decide whether it was revealed in Mecca or Medina,\textsuperscript{22} whether it is an early or late Meccan or Medinan sura,\textsuperscript{23} and whether it is part Meccan and part Medinan.\textsuperscript{24}

An important part of the introduction consists of historical backgrounds. These backgrounds, especially the ones to many of the long and medium-length suras, are of the nature of short essays that depict the sociocultural environment in which the suras were revealed. Containing as they do critical insights as well as useful information, they put a helpful perspective on the suras. Among the best are the introductions to S. 8, 9, 24, 33, 59, and 105.

The introductions offer brief but compact analyses of the suras. In them Mawdūdī states the central themes of the suras, relating the themes to the suras' historical setting. He also uses the introductions to comment on the suras' structural composition,\textsuperscript{25} to deduce lessons from the stories narrated in a sura,\textsuperscript{26} to give his opinion on controversial issues,\textsuperscript{27} to point out differences between suras with similar or identical themes,\textsuperscript{28} and to explain aspects of

\textsuperscript{18} I,11.

\textsuperscript{19} 1,521-522.

\textsuperscript{20} E.g., IV,172 (S. 34); IV,520 (S. 43); IV,576 (S. 45); V,336 (S. 58); V,452 (S. 61); VI,38 (S. 67).

\textsuperscript{21} E.g., I,434 (S. 5); III,258 (S. 23); III,552 (S. 27); V,68 (S. 49).

\textsuperscript{22} E.g., II,258 (S. 10); V,244 (S. 55); VI,180 (S. 76); VI,402 (S. 97).

\textsuperscript{23} E.g., II,440 (S. 13); III,672 (S. 29); VI,418 (S. 99).

\textsuperscript{24} E.g., III,196 (S. 22).

\textsuperscript{25} E.g., I,229 (S. 3); II,166-67 (S. 9); III,728-29 (S. 30); V,482-84 (S. 62); VI,392-95 (S. 96).

\textsuperscript{26} E.g., II,321 (S. 11); II,378-81 (S. 12); III,258-59 (S. 23); III,610-12 (S. 28).

\textsuperscript{27} E.g., VI,549-62 (S. 113-14).

\textsuperscript{28} E.g., II,320 (S. 10-11).
complementarity between suras. Until S. 18, with a few exceptions, Mawdudi presents the themes of the suras without regard to the order in which the themes occur in the suras themselves. Beginning with S. 18, he presents them in order of their occurrence in the suras. The first complete verse-by-verse analysis offered by Mawdudi is that of S. 33, but it is only from S. 55 onward that he generally follows this scheme.

Together, the introductions make up a systematic guide to the Qur'anic suras, and perhaps it would not be a bad idea to publish them in a separate volume. An English translation of such a volume would be a good way of introducing *Tajhim al-Qur'an* to the English-speaking world.

### Explanatory Notes

Mawdudi writes in the Preface to *Tajhim*:

I have scrupulously avoided introducing in the explanatory notes any subject that might distract the reader from the Qur'an. I have written notes only on two kinds of occasions: 1) when I felt that the reader would require an explanation, ask a question, or entertain some kind of doubt; and 2) where I was afraid that the reader would not pay sufficient attention to certain verses and, as a result, would fail to grasp their true significance.

According to this statement, and as can be seen from the first two volumes of *Tajhim*, the explanatory notes were to have a small compass. But, beginning with the third volume, Mawdudi casts his net wider and wider, and the notes gain in variety and detail. A study of the notes in *Tajhim* would indicate that they have three main functions: explanatory, integrative, and critical.

The most important function, of course, is explanation. In the notes, Mawdudi defends or gives reasons for his translations; cites the *sha'ān al-nuzul* (occasion of revelation) of certain verses if this differs from the general *sha'ān al-nuzul* of the sura in which those verses occur; presents the multiple meanings certain verses havel gives details of historical events and expounds the historical background of certain concepts; offers a compact, synoptic treatment of many key Qur'anic terms; quotes traditional exegetical opinions; and presents details of the Qur'anic legal injunctions with reference to the *Sunna* (normative conduct) of Muhammad (SAAS) and major (Sunni) legal works. *Tajhim* is quite free from theological discussions, and there is hardly any ex-

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29 E.g., III.314-17 (S. 24, 33); III.610 (S. 26-28); IV.474 (S. 41-42); IV.574 (S. 44-45).
30 I,II.
31 To give an example of the wider scope of the latter volume: S. 2:270 and S. 76:7 both speak of the making and fulfilling of one's vows. To the former Mawdudi writes an eight-line note (I.208, n. 310), but the note to the latter covers several pages (VI.191-97, n. 10).
tensive treatment in it of issues in the so-called Qur'anic science.

Mawdūdī often tries to present the Qur'anic suras, especially the longer ones, as integrated wholes. This he does either by establishing structural links between the various parts of a sura or by pointing out how the different parts of a sura make reference to the same central theme. For example, he writes about S. 3:190 ff.: “These are the concluding verses, and they bear a connection not to the immediately preceding verses, but to the whole of the surah; it is especially important to keep in mind the opening verses of the sura."

The critical function of the notes is important, too. Mawdūdī subjects the interpretations of traditional scholars to scrutiny and does not hesitate to reject them if he thinks they are not warranted by the Qur'anic context, contravene the Qur'anic outlook or philosophy, or are based on weak logic and reasoning. On a number of occasions he declares a ḥadīth to be unacceptable if it is found to be in conflict with the Qur'an. Also, Tafhim is rich in critical comparisons of the Qur'an with the Bible and the Talmud; probably the most detailed comparison of this kind is to be found in Mawdūdī's commentary on S. 12. Now and then, Mawdūdī criticizes Orientalist scholars' interpretations of Qur'anic verses.

But a treatment of the explanatory notes of Tafhim would remain incomplete without considering some of the motifs that run through them and impart to Tafhim a distinctive character. Two such motifs are: Islam as a system of life, and the relevance of Islam in modern times.

Islam as a System of Life

The kingpin of Mawdūdī's thought is that Islam is a system of life that deals with all sphere of human life and that, in order to be viable, Islam must be implemented in its entirety. Like many other works of Mawdūdī's, Tafhim presents this view with full force.

The idea that Islam runs the whole gamut of life is, of course, not original to Mawdūdī. However, what Mawdūdī tries to do is offer a set of clear and well-argued definitions of key Islamic concepts within a coherently conceived framework. As an illustration of Mawdūdī's view of Islam as the holistic approach to life, we will take the Qur'anic term dīn (religion, way of life) and see how it is treated in Tafhim.

S. 39:2 reads, in part: “Worship God, making the dīn exclusively His.”

32 I,310-11, n. 134.
33 E.g., I,332, n. 26 (S. 4:16); II,252, n. 121 (S. 9:123); IV,235, n. 57 (S. 34:33); IV,442-43, n. 12 (S. 41:10).
35 E.g., III,36-37, n. 57 (S. 18:60 ff.); IV,404-05, n. 41 (S. 40:26 ff.); VI,59, n. 4 (S. 68:4).
Mawdūdī first gives the three meanings the word *din* has in Arabic—sovereignty, submission, and custom or habit—and then writes:

In view of these three meanings, *din* in this verse represents the attitude and mode of behavior that man adopts in recognition of a being's superiority to him, and in submission to that being. And making the *din* exclusively God's means that one should not associate anyone with God in worship, that one should worship only Him, follow only His guidance, and obey only His laws and injunctions. 36

The italicized portion represents the emphasis Mawdūdī places, here and elsewhere in *Tafhim*, on the social and legal aspects of *din*. *Din*, he says, has a strong this-worldly dimension in addition to its other-worldly dimension. Unfortunately, however, Muslims have only too often construed the word in a restricted sense. Discussing S. 12:76, Mawdūdī writes:

By using [in this verse] the word *din* for the law of the land, the Qur'ān has fully explained the wide range of meanings *din* has. This use of the word categorically refutes the view of those who believe that a prophet's message is principally aimed at ensuring worship of the One God, adherence to a set of beliefs, and observance of a few rituals; of those who think that *din* has nothing to do with cultural, political, economic, legal, judicial, and other matters pertaining to this world. This view, which has been popular among Muslims for a long time, and which has largely been responsible for their failure to realize their duty to establish an Islamic order of life, is, according to this verse, utterly false...37

According to S. 42:13, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were sent by God with the instruction, *aqimū al-dīna* (establish the *din*). Mawdūdī comments on this verse at length. When the word *iqāma* (verbal noun form *aqimū*) is used for material or corporeal (madī yā jismānī) things, he writes, it means "to cause that thing to take an upright position" (as, raising an animal from the ground) or "to erect" (as, erecting a pillar). But when it is used for something abstract (ma'nawī,

it does not simply mean "to preach that thing," but "to act upon it, promote it, and actually enforce it." A person's *iqāma* of his rule does not mean that he is propagating his rule, but that he has established his authority over the people of the land and has so structured the various government departments that the entire ad-
administration of the State is being run under his supervision... From this it should not at all be difficult to see that the prophets, when they were charged with the iqāma of dīn, were not simply expected to practice the dīn themselves, or to preach it to the people so that the latter might acknowledged it to be true. Rather, after the people had acknowledge it to be the true dīn, the prophets were supposed to take the next step and actually enforce the dīn, so that it should acquire mandatory power—and retain that power.\textsuperscript{38}

These quotations indicate the emphasis Mawdūdī places on the socio-political aspect of the Qurʾānic or Islamic scheme for human life. This emphasis is characteristic of Tafhīm and distinguishes it from most other Qurʾān commentaries, old and modern.\textsuperscript{39} Incidentally, one cannot help feel that, on a few occasions at least, Mawdūdī’s preoccupation with this aspect of Islam unduly influences his interpretation of the Qurʾān. To illustrate: the Arabic word tawālla means “to turn away,” and also “to become a ruler or assume power.” S. 2:205 begins: \textit{wa idhā tawālla saʾā fī al-ardī li yufiīda fiḥā}. Mawdūdī translates: “And when he acquires power, all his activities in the land are aimed at spreading corruption.” Now if the verse is read in conjunction with the preceding verse, one would be disposed to think that the context requires the other meaning in a note,\textsuperscript{40} but his preference for the “political” type of meaning is rather obvious.

Relevance of Islam Today

This motif is closely linked in Mawdūdī with the first. Islam, Mawdūdī says, is not only a systematic religion, it is very much a workable proposition today. In order to establish his thesis, Mawdūdī deals with a number of issues and questions, raised in the Qurʾān, from a “modern” perspective. S. 2:275-76 distinguishes between ribā (usury or interest) and bayʿ (trade or commerce). It forbids the former and permits the latter, and remarks that God “wipes out” ribā but lets sadaqāt (acts of charity) “grow.” Mawdūdī tries to vindicate the Qurʾānic position by discussing the matter not only from an ethical and spiritual viewpoint, but also from an economic angle.\textsuperscript{41} Of considerable interest in Tafhīm is Mawdūdī’s treatment of the subject of Islamic law. Throughout Tafhīm,

\textsuperscript{38} IV.488.

\textsuperscript{39} In this respect, Tafhīm resembles, and invites comparison with, \textit{Fi Zilāl al-Qurān}, the Qurʾān commentary of the Egyptian scholar, Sayyid Qutb (1906-66), (6 vols.; Beirut: Dâr al-Shuruq, 1973-74).

\textsuperscript{40} I,159-60, n. 225.

Islamic law. Throughout *Tafhim*, sometimes in the form of brief notes and sometimes in more detailed discussions, Mawdūdi clarifies for the modern reader aspects of the Islamic legal approach, and explains how Islam furnishes man with definite guidance in the fields of constitutional, social, civil, criminal, and international law. S. 60:12 reads, in part: *wa lâ ya‘ūṣinakū fī ma‘rūfîn* (and that they [women who came to Muḥammad (pbuh) to pledge allegiance] shall not disobey you in respect of anything that is *ma‘rūf* [good, just, and reasonable]). Mawdūdi comments: “This statement in fact lays down the foundation-stone of the rule of law in Islam.”42 Sometimes he points out the legal potentialities of certain verses: “The rules contained in the following verses [S. 49:11 ff.], together with their explication as found in Hadith, can serve as a basis for the formulation of a detailed Islamic law of libel.”43

Exactly how well Mawdudi has succeeded in explaining the relevance of Islam in modern times or in presenting Islam as an integrated system of life is certainly a question that may be discussed. But this much at least may be said, that Mawdūdi is keenly aware of the importance of issues and problems of modernity which even today many Muslim Qurʾān scholars refuse to recognize as proper grist for their mills.

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42 V,447, n. 22.
43 V,84, n. 19.