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Fazlur Rahman: a framework for interpreting the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an

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THE Pakistani-American thinker and scholar Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) was one of the most daring and original contributors to the discussion on the reform of Islamic thought in the twentieth century. As the Qur'an is central to any such discussion, innovative approaches to its interpretation are part of any reform agenda. Given the importance of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an in the debate on renewal and reform, Rahman's work in this area is the focus of this chapter.

Fazlur Rahman was born on 21 September 1919 in Hazara district, in what is now Pakistan,¹ in an area with strong connections to Islamic religious education. His father, Mawlana Shihab al-Din, was an *'alim*, a graduate of Deoband Seminary in India. Under his tutorship, rather than in a seminary, Rahman received his religious education in *tafsir*, hadith and law, theology and philosophy. He attended Punjab University in Lahore, and obtained Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Arabic. He then went to Oxford, where he wrote his dissertation on Ibn Sina's philosophy.² Though his primary interest early in his academic career was Islamic philosophy, he was widely read in Islamic law and history, and in ethics, *tafsir* and hadith. Having completed his studies at Oxford, Rahman moved to Durham University (UK), where he taught Islamic philosophy from 1950 to 1958. He then left to take up the position of associate professor at the Institute of

Islamic Studies at McGill University in Canada, where he remained for three years.

At that time, General Ayyub Khan, the then president of Pakistan, was searching for a liberal reform-minded Muslim intellectual to head the Islamic Research Institute which was established by Ayyub Khan, in Rahman's words, 'to advise the government on religious policies that would be true to the principles of Islam, interpreted by us for application in the changing context of the modern world'.³ Thus the Institute was to provide intellectual support for Ayyub Khan's modernisation program. Pakistan, a nation founded as a 'homeland for Muslims', had from independence been torn between the traditionalist Islam of the general population and a 'modernist' Islam espoused largely by the intellectual and secular elite of the country. For political reasons, Ayyub Khan needed to steer a path of modernisation that would not offend tradition. With his extensive training in traditional Islamic scholarship and his contact with the West, Rahman was one of the few Pakistani intellectuals at the time with the breadth of knowledge and intellect for the task. At the invitation of Ayyub Khan, Rahman returned to Pakistan to take up, first, a visiting professor's position and, later, the directorship of the Institute, where he remained from 1961 to 1968.

In taking up this position, Rahman saw an opportunity to help reform the Pakistani religious establishment and in particular its educational system. At the Institute he began training young Pakistani scholars to approach the Islamic tradition from a critical perspective. At the same time he provided policy advice and recommendations on matters related to Islamic issues from family law reform to bank interest and *zakat*. In this, his views were 'liberal' and often at odds with those of the traditionalist religious establishment. According to Rahman, the stiffest resistance he faced was 'from religious conservatives, and it centered mainly on the question of the rights of women and the reform of family law'.⁴ The discontent of Ayyub Khan's political opponents, led by influential political and religious figures, found an ideal target in Rahman, who symbolised for them the worst aspects of the modernisation project – religious and social reform.

Thus Rahman's ideas, combined with a certain degree of idealism and political naivety, not only put him on a collision course with Pakistan's powerful religious establishment, but also made him a pawn in the establishment's power struggle with Ayyub Khan. The country's deep-rooted traditionalism and mass illiteracy exacerbated the problem. In an atmosphere of hysteria, threats were made against Rahman's life and he finally had to resign and leave Pakistan. He returned to his academic life in the West, in the United States. He was appointed Professor of Islamic Thought at the University of Chicago in 1968, and he remained there until his death in 1988.

At Chicago, Rahman played a significant role in training a number of postgraduate students from countries such as Indonesia and Turkey. While his thought is not generally known in the Arab world or in traditionalist religious circles elsewhere, it is in Turkey and Indonesia where Rahman is most influential. Many of his students occupy senior academic positions in Islamic Studies in these countries. In Indonesia, for instance, Nurcholish Madjid, one of the most influential public intellectuals, studied under Rahman at Chicago. In the United States, where Rahman spent the final twenty years of his life, several students of Islam took up his ideas and attempted to reinterpret specific areas of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an. A good example is Amina Wadud, whose work *Qur'an and Woman* is an excellent example of an application of Rahman's ideas to the interpretation of the Qur'an.

Although he spent most of his academic life in the West, Rahman's primary engagement was with the Islamic tradition, which he felt it was his mission to explain to a largely Muslim audience. As Waugh comments:

[F]or all his sojourn in the West, and his importance at the University of Chicago, Fazlur Rahman never consciously introduced analytic procedures derived from Western thinkers in a major manner. Even in those areas that influenced his methodology ... he was not attracted to the ongoing debate. He felt very deeply his Islamic origins, remained committed to an Islamic process of knowledge, and rested within an essentially traditional framework in his theoretical underpinnings.⁵

Rahman's writings are extensive and much broader than his primary field of Islamic philosophy. His writings include reform of Islamic education, Qur'anic hermeneutics, hadith criticism, early development of Islamic intellectual traditions, reform of Islamic law and Islamic ethics. Thus it would be almost impossible to summarise his thought in a short article such as this. His best-known works are *Islam* (1966), *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (1982), *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (1994), and *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (1975). More recently, his *Revival and Reform* (1999) has been edited by Ebrahim Moosa and published posthumously. An extensive array of articles attest to the depth and breadth of his scholarship.⁶ One prominent theme in all of his work is reform and renewal, and the importance of method in this reform. Among the most important projects for him was reform of Islamic education. Unlike many reformers of the modern period, Rahman was not involved in a mass movement, and did not seek out political conflict. He eschewed a propagandist approach, avoided activism, and was more comfortable in confining himself to the teaching and research environment of a university.

Rahman's critique of traditional Islam

Rahman saw that the primary reason for the decline of Muslim societies was rooted in the intellectual legacy of Islam. This decline, for him, did not begin with the Western encroachment on Muslim societies from the eighteenth century onwards, as claimed by many a modern reformer, but much earlier. For him it was the intellectual ossification and the replacement of scholarship based on original thought by one based on commentaries and super-commentaries, the closing of the gate of *ijtihad*, and the basing of Islamic method solely on *taqlid* (blind imitation) which led to the decline.⁷ Given this, from his point of view, any hope for revival should be based on addressing this intellectual problem, and giving it top priority.

For Rahman, then, the first step in the renewal of Islamic thought was a historical critique of the legal, theological and mystical developments in Islam. It was essential to his project to

reveal the dislocation between the worldview of the Qur'an and areas such as theology, interpretation and law:

A historical critique of theological developments in Islam is the first step toward a reconstruction of Islamic theology. This critique ... should reveal the extent of the dislocation between the world view of the Qur'an and various schools of theological speculation in Islam and point the way toward a new theology⁸

Rahman relentlessly argued that pristine Islam as reflected in the message of the Qur'an had been lost with the formation of orthodoxy, that is, what later came to be known as Sunnism. Although Sunnism claims to represent the 'original' Islam, Sunnism in Rahman's assessment announced a departure from the pristine faith. It 'owes itself largely to earlier sectarian developments',⁹ and 'had in certain fundamental ways, undergone a radical change, indeed a metamorphosis, vis-à-vis its "original" state and the teachings of the Qur'an'.¹⁰ Thus, he dated the 'traumatic departure from the Qur'an' to the period that saw the formation of 'Sunni Orthodoxy': namely, the advent of the Umayyad rule. He believed that the appearance of 'dynastic rule' had the most negative impact on the development of Islam.

For Rahman, Sunnism coincided with the break between politics and law in the nascent Muslim community and the ethics of the Qur'an. Only through the later discourses of Sufism was this break questioned. The stress on Sufi piety by figures such as al-Ghazali (d. 1111) represented relief from the legal rivalries that were often motivated by base political agendas, although Rahman pointed out that al-Ghazali 'did not call for social or community virtues that would once again prepare the community as such to play the role in the world that the Qur'an required of it'.¹¹ Rahman deplored *zuhd* (renunciation of this world), and even its great figures like Hasan al-Basri, for holding such a negative view of this world.¹² He also criticised 'cognitive Sufism' for disparaging reason and giving the seat of honour to *kashf* as a means of true knowledge. In his view, this stance bolstered an already strong anti-rationalism movement.¹³

Rahman admired the Mu'tazili theories of prophecy and the nature of revelation, which, after history, formed the most

important component of his own general hermeneutic of the Qur'an.¹⁴ The Mu'tazila had built a theory of rational ethics on the grounds that good and bad are knowable by natural reason without the aid of revelation. According to this theory, 'primary' or general ethical truths about right and wrong are rationally discoverable by intuitive reason, but for actual obligations of 'secondary ethical truths, humanity needs revelation'. Rahman also had firm affinities with the Mu'tazili ideas on the 'createdness' of the Qur'an. This did not prevent Rahman, however, from being critical of the Mu'tazila's more extreme rationalist positions.

Rahman's severest criticism in the area of the history of Islamic thought was perhaps reserved for Ash'arism. It was plagued, according to him, by a theology of pre-destination and the ethics of *irja'*.¹⁵ This was in addition to its anti-rational outlook, which assumed that human beings could only act metaphorically, an idea that left them, in a sense, stripped of responsibility for their actions. This to Rahman was a grave misrepresentation of the message of the Qur'an: 'This attitude was bound to do severe damage to the human self image as a repository of initiatives and originality and harmed the assumptions underlying law, which considered human beings as free and responsible agents.'¹⁶

Rahman's framework for interpretation

Rahman praised modern reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Ahmad Khan for recognising the need for reform and change, and also key figures such as Hasan al-Banna and Abul A'la al-Mawdudi for countering the excesses of Islamic modernism and for defending Islam against secularism. On the other hand, he criticised them for not having a 'method' and for the *ad hoc* nature of the solutions they proposed. In the case of al-Banna and al-Mawdudi, Rahman was of the view that they substituted cliché mongering for serious intellectual endeavour.¹⁷ Against this, Rahman devoted most of his intellectual energies towards elaborating a new Islamic methodology, because he believed that traditional methods were not able to bring Muslim

thought into the intellectual framework of the modern age.¹⁸ His goal was to reassess the Islamic intellectual tradition and provide a way forward for Muslims. In his view, a re-examination of Islamic methodology in the light of the Qur'an itself was a prerequisite for any reform in Islamic thought

The Qur'an thus remained at the centre of Rahman's thought. He was critical of an *ad hoc* decontextualised approach that treated the Qur'an as a series of isolated verses and failed to 'yield insight into the cohesive outlook on the universe and life'.¹⁹ If different fields of intellectual endeavour in Islam were to cohere, one of the tasks was to formulate an Islamic metaphysics firmly based on the Qur'an.²⁰ Only if the metaphysical part was clearly understood, could a coherent rethinking of the moral, social and legal message of the Qur'an be possible.

Rahman was, as a result, preoccupied with 'the correct method of interpreting the Qur'an',²¹ the most important religious document and most comprehensive guide for humankind.²² In his view, despite the importance of the method in interpretation, 'the basic questions of method and hermeneutics were not squarely addressed by Muslims'.²³ Rahman criticised Muslims for their failure to 'understand the underlying unity of the Qur'an' and for their adoption of an 'atomistic approach'.²⁴ He also felt that in the modern period, the piecemeal treatment of the Qur'an had worsened,²⁵ and that the formulation of an 'adequate hermeneutical method' was 'imperative'.²⁶ This was also a project to which both Muslims and some non-Muslims could contribute, as it was 'exclusively concerned with the cognitive aspect of the revelation'.²⁷

Rahman's mission may be summed up as an endeavour to retrieve the moral elan of the Qur'an in order to formulate a Qur'an-centred ethics. Failing to find a work on ethics that was based solely on the Qur'an, he sought 'to elaborate an ethics on the basis of the Qur'an, for without an explicitly formulated ethical system, one can never do justice to Islamic law'.²⁸ Rahman emphasises the importance of the ethical dimension in the Qur'an:

Muslim scholars have never attempted an ethics of the Qur'an, systematically or otherwise. Yet no one who has done any careful study of the Qur'an can fail to be impressed by its ethical fervor. Its ethics, indeed, is its essence, and is also the necessary link between theology and law. It is true that the Qur'an tends to concretize the ethical, to clothe the general in a particular paradigm, and to translate the ethical into legal or quasi-legal commands. But it is precisely a sign of its moral fervor that it is not content only with generalizable ethical propositions but is keen on translating them into actual paradigms. However ... the Qur'an always explicates the objectives or principles that are the essence of its laws.²⁹

It was Rahman's opinion that the Qur'an and the Sunna were mediated by certain historical realities, and that no claim of 'immutability' should be made to the understandings of either. For him, all religious traditions are in constant revitalisation and reform.

One of the most important of Rahman's interests was a framework for the interpretation of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an. He attempted to emphasise the close relationship between the concerns of present-day Muslims and those of the earliest Muslim community. He took a particular interest in using the Qur'an for providing guidance for Muslims in different times, places and circumstances. Lessons were to be learned from the way the Prophet and the earliest Muslim community (i.e., the 'immediate community') used the Qur'an, an approach which, transposed to the modern period, could not only be practical but also retain a high degree of authenticity.

To Rahman, the methodology of the jurists was not based systematically on the broad socio-moral theory that he believed should underlie the law. Indeed, the jurists, in their quest to develop a highly structured legal system, had avoided the fluidity that would have been the result of such a theory. Rahman argued that, even though a system based on socio-moral theory had never been attempted in the past, Muslims in the modern period were in urgent need of one. In emphasising his approach to the interpretation and construction of law and to its application, Rahman also accepted that differences in interpretation would result: 'However they will become more systematically and

consciously controlled by the systematic methodology proposed.³⁰

Although Rahman's interest in the Qur'an was broader than its ethico-legal content, this area occupied an important place in his writing, because it was central to his concern with the need for rethinking the interpretation of the Qur'an. In his view, the rigidity of the jurists' interpretations, and their denial of an historical context to the revelation, had resulted in archaic laws that not only prevented Muslims from dealing with modern problems, but also placed stress on the vibrancy of Islam itself. In the following, specific aspects of his approach will be brought together, based on six key elements: revelation and its socio-historical context; ideal/contingent; social justice; moral principles; cautious use of hadith; and, linking the past and present.

Revelation and its socio-historical context

Rahman began with a critique of the 'dictation theory' of revelation accepted by most Muslims, which rejects the possibility of any role for the Prophet except that of receiver of the message from God. The Prophet is reduced to a channel for the transmission of God's word, much like an audio-recording instrument such as a tape-recorder, which simply records the message exactly as it is given in sounds, words and sentences, and then transmits the 'text' as received. Rahman saw revelation as more complex

First, his position on prophecy was that he believed that the Prophet was the recipient of the final, verbal revelation of God: 'Without this belief no Muslim can be a Muslim even in name.'³¹ Yet, despite this statement, Rahman's position did cause a stir when it first appeared in his book *Islam* (1966), and continues to do so today.³² According to Rahman, for the Qur'an itself, and for Muslims, the Qur'an is the Word of God (*kalam Allah*):³³

This 'Other' through some channel, 'dictated' the Qur'an with an absolute authority. The voice from the depths of life spoke distinctly, unmistakably and imperiously. Not only does the word '*qur'an*', meaning 'recitation', clearly indicate this, but the text of the Qur'an itself states in several places that the Qur'an is *verbally revealed*, and not merely in its 'meaning' and ideas.³⁴

Next, Rahman attempts to show the psychology of the creative process of the mind of the Prophet, and to show that 'the source and the origin of this creative process lies beyond the ordinary reach of the human agency',³⁵ while maintaining at the same time that 'this process occurs, in some definite sense, as an integral part of the agent's mind'.³⁶ He arrives at the conclusion that: 'If the entire process occurs in [the Prophet's] mind, then, in an ordinary sense, it is his word, insofar as the psychological process is concerned, but is *Revealed Word* insofar as its source lies beyond his reach.'³⁷ Since for Rahman 'word' does not mean 'sound',³⁸ there is no real contradiction between the Qur'an being the word of God and also the word of the Prophet. He emphasises that there exists, indeed, an organic relationship between feelings, ideas and words. In inspiration, even in poetic inspiration, this relationship is so complete that feeling-idea-word is a total complex with a life of its own.³⁹

According to Rahman, during the process of revelation 'the ideas and the words are born in the mind of the Prophet'.⁴⁰ But the Qur'an asserts that their source cannot possibly lie in the mind of the Prophet by virtue of their 'novelty'.⁴¹ In this sense, '[they] must be traced and referred to a source beyond'.⁴² Ralunan's account, which he felt made an appreciable contribution to the debate, sought to distinguish the character of the divine revelation from other forms of inspiration, be they poetic, mystic, artistic or otherwise. For although his account acknowledges that the divine revelation is 'psychologically similar and forms ascending degrees of the same phenomena of creative inspiration',⁴³ it asserts that 'in terms of religious and moral import and valuation the Qur'an is something entirely *sui generis* and separate from any other form of creative thinking or creative art'.⁴⁴

In this way, revelation for Rahman was the result of an encounter between two realms: the uncreated world and the created world. In this encounter, the Prophet was 'inspired' by the Divine but, in Rahman's view, the dimension of the created world, the world of the Prophet and his immediate community, was allowed to feature prominently in the linguistic product

resulting from the 'revelation'. The expectations, anxieties, challenges and interests of the Prophet and his immediate community were reflected in the Qur'an, an aspect that Rahman believed should have been given substantial emphasis in Islamic theology and accommodated in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. Its relegation was, in Rahman's view, a fatal mistake.⁴⁵

Rahman further asserted that revelation was not a 'book' given at one time, but a process that continued with the prophetic mission over a twenty-two year period, reflecting, throughout the mission's vicissitudes, the mood of the Prophet and the community. This indicated that the Qur'an was not a book sent from the uncreated world to the created world, with no context in the created world. Its concerns, interests and guidance were directly connected with and organically related to the linguistic, cultural, political, economic and religious life, primarily of the people of Hijaz, and more broadly the people of Arabia. Without this connection, revelation would not have made much sense even to the immediate community, let alone as a meaningful guide to humankind.

For Rahman, this close connection between the revelation and its context was disrupted later in the process of the development of Islamic theology and law, creating an ever-widening gap. The unworldly origin of the Qur'an was emphasised in the elevation of the text to an 'aspect' of the Divine, as evidenced in the debate on the 'creation of the Qur'an' (*khalq al-qur'an*), particularly by the Hanbali traditionalists, and was also later included in a modified form in the influential Ash'ari theology. The transcendence of the Divine thus came to be attributed to the Qur'an (as speech of God, *kalam Allah*) itself, reinforcing the total 'otherness' of the revelation. Rahman demonstrated this problematic nature of the revelation as defined by later Islamic theology and law, in which revelation came to be seen as ahistorical, beyond the reach of humankind. According to Rahman, revelation does not function outside history, and we must recognise this if we are to make a strong connection between the Qur'an and the community to which it was initially addressed.

A corollary of the traditional juristic notion of the revelation as

without socio-historical context is that the Qur'an is applicable in all times and places. God has absolute knowledge of the past, present and future and, since the Qur'an is from God, whatever it contains must also be suitable for all times, places and circumstances. Revelation is thus to be considered an event precipitated by the All-Knowing God, and not necessarily related to the concerns of the people to whom it was addressed. Also related is the view that the Qur'an originally existed in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*) well before the creation of humankind, and was thus not necessarily a result of certain distortions and problems that emerged at a particular time in the created world. From this standpoint it became relatively easy to suggest that revelation is transcendent. This 'otherness' of the Qur'an as a cardinal principle of Islamic theology was established in the post-Mu'tazili period. Islamic law conformed, and the two exerted influence on other Islamic disciplines, such as *tafsir*, to adopt the same position that the socio-legal content of the text was without historical or temporal limitations.

In the early Islamic disciplines, the only aspect that Rahman considered supportive, albeit in a very limited way, of a close relationship between the revelation and the socio-historical context was the *asbab al-nuzul* (occasions of revelation) literature, which found its way into the *tafsir* tradition. This, however, did not occur in order to relate the Qur'an to its socio-historical context. In *tafsir*, the *asbab al-nuzul* served to better explicate certain texts, particularly where the Qur'an avoided specific references to particular people, times and places. In *fiqh*, the *asbab al-nuzul* were mainly a way of explaining the chronological sequence of related texts or of better understanding certain texts where the Qur'an avoided specific references. Of these two, chronology was perhaps the more important and came to be used primarily to understand when a particular text (related to law) was revealed, and, where conflict arose between two texts, to determine which text 'abrogated' the other.

The relatively minor interest *fiqh* had in this literature can be seen from the general principle of *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), according to which, if a command or prohibition

is given in the Qur'an and the wording of it is general, one should not attempt to restrict it to the specific circumstances in which it was revealed. Rather its application should be general.⁴⁶ This de-emphasises the occasion and the specific circumstances of the revelation in favour of the general application of the text. In their quest to construct a comprehensive legal system, the jurists were driven by the idea that the Qur'anic instruction had to be extended to as many situations as possible, and that it should not be limited by any one concrete condition. Thus, texts were read with as little reference as possible to their context, a practice that Rahman criticised and saw as even more prevalent in the modern period.

The ideal and the contingent

Rahman was highly critical of the view prevalent among Muslims that the Qur'an was a book of law. For him, the Qur'an neither was, nor did it purport to be, a book of law; it called itself a guide for humankind (*hudan li al-nas*) and demanded that believers live by its commands, which were, for the most part, not legal, but ethical or quasi-legal.⁴⁷ Rahman pointed out that the Prophet himself was a 'moral reformer of mankind' who 'seldom resorted to general legislation as a means of furthering the Islamic cause'.⁴⁸ In the Qur'an itself 'general legislation forms a very tiny part of Islamic teaching'.⁴⁹ According to Rahman, even the

legal or quasi-legal part of the Qur'an itself clearly displays a *situational* character. Quite situational, for example are the Qur'anic pronouncements on war and peace between the Muslims and their opponents – pronouncements which do express a certain general character about the ideal behaviour of the community *vis-à-vis* an enemy in a grim struggle but which are so situational that they can be regarded only as quasi-legal and not strictly and specifically legal.⁵⁰

Rahman believed that the ethico-legal Qur'anic instructions functioned at two levels: the 'ideal' and the 'contingent'. The ideal was the goal that believers were to aim for. This ideal might or might not be achieved during the time of the revelation. The contingent, on the other hand, meant what was possible at the

time of the revelation, given the structural constraints within the immediate community and the conditions of the time. The close affinity of the Qur'an to the situation at hand, that is at the time of revelation, required that its instructions address problems of the time in *their* specific circumstances, while highlighting or alluding to the ideal to which Muslims should aspire as they moved from one situation to another, from one time to another.

Rahman argued that, in order to understand the ideal and the contingent in Qur'anic pronouncements, the best tool available was 'historical criticism', which could clarify the context and the rationale of the guidance, and distinguish the ideal from the contingent. To demonstrate this point, Rahman used the example of polygamy. The Qur'an undoubtedly improved the rights and status of women compared with their pre-Islamic condition in Hijaz. One of its instructions was that a man should not marry more than one wife if he could not do justice to all of them, adding categorically that, no matter how he tried, just treatment would be impossible. However, it was equally true that the Qur'an gave permission to marry up to four wives. How then could these two sets of instructions be understood? One way was to say that the Qur'an wanted to promote the maximum happiness of family life and that, to this end, a monogamous marriage would be the ideal, but that this declared moral purpose had to be compromised in the reality of seventh-century Arabian society, in which polygamy was too deeply entrenched for it to be removed without defeating the moral purpose itself. The Qur'an therefore accepted polygamy at the legal level, but restricted it and placed as many safeguards as possible, while at the same time enunciating the ideal of the monogamous society towards which the Prophet wanted Muslims to move.⁵¹

The distinction between the ideal and the contingent, Rahman argued, was given little importance, if any, in the construction of Islamic law and in the interpretation of the Qur'an. Yet, if Muslims were to bring about reform in the modern period, this had to change. According to Rahman, jurists had mistakenly taken much of the Qur'anic content, for example *hudud*, family law, *mu'amalat*, to be ideal and had allowed it to be firmly embedded in Islamic

law. If the ideal and the contingent, and the historical context of the text, could be accepted, laws stemming from legal or quasi-legal content in the Qur'an that was really related directly to the immediate community could be rethought or reformed.

Social justice as the primary objective

Rahman believed that the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an was to be read in the light of the 'social justice' objectives of the Qur'an, which for him were the basis of this content. In any understanding of the Qur'an at any period, therefore, important concepts associated with social justice, such as 'cooperation, brotherhood and self-sacrifice for the sake of the common good'⁵² were to be considered of primary importance. Further emphasising this, he said that the entire Islamic movement and the teachings of the Qur'an could be seen as 'directed towards the creation of a meaningful and positive equality among human beings. As such the Islamic purpose cannot be realised until genuine freedom to human beings is restored and freedom from all forms of exploitation – social, spiritual, political and economic – assured.'⁵³

For Rahman, freedom from all forms of exploitation was essential in order for meaningful moral choices to be made. At the social level, distinctions between rich and poor, powerful and weak, higher 'castes' and lower 'castes' were antithetical to his idea of social justice. He found confirmation of his belief in the Qur'an, which seeks to minimise, if not eliminate, those distinctions that it sees as invalid among human beings. Further, there is an obligation on the part of those who are able to do so to make a difference at political, economic, social and spiritual levels. For Rahman, a primary task of the Prophet was social reform in the context of strengthening the position of the socio-economically weak and depressed classes in the prosperous mercantile Meccan society, including orphans, women and the elderly.⁵⁴ Rahman says:

What emerges most clearly from the entire drift of the Qur'an and the Prophet's actions from this point is that no moral or spiritual welfare is possible without a sound and just socio-economic base.

Indeed, one may correctly assert that the rectitude of moral life in Islam is to be tested by, and is finally realized in, this society-building activity⁵⁵

As an example, Rahman highlights the social justice objectives in the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an relating to women:

The Qur'an insistently forbids the male to exploit the female on the strength of his stronger position in society, and Islam set into motion the whole complex of measures – legal and moral – whereby sex exploitation would be completely eradicated. It forbade the recourse to polygamy under normal circumstances, allowed the woman to own and earn wealth, declared her to be an equal partner in the society, noting and allowing for the disadvantages she had in the society of that age. It laid down the basis of matrimonial life to be mutual love and affection, and that spouses were like garments unto each other. It strictly regulated the law of divorce.⁵⁶

Later Muslim history, however, had not done 'full justice to the objective of the Qur'an on the subject and, consequently, due to unregulated polygamy and divorce and their baneful effects on children, Muslim society deteriorated in the Middle Ages. This trend has to be sternly and quickly checked.'⁵⁷

Identification of moral principles

Rahman lamented the almost total neglect of ethics as a discipline in Islam.⁵⁸ Any writings on ethics were developed outside the shari'a disciplines and were explicitly based on Greek and Persian sources. It was extraordinary that ethics, so prevalent throughout the Qur'an, should have developed independently of the Qur'an and shari'a disciplines. Rahman found this distance, between ethics on one hand and law and theology on the other, extremely problematic.⁵⁹

For Rahman, ethically-acting individuals preceded the formulation of laws. At the basis of Islamic ethics is *taqwa*, that quality of mind whereby a person becomes capable of discerning between right and wrong and makes the effort to do so.⁶⁰ *Taqwa* (also seen as 'God-consciousness') enjoys the most prominent position among the Qur'anic moral principles. The essential aim of the

Qur'an is to create proper conscience, to maximise moral energy and use that energy through appropriate channels'.⁶¹

In order to read the Qur'an from a 'moral' perspective centred on *taqwa*, Rahman said that Muslims were not to treat the Qur'an as a legal manual documenting minutely what they should or should not do. It was to be considered essentially a text concerned with moral and ethical issues, and turning it into a technical legal text was fraught with danger. In the construction of law on the basis of the Qur'an, Rahman believed the correct approach would be to arrive at the moral principles of the Qur'an first, and then derive law from them. Rahman argued that the Qur'an often gave explicit reasons for its legal or quasi-legal pronouncements, and that where the reasons were not explicit, they could be arrived at by studying the background material. What was required was a systematic identification of rationales or objectives of the Qur'an in terms of its principles and values, which would define the ethics of the Qur'an. Rahman commented on the procedure for this:

The really effective procedure would have been to erect a system of universal ethical values on the basis of an analysis of the moral objectives of the Qur'an. But did the Sunni jurists do that? This could have been achieved through developing a systematic ethical system derived from the Qur'anic values, which are either there explicitly in the Qur'an or could be extracted from its *rationes legis*. Instead the jurists were content to apply their legal principle of analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) quite unsystematically and in an *ad hoc* manner. The result is that today Muslims wishing to derive workable Islamic law from the Qur'an have to make a fresh start by working out a genuine ethical value-system from the Qur'an.⁶²

In Rahman's view, the atomistic approach largely led to the disorder in the interpretation of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an, as it stands in the form of laws in Islamic legal texts.⁶³ Instead of developing a system of law based on 'higher non-legal specially moral principles',⁶⁴ Islamic law opted for juxtaposing the moral propositions of the Qur'an with the legal and, in doing so, failed to do 'justice to the moral principles of the Qur'an. The principles of the Qur'an deserve systemisation and then from these, law should be systematically derived.'⁶⁵

Again, Rahman's emphasis on historical background informs his thoughts on systematisation, in particular in relation to moral objectives. Given the status of critical tools available in traditional Islamic education, Rahman considered that historical study could be conducted as well by non-Muslims, as long as they had the necessary preparation for such an undertaking.⁶⁶ Based on critical historical study, a hierarchy of moral values, or what he called 'general principles'⁶⁷ for the interpretation of the Qur'an, could be developed. Rahman, however, did not provide a detailed framework for developing this hierarchy of moral values apart from stating that one should first elicit general principles from specific rulings in the Qur'an by giving full consideration to their socio-historical context. He went on to argue that, on the basis of these general principles, Muslims should develop what he called a 'unified and comprehensive socio-moral theory'.⁶⁸ Rahman cautioned that this task had never been attempted before and would present challenges:

The various purposes and principles of the Qur'an must, therefore, be brought together to yield a unified and comprehensive socio-moral theory squarely based upon the Qur'an and its *sunna* [sic] counterparts. It must be frankly admitted that this task has not been attempted in the past and, although the Qur'anic teaching on socio-moral questions has a definite character, this teaching has never been formulated as a comprehensive and cohesive doctrine.⁶⁹

This was a significantly different concept to *qiyas* (analogy) in *usul al-fiqh*, which jurists used extensively to extend the legal or quasi-legal material of the Qur'an to other situations or problems through the medium of *'illa* (efficient cause). For Rahman, this extension through *qiyas* was too limiting and artificial. He was more interested in utilising 'socio-moral theory', not *'illa*, as a basis for extending or restricting the application of a particular text.

Cautious use of the hadith

An essential element of Rahman's framework was his emphasis on the 'overall patterns of practice' of the Prophet and the immediate community, which could be seen as consistent with broader

Qur'anic guidance while demythologising key aspects of Sunna and hadith. Rahman did not define Sunna in the way it is defined by jurists or hadith critics. For him Sunna can be either the 'prophetic Sunna' or the 'living Sunna'. The prophetic Sunna is what he called 'the ideal legacy of the Prophetic activity',⁷⁰ while the living Sunna is the prophetic Sunna creatively elaborated and interpreted to meet new changes, challenges and circumstances faced by the Muslim community.⁷¹ For Rahman in the early period of Islam the concept of the Sunna was fluid, and referred not necessarily to a body of specific *texts* but to the normative behaviour of the Prophet and the early Muslim community, and included both types of Sunna.

Emphasising the importance of Sunna to the Qur'an, Rahman maintained that the Sunna of the Prophet was a valid operative concept from the beginning of Islam, and that the Qur'an was organically related to this Sunna. He criticised those who argued for interpreting the Qur'an without any reference to Sunna; both the Qur'an and Sunna needed each other:

It would be utterly *irrational* to suppose that the Qur'an was taught without involving in fact the activity of the Prophet as the central background-activity which included policy, commands, decisions etc. Nothing can give coherence to the Qur'anic teaching except the actual life of the Prophet and the environment in which he moved, and it would be a great childishness of the twentieth century to suppose that people immediately around the Prophet distinguished so radically between the Qur'an and its exemplification in the Prophet that they retained one but ignored the other, i.e., saw the one as divorced from the other.⁷²

Rahman argued, however, that the Sunna content left by the Prophet (prophetic Sunna) was neither extensive nor meant to be absolutely specific. In the post-prophetic period, this limited material was further added to by the early Muslim communities through the 'living Sunna'. However, in order to maintain the link to the prophetic legacy, this living Sunna was legitimised by the *ijma'* of the community. This function of *ijma'* thus kept isolated hadith outside the boundary of Sunna, giving the living Sunna a certain degree of cohesiveness. Following the mass

hadith movement, however, the organic relationship between Sunna and *ijma'* was destroyed. Similarly, the distinction between the 'prophetic Sunna' and 'living Sunna' became blurred. All was subsumed in the broad category of hadith, which became synonymous with the Sunna of the prophet, a gross distortion of the concepts. Much of this distortion took place over the second and third centuries AH, and in particular in the work of al-Shafi'i.

While Rahman saw a close connection between the Qur'an and the prophetic Sunna, he argued that hadith material should be used advisedly, particularly as the hadith came to include many superstitions that developed in the post-prophetic period, such as the Prophet's ascension or *mi'raj*, which, for Rahman, had virtually no support in the Qur'an but appeared often in the hadith. Nonetheless, Rahman thought that the hadith, even though they might not necessarily reflect 'prophetic Sunna', could be useful if subjected to historical criticism. If the study of early hadith material were carried out under the canons of historical criticism in relation to historical and sociological background, even an isolated hadith could become meaningful for now.⁷³

In keeping with his belief and his education, Rahman always gave priority to what the Qur'an said, and in particular to its overall message, on any given issue. Where that message conflicted with the hadith, Rahman was in no doubt that the Qur'an was to be preferred over the hadith as representing the actual legacy of the Prophet. In any interpretation of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an, the actual, explicit and overall message of the Qur'an, in his view, should be given priority.⁷⁴ Rahman saw the two main problems for Muslims in rethinking the interpretation of the Qur'an in order to relate it to present needs as the historical belief that the hadith contained the Sunna of the Prophet, and that the Qur'anic rulings on social behaviour had to be literally implemented in all times: 'This stood like a rock in the way of any substantial rethinking of the social content of Islam.'⁷⁵ Both beliefs thus had to be challenged and rethought.

Linking past and present: the 'double movement theory'

Rahman brought together the six elements of his framework for interpreting the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an and relating it to the needs of Muslims in the modern period in what is referred to as his 'double movement theory'. He summarises this as follows:

In building any genuine and viable Islamic set of laws and institutions, there has to be a twofold movement. First one must move from the concrete case treatments of the Qur'an – taking the necessary and relevant social conditions of that time into account – to the general principles upon which the entire teaching converges. Second, from this general level there must be a movement back to specific legislation, taking into account the necessary and relevant conditions now obtaining⁷⁶

For Rahman, this involved two movements of juristic thought: the first from the particular to the general and the second from the general to the particular. The first requires an understanding of the Qur'anic principles, to which the Sunna is organic. In the first movement, the socio-historical context of the Qur'an is considered in exploring specific Qur'anic cases in order to arrive at general principles like justice, equality, and freedom. In line with his interest in developing a socio-moral theory, Rahman spoke of a set of principles. Since the Qur'anic imperatives had a situational background and came as solutions to actual problems, the texts of 'occasions of revelation', despite their historical and contextual problems, should be studied to understand the reasons behind the ethico-legal content. The reasons, which he referred to as *hikam* (purposes that constitute the essence of Qur'anic teaching in society), form the basis for the general principles⁷⁷

The second movement in juristic thought referred to the method of reasoning from the general to the particular. Here, the general principles arrived at under the first movement are to be used as a basis for formulating laws relevant to the modern period. It must be noted also that anyone formulating such laws must be thoroughly familiar with the conditions of the modern

period.⁷⁸ Just as the background of the Qur'anic teaching should be studied to obtain the general principles, so must the contemporary situation be studied in order for the law to be formulated and applied.⁷⁹ The importance of Rahman's 'double movement' approach is that he takes into account both the conditions of the time of the revelation and those of the modern period in relating the text to the community. In utilising this double movement theory, it is expected that not only the traditional ulama, who should determine what is Islamically acceptable and what is not, will be involved, but that it will also involve other 'specialists' of relevance from fields as diverse as history, philosophy, law, ethics, sociology, and anthropology to assist in the process of deriving Islamic law that is meaningful, relevant and appropriate.

An assessment of Rahman's contribution

Despite his interest in a systematic approach to the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an, Rahman did not hold that there was one single authoritative interpretation of the text. He saw multiple interpretations as not only necessary but also essential for the survival of the religion as well as for the relevance of the Qur'an. Though he did not openly say so, his position seemed to be that the followers of a religious tradition read various meanings into the text in different times, places and circumstances. This, for him, was a natural and perhaps necessary phenomenon. The multiplicity of interpretations did not in any way detract from the 'sacredness' of the text originating from God. Rather, the text, as a linguistic phenomenon and as a message to all humankind, requires multiple interpretations if it is to remain valid. Sacredness and immutability are to be attributed to the text itself, not to its interpretations, which are merely the human understandings. Rahman stressed that this reading of meanings into the text was to be *guided* by certain principles and a socio-moral set of values of a hierarchical nature in order to avoid unnecessary arbitrariness, or unprincipled and forced readings of the text, and to prevent the Qur'an from being thoughtlessly dipped into to find answers to any question.

Rahman knew that criticism could be levelled at his proposed framework and in particular his 'double-movement' method, because it could be seen to have 'excessive subjectivity' in its process. He was prepared with two responses. The first was that the Qur'an was not silent about its objectives and purposes, either implicitly or explicitly, and that those objectives that were not apparent could be identified by consideration of the background and the context of the rules. Rahman claimed that this procedure would minimise subjectivity, if not eliminate it altogether. His second response was that differences in interpretation had always existed among jurists, and that there was great value in such differences as long as they were sincerely advanced for thoughtful rather than arbitrary reasons.⁸⁰

In providing an alternative framework for the interpretation of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an, Rahman made a major contribution by emphasising something previously neglected in Qur'anic interpretation, and by providing clear guidelines on how to achieve it. His work was not complete, for the principles he gave at times lacked specific examples of application. But he believed in the potential of the principles to provide answers to contemporary problems and questions; any mismatch between the principle and the specific represented an opportunity, not a barrier to reaching flexible solutions. Rahman noted that if any incompatibility existed between the normative principles of Islam and the new situation, the problem lay with the interpretive approach: 'As for the methodology itself, there is nothing wrong or inherently or insuperably difficult, or un-Islamic about it; on the contrary Islam would have come more truly and effectively into its own through this methodology than it has actually done.'⁸¹ Rahman's words from the late 1960s are still relevant and stand as a summary of his interests in the area of Qur'anic interpretation:

[T]he implementation of the Qur'an cannot be carried out *literally* in the context of today because this may result in thwarting the very purposes of the Qur'an, and that, although the findings of the *fuqaha* 'or the *ulama*' of Islam during the past thirteen centuries or so should be seriously studied and given due weight, it may well be

found that in many cases their findings were either mistaken or sufficed for the needs of that society but not for today. This approach is so revolutionary and so radically different from the approaches generally adopted so far in that it seeks to bring under strictly historical study not only *fiqh* and *sunnah* of the Prophet but the Qur'an as well, that not only the traditionalists but even most of the modernists seriously hesitated to accept. But this would seem to be the only honest method of appraising the historic performance of the Muslims and of genuinely implementing the purposes of the Qur'an and the Prophet. There would be naturally bitter opposition to this kind of approach and particularly the results reached through it. But there is reason to believe that in a span of a decade or so the larger part of the liberals will come round to some such view. Failing this, this writer does not see any alternative for Islam except, in course of time, to be reduced to a set of rites which will claim emotional attachment for some time to come.⁸²

Rahman's approach to the Qur'an and its interpretation attracted criticism from several quarters. For many a critic, Rahman's arguments were 'radical' by any measure, and contained major errors.⁸³ Apart from the traditionalist critique of Rahman's understanding of prophecy and revelation, and of his 'demythologisation' of key aspects of early Islamic intellectual history such as the concept of Sunna, there have been other more recent evaluations of Rahman's methodology. Farid Esack, for example, argues that: 'Rahman shows a lack of appreciation for the complexity of the hermeneutical task and the intellectual pluralism intrinsic to it.'⁸⁴ He finds 'this absence of grey areas is the most serious inadequacy in his approach'.⁸⁵

Though Rahman does not elaborate on the philosophical nature of understanding, interpretation, or meaning, he emphasises throughout his writings the inadequacy of classical approaches to the Qur'an that tended to reduce the task of interpretation to a linguistic dimension. While it is true that he argues for a more 'objectivist' approach to the Qur'an in line with the work of Emilio Betti,⁸⁶ and in opposition to Gadamer's 'subjectivist' approach, Rahman cannot be said to have ignored the complexity of the hermeneutical task, as Esack claims; he simply was not interested in it for its own sake. Although he was certainly familiar with modern hermeneutical debates (as evidenced in his

critique of Gadamer, for instance),⁸⁷ he felt that his primary responsibility was to address the specific problems he thought needed attention from the perspective of a Muslim who was struggling to be a relevant participant in a fast changing environment. Given his interest in rethinking Islamic law and the close relationship this has with the interpretation of the Qur'an, he sought to demonstrate the close relationship between the Qur'an and its socio-historical environment, and how this environment facilitated and provided a basis for the understanding of the Scripture. He stresses the need to understand the Qur'an against the background of its revelation and also allows for a multiplicity of perspectives, which is hardly a 'black and white' approach. His understanding of 'axiology', which is constructed on the basis of the Qur'an, also requires historical reconstruction, and even here multiplicity is allowed for. In addition, the double movement theory, which Rahman advances in order to connect past and present, does not assume a black and white view of history. Instead, it assesses available pieces of evidence, both textual and contextual, to arrive at both ends of the movement. It is always assumed that this assessment will function within a given intellectual, social, political and religious milieu, which again highlights the connection between text, context, understanding and meaning.

Rahman's double-movement theory and other ideas related to the interpretation of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an (as highlighted above) were not meant to be a formulaic set of rules. They were intended as a guide to the interpreter of the Qur'an. While recognising the subjectivity associated with the task of interpretation, Rahman attempted to guide Muslims in their approach to the Qur'an away from the classical decontextualised and reductionist approaches, providing instead a wider contextual basis by recognising the environmental and broader linguistic context of the Qur'an. His theory of revelation also takes this into account by his emphasis on the role of the Prophet in the process of revelation and by emphasising the psychological and contextual place of the Prophet himself vis-à-vis his community, needs, concerns and aspirations. On balance, Rahman's approach to the

Qur'an was among the most original, daring and systematic of the mid to late twentieth century. His emphasis on the context of the revelation has had far reaching influence on the debate among Muslims of questions such as human rights, women's rights and social justice. Rahman's approach has been utilised by an increasing number of Muslims to relate the Qur'an to contemporary needs; it will likely continue to be influential among the younger generation of Muslim intellectuals.

NOTES

1. Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, ed Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford, 1999), p 1. The biographical section relies heavily on this work, as well as Rahman's own statements about his life and work. For example, see Fazlur Rahman, 'My Belief in Action', in Phillip I. Berman, ed., *The Courage of Conviction* (New York, 1985), pp 153-9.

2. Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, pp 1-2

3. Rahman, 'My Belief in Action', p. 157.

4. Ibid., p 158.

5. Earle H. Waugh, 'The Legacies of Fazlur Rahman for Islam in America', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 16, 3 (1999), p. 31.

6. See bibliography for details.

7. Basit B. Koshul, 'Fazlur Rahman's *Islam and Modernity* Revisited', *Islamic Studies*, 33, 4 (1994), pp 403-6.

8. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago, 1982), pp. 151-2

9. Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, p 30.

10. Ibid., p 30

11. Ibid., p. 131.

12. Ibid., p 111.

13. Ibid., p 106.

14. Ibid., p 11.

15. *Inqā'*, 'postponement', refers primarily to the idea that one should suspend judgement on what happens to the grave sinner; it is God on the Day of Judgement who will determine the fate of such a person).

16. Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, pp. 67-8.

17. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 137.

18. Ibid., p. 86.

19. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis, 1980), p. xi.

20. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 133

21. Ibid., p. 1.

22. Ibid., p. 2.

23. Ibid., p. 2.

24. Ibid., p. 2.

- 25 Ibid., p. 4
- 26 Ibid., p. 4.
- 27 Ibid., p. 4.
- 28 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago, 1979), p. 256
- 29 Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* p. 154.
30. Fazlur Rahman, 'Towards Reformulating the Methodology of Islamic Law', *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics*, 12, 2 (1979), p. 223
31. Fazlur Rahman, 'Divine Revelation and the Prophet', *Hamdard Islamicus*, 1, 2 (1978), p. 72
32. This attempt to clarify his stance on the 'nature' of prophecy is largely based on his views on revelation as outlined in *ibid*, pp. 66-72
33. Rahman, 'Divine Revelation and the Prophet', p. 110
34. Rahman, *Islam*, pp. 30-31.
35. Rahman, 'Divine Revelation and the Prophet', p. 111.
- 36 Ibid., p. 111.
37. Ibid., p. 111.
- 38 Ibid., p. 111.
39. Rahman, *Islam*, p. 33.
- 40 Rahman, 'Divine Revelation and the Prophet', p. 113.
- 41 Ibid., p. 113.
- 42 Ibid., p. 114.
- 43 Ibid., p. 114
44. Ibid., p. 114.
- 45 Fazlur Rahman, 'Concepts Sunnah, Ijtihad and Ijma' in the Early Period', *Islamic Studies*, 1, 1 (1962), p. 10
- 46 This is expressed in the principle *al-'ibratu bi-'umum al lafz la bi-khusus al-sabab*
47. Fazlur Rahman, 'Islamic Studies and the Future of Islam', in Malcolm Kerr, ed., *Islamic Studies: Tradition and its Problems* (Malibu, 1980), pp. 128-9
- 48 Rahman, 'Concepts Sunnah, Ijtihad and Ijma', pp. 10-11.
49. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
50. Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Karachi, 1965), p. 10.
51. Fazlur Rahman, 'The Impact of Modernity on Islam', *Islamic Studies*, 5, 2 (1966), pp. 121-2.
52. Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Reflections on the Reconstruction of Muslim Society in Pakistan', *Islamic Studies*, 6, 9 (1967), pp. 103-20
53. Ibid., p. 103.
- 54 Fazlur Rahman, 'Islam and Political Action: Politics in the Service of Religion' in Nigel Biggar, J.S. Scott and W. Schweiker, eds., *Cities of God: Faith, Politics and Pluralism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London, 1986), p. 153.
- 55 Rahman, 'Some Reflections', p. 106.
56. Rahman, 'The Impact of Modernity on Islam', p. 111.
- 57 Ibid., p. 111.
- 58 Rahman, 'Islamic Studies and the Future of Islam', pp. 126-7.
59. Ibid., p. 127

60. Rahman, 'Islam and Political Action', p. 155.
61. Ibid., p. 162.
62. Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, p. 61.
63. Ibid., pp. 98-9.
64. Ibid., p. 98.
65. Ibid., pp. 98-9.
66. Rahman, 'Islamic Studies and the Future of Islam', pp. 131-3.
67. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 20.
68. Rahman, 'Towards Reformulating', p. 221.
69. Ibid., p. 221.
70. Fazlur Rahman, 'Social Change and Early Sunnah', *Islamic Studies*, 2, 2 (1963), p. 206.
71. Ibid., p. 206.
72. Rahman, 'Concepts Sunnah, Ijtihad and Ijma', p. 10.
73. Ibid., pp. 5-21.
74. Rahman, 'The Impact of Modernity on Islam', p. 122.
75. Fazlur Rahman, 'Revival and Reform in Islam: The Tradition', in P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis, eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, 1970), vol. 2, p. 640.
76. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 20.
77. Rahman, 'Towards Reformulating', p. 221.
78. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 13-22.
79. Rahman, 'Towards Reformulating', pp. 222-3.
80. Ibid., p. 219.
81. Rahman, 'Islamic Studies and the Future of Islam', p. 130.
82. Rahman, 'The Impact of Modernity on Islam', p. 127.
83. Koshul, 'Fazlur Rahman's *Islam and Modernity* Revisited', p. 403.
84. Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* (Oxford, 1997), p. 67.
85. Ibid., p. 67.
86. For Rahman's reference to Betti's views see *Islam and Modernity* pp. 8-9. For a more detailed discussion of Betti's approach, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London, 1975), pp. 276, 290-95, 470.
87. For Rahman's critique of Gadamer, see *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 8-11.

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