Islamic Methodology in History

Although the views of Fazlur Rahman on the revelation of the Qur'an were the final straw which led to his resignation and quitting Pakistan, the question of his views on Hadith and Sunna prompted deep-seated opposition and denunciation, although no analytical survey was published in English at the time. This opposition might be partly explained by the fact that it was perhaps in this respect that Fazlur Rahman most publicly acknowledged his debt to and agreement with western non-Muslim scholars of Islamic studies, especially Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921)[1] and Joseph Schacht (d. 1969).[2]

The whole question of the Hadith literature has been perhaps the most disputed between non-Muslim western scholars and defenders of the orthodox Muslim position. To attempt a detailed critical study of Fazlur Rahman's views on this subject would require a major study in its own right by a researcher who was well-schooled in the traditional sciences of Hadith literature; such as that undertaken by M. Mustafa Al-Azami: *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*;[3] who, even in the compass of a dedicated monograph, had to confine himself to "the most crucial points regarding *sunna*".[4] The present study will therefore have to confine itself to an analytical presentation of the main points of Fazlur Rahman's teaching on this subject, giving particular emphasis to the development of a methodology for re-invigorating Islamic studies.

It is perhaps appropriate though to begin with a comment by Al-Azami, who, having noted that Schacht's work had been hugely influential amongst western scholars and such Muslim writers as Fazlur Rahman and A.A.A. Fyzee,[5] noted Schacht's thesis that "the Prophet had no role as a legislator",[6] then quoted two paragraphs from Fazlur Rahman,[7] before saying,

> Perhaps Fazlur Rahman provides the fullest statement of the implications of this position. It denies the systematic legal activities of the Prophet, which consequently leads to the denial of the existence of the *sunna* of the Prophet, which in turn logically entails the rejection of the validity of whatever may have been described as the *sunna* of the Prophet.[8]

Whether this assessment of Fazlur Rahman is valid, when judged against the totality of his writings on this subject, will emerge in the course of this essay.

Fazlur Rahman showed no interest in making a critical study of the Hadith for its own sake. For him, the question was always, how to interpret the key sources of Islam (the definition and relationship between the Qur'an, Sunna, *ijtihad* and *ijma*) to provide authentic guidance for the modern generation. It was a methodology to re-vitalise Islam that was his prime goal; hence he called his work on this subject *Islamic Methodology in History*[9] [hereafter *Islamic Methodology*]. This work, which was published by the Central Institute of Islamic Research in 1965, comprised five chapters. The only original contribution was Chapter Four: *Ijtihad* in the Later Centuries, which was unpretentious in scope. The remaining chapters had been published first as articles in *Islamic Studies*.[10]

A complexity in assessing Fazlur Rahman's teaching is that his book *Islam*, which was written in 1958 but did not appear until 1966, was referred to in manuscript form in the course of *Islamic Methodology*. In a sense, then, *Islam* is the prior text, even though it did not appear until after the publication of both the *Islamic Studies* articles and *Islamic Methodology*.

Islam devoted two chapters to the subject matter under consideration.[11] It is written in a different style to the Karachi works, being addressed to a western non-Muslim audience and being the direct product of his desire to re-think his Islamic understanding in the light both of his immersion in philosophical studies and the resulting 'crisis of faith'. A reminder is in order at this stage, that *Islam* serves, in a sense, as a work-plan for the rest of Fazlur Rahman's career, sketching out the areas which he felt, at that time, needed systematic attention to re-invigorate Islamic studies. In the light of this, it will be no surprise that in *Islam*, the author addressed common misperceptions, set down principles and gave indications of questions to be taken further at a subsequent date. *Islamic Methodology* took the discussion further in a more systematic manner. The preferred methodology of this study will be to treat the latter as the principal source, with reference back to *Islam* as necessary, and utilising the divisions found in *Islamic Methodology*.

Critique of western scholarship

Fazlur Rahman began both *Islam* and *Islamic Methodology* with a critical survey of some of the points being made by western non-Muslim scholars of Islamic studies.[12] He took issue with the position that the Sunna was actually constituted by the established practice of the early Muslim community, which, by repetition, became normative.[13] He argued that the Sunna is not just a behavioural phenomenon but a normative moral law which requires and expects obedience.[14] Citing those Qur'anic verses which refer to the exemplary conduct of Muhammad and other prophets, which is there to be followed,[15] he asked if it is conceivable that the earliest Muslims did not model their lives on the practices of Muhammad.[16] Therefore the actual practice of Muhammad must have been considered normative before the phenomenon of its observance by the community.[17] During the Prophet's lifetime, he would have been able to give personal guidance to those who enquired; after his death, the early Caliphs applied their own judgement in the light of the Qur'an and the Prophetic example,[18] including making a public appeal for information about the Prophet's teaching when they did not possess it on a specific question.[19]

Fazlur Rahman reviewed critically the contributions of such scholars as Goldziher, D.S. Margoliouth (1858-1940), H. Lammens (1862-1937) and Schacht.[20] He praised the contributions which they had made to the scholarship of Hadith criticism,[21] whilst pointing to weaknesses in their conclusions.[22] He distilled three areas of criticism from their views: a. that part of the *content* of the Sunna is a direct continuation from the pre-Islamic Arabs; b. that the greatest part of the *content* is due to *ijtihad* by the legists who incorporated insights from other sources, e.g., Jewish, Byzantine and Persian; and c.

that the Hadith-movement of the late second and third centuries of Islam attributed the whole *content* verbally to Muhammad.[23]

Fazlur Rahman's understanding of Sunna

To turn now to a positive assessment of Fazlur Rahman's position which, in turn, will demonstrate his response to the above-mentioned points. It is necessary to begin with some clarification of terminology to facilitate consistency in presentation and promote understanding. In his writings, Fazlur Rahman distinguished three aspects of Sunna to which he assigned descriptive names. The precise description of each will emerge as the development of his thought is traced. The atemporal device will be utilised here of naming each of these aspects, from the beginning, according to this more developed system. Accordingly, the term 'Sunna' on its own, has its customary generic meaning.

However, the generic sense will be differentiated as follows. First, the terms 'Prophetic Sunna' and 'Sunna of the Prophet' refer to those elements of the Sunna which can be traced back explicitly to the verbal and non-verbal activities of Muhammad himself (in this sense they could be described as the 'Muhammadan Sunna'). Second, the term 'Living Sunna' is used for the on-going and expanding teaching and practice of the early Muslim community which is the product of their modelling their lives on the Prophetic Sunna, as reflected in the life of Muhammad and subsequent generations. This term can be used in a plural sense as the Living Sunna could vary from one region of the Muslim world to another, e.g., the Sunna of Madina, the Sunna of Iraq, etc. Third, this plural usage is to be distinguished from the term 'Practical Sunna(s)', which most frequently occurs in the plural form, referring to practical norms for living which were deduced by interpreting the Living Sunna or agreed Hadiths.[24]

Fazlur Rahman delineated five hypotheses which he wished to test:[25]
(i) That western scholars are 'essentially correct' about the development of the *content* of the Sunna but incorrect concerning the *concept* of the 'Sunna of the Prophet', which "was a valid and operative concept from the very beginning of Islam and remained so throughout".[26]
(ii) That the actual content of the Prophetic Sunna, as left by Muhammad, "was not very large in quantity and that it was not something meant to be absolutely specific".[27]
(iii) That after the death of the Prophet, the *concept* of Sunna included both the Prophetic Sunna and the later interpretation based on it.
(iv) That this post-Muhammadan Sunna, which was described as 'Living Sunna', is coextensive with the *ijma* of the community, which is by essence ever-expanding.
(v) That after the Hadith-movement of the late second and third centuries, the organic relationship between Sunna, *ijtihad* and *ijma* was destroyed.

In defence of his first hypothesis, Fazlur Rahman cited the Qur'anic verses which speak of the Sunna of God,[28] thus creating the concept of an ideal normative pattern to be followed by humankind. This was then linked to the exemplary conduct of Muhammad as a model to be emulated.[29] Thus the concept of Muhammad's teaching and example being an extra-Qur'anic expression of the divine guidance, which is there as an

exemplary model, the emulation of which will be judged righteous, was traced back to the Qur'an itself.[30]

He then pointed to references to this concept in the first century writings of a letter of Hasan al-Basri,[31] and the poet al-Kumayt,[32] which indicate that the sense of the concept 'Sunna of the Prophet' as the actual teachings and example of Muhammad, was "fully established" by that time.

One of the earliest implied uses of the concept was in the time of the Caliph Umar (ruled 13AH/634CE to 23AH/644CE). Abu Yusuf (113AH/731CE to 182AH/798CE), the famous student of Imam Abu Hanifa, spoke of Umar sending people to teach "the Sunna of our Prophet".[33] From this, Fazlur Rahman argued; first, that this was entirely possible as it is known that Umar did send out many teachers to bring the Qur'an to the rapidly-expanding empire; and second, that it is neither credible nor logical to suppose that new converts accepted the teaching of the Qur'an without asking about the person, character and teaching of the Prophet as the interpreter *par excellence* of the Qur'an, both in the particular circumstances of its revelation and in the general context.[34] He concluded that,

> ...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 the one but ignored the other.[35]

Thus, that part of the first hypothesis dealing with the *concept* of the Prophetic Sunna can be judged to be upheld. That part of the hypothesis concerning the *content* of the Sunna requires more detailed and subsequent examination.

In defence of his second hypothesis, the contentiousness of which has already been alluded to by Al-Azami above, the quotations given in that place exemplify the claim of Fazlur Rahman that, practically speaking, Muhammad lacked the time to legislate in minute detail, and enabled him to observe that Muhammad was essentially "a moral reformer of mankind" and not a "pan-legist",[36] and that "In the Qur'an itself general legislation forms a very tiny part of the Islamic teaching".[37]

To exemplify the balance between general and specific, he said,

> A prophet is a person who is centrally and vitally interested in swinging history and moulding it on the Divine pattern. As such, neither the Prophetic Revelation nor the Prophetic behaviour can neglect the actual historical situation obtaining immediately and indulge in purely abstract generalities; God speaks and the Prophet acts *in*, although certainly not merely *for*, a given historical context.[38]

If then the Prophet in Madina was not legislating for every eventuality, how did the nascent Muslim community conduct itself?

> ...the Muslim community went about its normal business and did its day-to-day transactions, settling their normal business disputes by themselves in the light of common sense and on the basis of their customs which, after certain modifications, were left intact by the Prophet. It was only in cases that became especially acute that the Prophet was called upon to decide and in certain cases the Qur'an had to intervene.[39] Mostly cases were of an *ad hoc* nature and were treated informally and in an *ad hoc* manner. Thus, these cases could be taken as normative Prophetic examples and quasi-precedents but not strictly and literally.[40]

Fazlur Rahman offered two justifications for his contention "that the Prophetic Sunna was a general umbrella-concept rather than [being] filled with an absolutely specific content".[41] The first being theoretical: viz., that 'Sunna' is a behavioural term; the situation of every act is unique - morally, psychologically and materially; therefore the concept of Sunna must allow for interpretation and adaptation based on the principles of induction.[42] The second being practical: viz., the case demonstrated by the letter of Hasan al-Basri to which reference has already been made,[43] in which the author argued inductively from the behaviour of the Prophet that he did not by his practice support a doctrine of predetermination of the human will.[44] Fazlur Rahman commented,

> This passage of Hasan is highly revelatory of the Prophetic *Sunnah* as being rather a pointer in a direction than an exactly laid-out series of rules, and demonstrates that it was precisely this notion of the "Ideal *Sunnah*" that was the basis of the early thought-activity of the Muslims, and that *ijtihad* and *ijma* are its necessary complements and forward reaches in which this *Sunnah* is progressively fulfilled.[45]

The contention in the hypothesis that the content of the Prophetic Sunna was not large was thus defended *a priori*, rather than a quantitative defence *a posteriori*. In other words, this question is not to be answered by a word-count, but rather by reference to the intention of the Prophet as deduced from his biography. If it is accepted that the life of the Prophet portrays him as a moral reformer who gives occasional specific rulings based on the great ethical themes of the Qur'an itself, which is the image that can be attributed to Fazlur Rahman based on his corpus, then the logical sequence of drawing out legal principles by induction must be supported and thus the hypothesis upheld.

In defence of his third hypothesis, Fazlur Rahman turned to the *Muwatta* of Malik ibn Anas (d. 179AH), as the earliest extensive work on the Hadith and Sunna. He noted Malik's practice of quoting a Hadith, from the Prophet if available and if not from a Companion, at the beginning of each legal topic he covered. This is usually followed by a remark equivalent to "And this is the Sunna with us".[46] On the question of a person's right to exercise an option to buy a share in property (*shuf'ah*), Malik records that Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib (d. c. 90AH), a lawyer in Madina, was asked, "Is there any Sunna concerning it?". From this example, Fazlur Rahman drew two sets of deductions.

First, he said, that the term ‘Sunna’ was being used in two different senses, with an element of temporal progression. In the later case of Malik, it clearly has the meaning of an agreed and established practice. This cannot be its meaning in the earlier case of Sa'id, as, if there is an agreed and established practice, one hardly needs to ask if there is any Sunna concerning it. Here then ‘Sunna’ must have meant an authoritative or normative precedent.[47] This raised the second question: whose?

Fazlur Rahman argued in this way,

> Obviously in this case the *Sunnah* is either the *Sunnah* of the Prophet or of any subsequent authority under the *general* aegis of the Prophetic Sunnah... But whereas it is clear that the *Sunnah* is under the *general* aegis of the Prophetic model, it is also clear that Ibn al-Musayyib *does not* mention the Prophet here. And Malik quotes no *Hadith*, in this matter, from the Prophet on the authority of Ibn al-Musayyib. It is thus obvious that the *Sunnah* in question could have been set by any Companion or a subsequent authority although it is not divorced from the *general* concept of the Prophetic *Sunnah*.[48]

The argument here adduced by Fazlur Rahman, together with the established principle that not every element in the Sunna must go back ultimately to the explicit word or action of the Prophet but all must be reflected in the life-practices of the generations which immediately followed, supports the judgement that this hypothesis is also tenable.

In defence of his fourth hypothesis, Fazlur Rahman began by seeking the intellectual instrument which was used by the early community to develop a defined code of human behaviour out of the Prophetic Sunna; this he indicated to be ‘personal considered opinion’ (*ra'y*).[49] This operated for the first one-and-a-half centuries (AH), producing “an immense wealth of legal, religious and moral ideas”, which resulted in a somewhat chaotic divergence in the various regions of the Muslim world.[50] Eventually though, each regional Muslim community refined this material until it produced an *ijma* of the Living Sunna in that region. The example quoted by Fazlur Rahman was Madina, where Malik used the terms ‘Sunna’ and ‘*ijma*’ “almost equivalently”.[51] At the same time, the intellectual instrument was being refined into “systematic reasoning by analogy” (*qiyas*).

Although wanting to establish that the Living Sunna and the *ijma* of the community were coextensive, Fazlur Rahman drew out an important distinction between them in terms of their points of view. He saw ‘Living Sunna’ as being essentially backward-pointing, drawing its rationale always from the Prophetic Sunna by induction; whilst ‘*ijma*’ uses this same body of agreed material deductively in a progressive framework as new situations are encountered by the evolving community.[52] In both cases, however, there is a necessary intellectual activity, *qiyas* or *ijtihad*, which works on the material contained in the Qur'an and Prophetic Sunna to arrive at the Living Sunna or *ijma*.[53]

To illustrate this principle, Fazlur Rahman referred to the "continuous pages of his own *Ijtihad*" in Malik's *Muwatta*, and Al-Shaybani's (d.189AH) use of both *qiyas* and 'personal opinion' (*istihsan*) in his *Kitab al-Siyar al-Kabir*.[54] Noting in so doing, that Al-Shaybani quoted an "extremely small" number of Hadith from the Prophet, with many more from the Companions and especially the Successors (*Tabi'un*).

At this point in the development of his argument, Fazlur Rahman offered a summary leading to a crucial conclusion which is worthy of quotation *in extenso*.

> We have, so far, established: (1) that the *Sunnah* of the early Muslims was, *conceptually and in a more or less general way*, closely attached to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and that the view that the early practice of the Muslims was something divorced from the *concept* of the Prophetic *Sunnah* cannot hold water; (2) that the actual specific *content* of this early Muslim *Sunnah* was, nevertheless, very largely the product of the Muslims themselves; (3) that the creative agency of this content was the personal *Ijtihad*, crystallizing into *Ijma*, under the general direction of the Prophetic *Sunnah* which was not considered as being something very specific; and (4) that the content of the [Living Sunna] was identical with *Ijma*. This shows that *the community as a whole had assumed the necessary prerogative of creating and recreating the content of the Prophetic* Sunnah *and that* Ijma *was the guarantee for the rectitude*, i.e. *for the working infallibility... of the new content*.[55]

He went on,

> With this background in view, we can understand the real force of the famous second-century aphorism: "The *Sunnah* decides upon the Qur'an; the Qur'an does not decide upon the *Sunnah*", which, without this background, sounds not only shocking but outright blasphemous. What the aphorism means is *that the Community, under the direction of the spirit (not the absolute letter) in which the Prophet acted in a given historical situation, shall authoritatively interpret and assign meaning to Revelation.*[56]

A theological device of this sort, which may be styled in Latin *sensus fidelium*, is a necessity in any religious tradition which wishes to preserve an authoritative community-based interpretation of a revealed scripture to prevent the sixteenth-century (CE) Protestant Christian conundrum focused on the aphorism "Every Man his own Pope".

> An important feature of this *Sunnah-Ijma* phenomenon must be noticed at this stage. It is that this *informal Ijma* did not rule out differences of opinion. Not only was this *Ijma* regional - the *Sunnah-Ijma* of Madinah, e.g. differed from that of Iraq - but even within each region differences existed although an *opinio generalis* was crystallizing. This itself reveals the nature of the process whereby *Ijma* was being arrived at, i.e. through differences in local usage and through different interpretations a general *opinio publica* was emerging, although at the

> same time the process of fresh thinking and interpretation was going on. This procedure of reaching *Ijma* or a common public opinion was utterly democratic in its temper.[57]

It was at this stage in history, according to Fazlur Rahman, that the need for a standardized and uniform interpretation of Islam asserted itself, driven mainly by administrative and legal pressures, which was associated with al-Shafi'i and the 'mass-scale Hadith-movement'.

> This movement for uniformity, impatient with the slow-moving but democratic *Ijma*-process, recommended the *substitution* of the *Hadith* for the twin principles of *Ijtihad* and *Ijma* and relegated these to the lowest position and, further, severed the *organic* relationship between the two. This seemed to put an end to the creative process but for the fact that *Hadith* itself began to be created.[58]

It is clear from the above, drawing extensively on his own words, that Fazlur Rahman was convinced that his own fourth hypothesis was verified and his fifth indicated.

In defence of his fifth hypothesis, Fazlur Rahman drew a distinction between the concept of *ijma* in the pre-Shafi'i period and the understanding of al-Shafi'i himself. The latter regarded the former as not possessing general *ijma* at all but rather disagreement (*iftiriq*).[59] Al-Shafi'i's "idea of *Ijma* was that of a formal and total one; he demanded an agreement which left no room for disagreement".[60] By contrast,

> ...the notion of *Ijma* exhibited by the early schools was very different. For them, *Ijma* was not an imposed or manufactured static fact but an ongoing democratic process; it was not a formal state but an informal, natural growth which at each step tolerates and, indeed, demands fresh and new thought and therefore must live not only *with* but also *upon* a certain amount of disagreement. We must exercise *Ijtihad*, they contended, and progressively the area of agreement would widen; the remaining questions must be turned over to fresh *Ijtihad* or *Qiyas* so that a new *Ijma* could be arrived at.[61]

The consequences of al-Shafi'i's insistence on a total and static *ijma* were that it left no room for the ongoing prior intellectual activity of *ijtihad*, thus breaking the "living and organic relationship" between *ijtihad* and *ijma*.

> The place of the living *Sunnah-Ijtihad-Ijma* he [al-Shafi'i] gives to the Prophetic *Sunnah* which, for him, does not serve as a general directive but as something absolutely literal and specific and whose only vehicle is the transmission of the *Hadith*. The next place he assigns to the *Sunnah* of the Companions, especially of the first four Caliphs. In the third place he puts *Ijma* and, lastly, he accepts *Ijtihad*.[62]

The result of this severing of the relationship was to change *ijma* from an on-going process, being moved onwards by fresh *ijtihad*, into a static and backward-looking

construct. "It is that which, instead of having to be accomplished, is already accomplished in the past."[63]

The fifth hypothesis is the most easily proven, given that it is a commonplace that *ijtihad* was transposed in the order of methodological development following the 'formative period' of Islamic thought.

Before leaving this contrast between the pre- and post-Shafi'i framework, it is worth noting the exposition of it which Fazlur Rahman gave in another place. He looked at the comments of Abu Hanifa's disciple Abu Yusuf on the Syrian al-Awza'i in his *al-Radd 'ala Siyar al-Awza'i*. Here he depicted the two early scholars discussing and differentiating between the Prophetic Sunna, the Sunna of the Companions and actions by the Prophet which Abu Yusuf regarded as exceptions to the general Sunna, which, in specific situations, could serve as precedents and thus shape the actions of the community.[64] Having done so, Fazlur Rahman commented,

> What a contrast this freedom of interpretation of the Prophetic *Sunnah*... presents to the rigid and inflexible doctrine of *Sunnah* inculcated by later legists. Here a freely flowing situational treatment of the Prophetic activity, there a once-and-for-all positing of immobile rules; here a ceaseless search for what the Prophet intended to achieve, there a rigid system, definite and defined, cast like a hard shell.[65]

To conclude this analysis of the development of the Sunna in Fazlur Rahman's thought, which has been somewhat detailed and extensive not only to draw out his conclusions but, perhaps equally importantly, to exemplify his methodology, the conclusion cannot be escaped that this was a process of *ijtihad* based on that free personal argumentation and striving for truth which he was defending; thus, the medium exemplified the message. It would also be true to say that, in the nature of *ijtihad*, this contribution requires both differing models to be brought forward by other commentators and a critical appraisal of them by the Muslim community at large in order that an agreed *ijma* might emerge. The impression of a definitive summation of the situation is not conveyed herein, but rather the presentation of one possible analysis of history, pushing back the frontiers of understanding, in keeping with that modern western thought, namely, that the innovative systematician must accept the possibility, and indeed probability, that any contribution to a given question is likely to be inadequate. The very inadequacy of one contribution prompting others to re-assess it, in order that, through a dialectical process, the consensual truth might emerge.

Turning to the intellectual tools which are used in this approach; it is manifest that this is a rational methodology based on the logical use of reasoned argument, within the parameters specified by the Qur'an, but wholly in keeping with that oft-repeated Qur'anic command to reflect and make use of reason.[66] This methodology can be seen applied above to linguistic analysis, the data of history and the logical development of ideas.

From Sunna to Hadith

Just as Fazlur Rahman understood there to have been a development in the Sunna, from the earliest Prophetic Sunna, which developed into and subsisted within the Living Sunna of the practice of the Muslim community, so he understood there to have been a further development. The same activities of *ijtihad* and *ijma* which led to the formulation and authorization of the Living Sunna, drew out from it Practical Sunnas, that is norms for living, through the process of deduction.[67]

These Practical Sunnas were non-verbal elements of the Prophet's extra-Qur'anic teaching; in that way, they were the *acta* which corresponded to the *dicta* of the Hadith. In the earliest 'pristine' period of Islam, the Hadith and the Sunna were coeval and consubstantial.[68] That is to say that Hadith from the Prophet existed and were in circulation from the period of his lifetime onwards; a fact which Fazlur Rahman holds "may not reasonably be doubted".[69]

> Indeed, during the lifetime of the Prophet, it was perfectly natural for Muslims to talk about what the Prophet did or said, especially in a public capacity. The Arabs, who memorized and handed down poetry of their poets, sayings of their soothsayers and statements of their judges and tribal leaders, cannot be expected to fail to notice and narrate the deeds and sayings of one whom they acknowledged as the Prophet of God. Rejection of this natural phenomenon is tantamount to a grave irrationality, a sin against history... the *Sunnah* of the Prophet was much too important... to be either ignored or neglected... This fact juts out like a restive rock in the religious history of Islam, reducing any religious or historical attempt to deny it to a ridiculous frivolity: the *Sunnah* of the Community is based upon, and has its source in, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.[70]

It is of paramount importance to stress Fazlur Rahman's acceptance of Hadith in these terms at the outset, as his views have been widely misunderstood. He cited Abu Yusuf (*q.v.* above), warning his readers against an uncritical acceptance of Hadith which must be judged by their conformity to the Qur'an and Sunna. "Thus Abu Yusuf establishes as the criterion of the 'collective nature or spirit' of the *Hadith*, the well-known *Sunnah*."[71]

Having established the existence of Prophetic Hadith, Fazlur Rahman turned to look at the way in which they were received and transmitted by the Companions. He described the Companions, not as students who merely learnt from the Prophet, but as 'disciples' who sought to model their lives on that of Muhammad.

> It was therefore inevitable that in the minds of the Companions the *actual* dicta and facta of the Prophet were often imperceptibly intertwined, and even more so in the minds of the succeeding generations, with their own behaviour. This fact must be borne in mind because it explains why it became difficult for the formal traditionalists at the turn of the [second] century and for subsequent generations to disentangle the strictly prophetic element from the alleged dicta and facta of

> the Companions. It also explains in part why the Hadith when it first began to be codified by the traditionalists, was referred to the Companions rather than to the Prophet.[72]

In this, a similar development can be observed in the Hadith to that which has been traced in the Sunna itself from the Prophetic Sunna to the Living Sunna of the community. A similar development was traced by Fazlur Rahman in the chain of transmitters (*isnad*). In the earliest period, "a Hadith was referred to the immediate reporter in his reportive capacity or to the source of the actual transmission, although the Hadith itself claimed to go back to the Prophet himself."[73] It was only at the beginning of the second century (AH), that the science of recording the various chains of transmitters was developed.[74] This led him to comment,

> The majority of the contents of the *Hadith* corpus is, in fact, nothing but the *Sunnah-Ijtihad* of the first generations of Muslims, and *ijtihad* which had its source in individual opinion but which in course of time and after tremendous struggles and conflicts against heresies and extreme sectarian opinion received the sanction of *Ijma*, i.e. the adherence of the majority of the Community. In other words, the earlier living *Sunnah* was reflected in the mirror of the *Hadith* with the necessary addition of a chain of narrators. There is, however, one major difference: whereas *Sunnah* was largely and primarily a practical phenomenon, geared as it was to *behavioural* norms, *Hadith* became the vehicle not only of legal norms but of religious beliefs and principles as well.[75]

It was at this juncture in *Islamic Methodology* that Fazlur Rahman set about an elementary criticism of the established corpus of Hadith literature. He was well aware that his views here would be controversial and, indeed, offensive to many of his readers as he remarked in a preliminary note at the beginning of his *Islamic Studies* article.[76] As has already been noted, this critical analysis deserves a fuller treatment than can be attempted within the compass of the present study; here the content will be noted only as a means of identifying some elements of the author's methodology whilst attempting thus not to misrepresent the original as a whole.

Fazlur Rahman argued logically that 'anti-Hadith Hadith', i.e., those Hadith which warn against the abuses of Hadith, must be temporally subsequent to the occurrence of a significant number of Hadith; just as 'pro-Hadith Hadith' would logically follow the anti-Hadith Hadith, in order to re-adjust the balance.[77] The same striving for balance, an important theme, can be seen in the complementary famous Hadiths, "He who deliberately reports lies about me shall prepare his seat in the Fire" and "Whatever there be of good saying, you can take me to have said it".[78]

Fazlur Rahman questioned the authenticity of those Hadith which deal with sophisticated theological elements such as the rise of dialectical theology or the freedom of the will and predestination,[79] on the grounds that they rely on a philosophical sophistication which did not exist in seventh-century (CE) Arabia. Likewise, Hadith which include a prediction of the future, especially when fairly specific, are rejected on

the grounds that they must refer to a later, relevant date in history.[80] Hadith which refer to later theological sects are rejected on the grounds that they must post-date the foundation of such sects.[81] Similarly, those which relate to a later theological dispute such as whether one who commits a public sin may retain membership of the community, are referred to that historical period in which the dispute arose.[82] The same may be said of the pro- and anti-Sufi Hadith.[83] In general, Fazlur Rahman confined himself to a critical analysis of those Hadith which dealt with the fundaments of faith and practice rather than the legal Hadith, calling on those who took up a detailed study of the subject to address these also in critical vein.[84]

Central to Fazlur Rahman's understanding of the development of Hadith is that it followed along similar lines to the development of the Sunna already noted in detail. In the period when those who had known the Prophet or the immediately subsequent generations, there was less need for precise rigour in Hadith formulation, but as time moved on, the need for codification became more pressing. Thus,

> It is a point of great importance and interest to note that it is after approximately these three generations that the 'living *Sunnah*' of these very generations starts getting canonized in the form of the *Hadith*.[85]

This was the time for stabilising the growth and balance of the Muslim community, and along with this, the rise of various factions which threatened that stability. Thus, the principle of *ijma* was at work in community-building, whereby the majority-balanced-orthodox community sought to protect its very existence and 'middle way' by countering the 'deviant' groups. In Sunna-development terms, this would be seen as a function of the Living Sunna, to hold fast to the balanced and authentic teaching of the Qur'an, as reflected in turn by the Prophetic Sunna and the Living Sunna of the majority community. In the Hadith-model, the balance was maintained by crystallising the practices of the Living Sunnah of the orthodox community in the formulation of Hadiths which, to ensure their authenticity, were traced back and projected as sayings of the Prophet himself. As such they were attributed verbalizations of the on-going inherited practices of the Prophet, thus reflecting the pairing of *acta* and *dicta*.[86] Similarly, Hadith were formulated with the same attribution to warn against or 'outlaw' certain 'deviations' from the orthodox community.

Certain underlying methodological points from Fazlur Rahman's approach can be drawn out here. First, "The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* were given for intelligent moral understanding and implementation, not for rigid formalism."[87] Second, the Hadith are seen as synthetic, seeking, through the principles of *shura* and *ijma*, the unity and balance of the orthodox community.[88] Third, that the extant corpus of Hadith is to be judged in the light of the Qur'an and the known history of the Prophet and the early community.[89] Fourth, that by such endeavour, the corpus of Hadith can be reduced to the Living Sunna of the early generations. Finally, that by so doing, the spirit which led to the 'formulation' (*not* 'forgery') of the Hadiths can be regained to re-invigorate the balanced, orthodox community of the present age. To exemplify the fourth and fifth points above, the following quotation is illuminating.

> On some such line of re-treatment, we can reduce the *Hadith* to *Sunnah* - what it was in the beginning - and by situational interpretation can resurrect the norms which we can then apply to our situation today. It will have been noticed that although we do not accept *Hadith* in general as strictly historical, we have not used the terms 'forgery' or 'concoction' with reference to it but have employed the term 'formulation'. This is because although *Hadith, verbally speaking*, does not go back to the Prophet, its spirit certainly does, and *Hadith* is largely the situational interpretation and formulation of this Prophetic model or spirit. This term 'forgery' and its equivalents would, therefore, be false when used about the nature of *Hadith* and the term 'formulation' would be literally true. We cannot call *Hadith* a forgery because it reflects the living *Sunnah* and the living *Sunnah* was not a forgery but a progressive interpretation and formulation of the Prophetic *Sunnah*. What we want now to do is to re-cast the *Hadith* into living *Sunnah* terms by historical interpretation so that we may be able to derive norms from it for ourselves through an adequate ethical theory and its legal embodiment.[90]

Before leaving this question and moving on to consider methodology in later periods, it is worth underlining the return of the early pattern of methodological tools advocated here by Fazlur Rahman. The Qur'an and Sunna (as understood in these passages) requires the active striving for rational development and deduction (*ijtihad*) by several complementary paths, to produce norms for living in the modern period which can be offered for refinement and adoption by the majority, balanced community (*ijma*).

Post-formative developments in Islam

A plateau built on firm foundations was reached towards the end of the first three centuries (AH). The mainstream, balanced, orthodox Muslim community had preserved itself from the vicissitudes of the Mu'tazilah, Kharijite and Shi'a dispensations and established an agreed body of socio-legal teaching, validated by the *ijma* of the majority community and sourced to the Prophet himself. This represented "a remarkable social equilibrium and cohesion",[91] which was an expression of the genius of Islam. In Fazlur Rahman's words,

> Islam is the first actual movement known to history, that has taken society seriously and history meaningfully because it perceived that the betterment of this world was not a hopeless task, not just a *pis aller* but a task in which God and man are involved together.[92]

On this foundation, a luxuriant flowering of civilization took place in many aspects of the intellectual, spiritual, political, cultural and scientific domains. Truly, this was the legendary 'Golden Age of Islam'. However, history records that this age was relatively short-lived and, in Fazlur Rahman's understanding, subsequent history has been moribund and marked with intellectual stagnation rather than creative thought. The question to be explored then is 'what happened?' In pursuit of the answer, Fazlur Rahman essayed an analysis under the divisions of politics, moral principles, spiritual

life, philosophy and education. The same divisions will be preserved in this study but first two overarching pointers to his thought will be noted.

> (1) that in order to face certain particular historical exigencies of an extreme nature, our orthodoxy was led, during its early formative phase, to adopt certain more or less extreme remedial measures; but (2) that since the door of re-thinking (*Ijtihad*) was closed; after this period, these early measures became part of the permanent content of our orthodox structure.[93]

In another place, Fazlur Rahman offered an expanded indication along similar lines,

> What we wish to essay in the following is to prove that although the social equilibrium achieved did bestow an extraordinary fecundity and creativity on the Muslim civilization, nevertheless, this phenomenal growth was relatively short-lived because the *content* of this structure was invested with a halo of sacredness and unchangeability since it came to be looked upon as uniquely deducible from the Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. The growth and flowering of Islamic culture was, therefore, stifled at its very roots and almost at the very moment when it began to blossom. This is because the actual content of the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, the content [of] which we described in the previous chapters as the 'living *sunnah*', ceased to be a living *sunnah*, i.e. an on-going process, and came to be regarded as the unique incarnation of the Will of God.[94]

The chapter on post-formative developments in *Islamic Methodology* can best be seen, not as a history of ideas in the Islamic world, but as an essay on the development of intellectual activity as manifested in the life of the Muslim community.

In the political order, the early rebellious nature of the Kharijites threatened the very existence of the Muslim community so radically that the orthodoxy followed the common sense principle that "*any law is better than lawlessness*".[95] This led to the development of the theory of submission to *de facto* authority, even that of an unjust ruler. Fazlur Rahman traced the formulation of politically pacifist Hadith to this trend and saw it as being established as "part of the permanent furniture of Sunni belief".[96] As such, it was a necessary counter-balance to extremism being adopted through the Hadith-movement and thus grounded in Prophetic authority.

This was compounded by the issue of exclusion from the Muslim community. Should the public sinner be excluded or allowed to remain within the community? Again, to prevent the extreme of civil war and vicissitudes, the orthodox community emphasised that the judgement must be left to God alone and that "a person who professes 'there is no god but God' enters paradise 'even though he commits adultery or theft'".[97] The original intention was to prevent dogmatic civil wars and provide a legal definition of a Muslim,

> But once it was accepted not only as a legal definition but also as a constituent of the substance of the creed, its actual effect was bound to be in favour of moral apathy, despite a good deal of *Hadith* to the contrary which could, however, never revoke the *Hadith* in question.[98]

The combination of 'a deliberately cultivated political docility' and 'a general moral passivity' enshrined as a form of 'doctrinal rectitude', inevitably led to a type of conformism in which the acknowledged gap between ideals and realities widened, which in turn, led to political opportunism and cynicism.[99] Fazlur Rahman identified the Islamic tool against such a development to be the principle of *shura*, which "could have been developed into an effective and permanent organization. But nothing like this was achieved."[100]

> The ground was thus prepared and justification supplied for visitation of the Muslim world from the fourth century onward by sultan after sultan and amir after amir. The decrepitude of the Baghdad Caliphate was hastened... Amirs would rise with their mercenary hordes and make a clean sweep of vast territories, but the Muslims could do nothing - nothing, that is to say, religiously except to obey.[101]

This political decline in the Muslim world had an exaggerated effect on the urban population, particularly the professional and commercial classes, who bore the brunt of military action and were taxed by successive rulers. It was precisely these classes which had pioneered the flowering of Islamic culture and civilisation in the 'Golden Age' and their decline was "a major symptom of deterioration" in the Muslim world.[102]

> When professional classes weaken and commerce declines in the cities, the ground beneath any cultural development worthy of the name is removed. The existence of a robust middle class is absolutely essential for any cultural development - spiritual, intellectual or artistic.[103]

Thus, in Fazlur Rahman's estimation, the decline in creative cultural activity can be attributed to the intellectually moribund atmosphere of absolute conformism, which was a necessity at its inception but which was later "erected into a kind of dogma", which resulted in political apathy.[104] Indicating the way forward, he concluded,

> *What is imperatively required is a healthy interest in the state and a constructive criticism of the government affairs, keeping in view the overriding need of the integrity of the Community and the stability of the state*.[105]

On the moral plane, Fazlur Rahman delineated the issue of human freedom and accountability as the focus of decline during the centuries. He saw the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunna providing a moral framework with all the necessary tensions "to ensure (i) the maximum of creative human energy and (ii) the keeping of this human creativity on the right moral track".[106] At the same time, it guarded against moral nihilism by

requiring submission to the moral law, and "charged man with limitless potentialities and made him squarely responsible for discharging this 'trust'."[107]

Fazlur Rahman did not see the Qur'an as being interested in a discussion of the problem of the freedom of the human will or determinism, but accepted that every religious community has to address such theological issues in the formulation of its world view. With the rise of the Mu'tazilites, who stressed those Qur'anic elements which dealt with human moral creativity and accountability, the scene was set for the orthodoxy to counter-balance this with a stress on the absolute supremacy of the moral law and the power, will and majesty of God. Both elements are present in the Qur'an, but with the orthodoxy's stress on the latter they "erected determinism into an unalterable part of the orthodox creed".[108]

> The 'orthodoxy' was thus once again manoeuvred into an extreme position. In place of the living, concrete and synthetic moral tension of the Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah* we have again a conflict of pure and naked extremes... the 'orthodoxy' came into existence on the very plea and with the very programme of installing the omnipotence of God and impotence of man into a dogma.[109]

Such a doctrine of determinism suited the political climate of the Umayyads "for they feared that a stress on human freedom and initiative might unseat them".[110] Similarly, determinism fitted well with the necessary stress on the distinction between faith and acts which orthodoxy had made in contradistinction to the Kharijites. When this shifted from a *formal* to a *real* definition of what it is to be a Muslim then the way was open for "almost an exact Muslim replica of the Christian doctrine of 'Justification by Faith'."[111] "This attitude of mind was bound to result in an undue easing of the religious conscience which obviously lowers the moral tension and proportionately the moral standards."[112]

With the elevation of determinism in the theology of the orthodox community, the way was set for the Muslim philosophers in the fourth and fifth centuries (AH) with their superior intellectual tools of rationality, to develop determinism still further "by an identification of the causal, rational and theistic forms of determinism", thus producing "a truly imposing deterministic structure of the universe - and of man".[113] Subsequently, the philosophers were followed by theologians such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606AH/1209CE), "a theistic predestinarian of a truly frightening order".[114] Which in turn led to sufi theosophs who argued in their monistic framework from "Every act or occurrence is created by God", through "Every act or occurrence is a manifestation of God", to "Every act or occurrence is God".[115] This inexorable development led Fazlur Rahman to observe,

> The fact is that the chief property of the spiritual and intellectual life of the Muslims approximately from the seventh century onward is fatalism and the moral-psychological attitude that goes with it.[116]

The result of this fatalism on the intellectual and creative activity of Muslims in recent centuries was that all initiative was "severely proscribed until it was almost numbed".[117]

The spiritual life of the Muslim community was also affected by the trends on the political and moral levels which have been traced above. Indeed, Fazlur Rahman saw sufism in its organisational origins[118] as "a moral-spiritual protest against certain developments of politico-doctrinal nature within the Community".[119] He described sufism as "essentially a moral movement, emphasising and re-emphasising the interiorization, deepening and purification of the moral motive and warning man of the awful responsibility that life lays on his shoulders".[120]

One of the negative trends which Fazlur Rahman saw in sufism as manifested was an *over-emphasis* on negation of this world (*zuhd*), which was compounded by the break-up of effective political leadership after the disputes concerning the caliphal succession, and led to a renunciation of engagement with changing society, as a form of isolationism.[121] This isolationism in turn developed into a form of Messianism, which looked for the coming of the Mahdi or the return of Jesus as a *necessary* hope for the 'redemption' of an otherwise irredeemable world; which, in turn, led to a resignation and withdrawal from socio-economic revival and activity.[122]

On the moral level too, the stress of the early legists to develop a system of law to regulate the life of the community had the tendency to lead to a 'law of externals' rather than a concentration on the 'inner tribunal of conscience'. Both are essential to law in Islam, as Fazlur Rahman ceaselessly indicated, because Islamic law is the practical working out of the great ethical impulses of the Qur'an which seek to change the human heart through the cultivation of *taqwa*. Such tendencies led to strains between the sufis and the *ulama*.

These strains became sharper with the development of a science of *gnosis* (*ma'rifah*) amongst the sufis, which proclaimed an 'inner knowledge' with the potential to be set against rationalism or orthodox *'ilm*. Again, opportunities were missed to keep a balanced relationship between intuition and intellection.[123] Such attempts were made by al-Ghazali (d. 606AH/1111CE) and later by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1035AH/1625CE).[124]

The divisions between the sufis and the orthodox *ulama* on the ground of knowledge led to a cleavage between knowledge which can be attained through fallible reason and that which can be attained through the unassailable assurance of immediate personal experience (*kashf*). "Now, whenever the organic relationship between perceptive and formulative reason is thus cut in a society, it can never hope to keep alive any intellectual tradition of a high calibre."[125]

Returning to the moral plane, under the influence of Ibn Arabi (d. 638AH/1240CE) and his 'theosophic intuitionism' which led him to propose a doctrine of pantheism, a similar decline in the moral tension of society was posited by Fazlur Rahman.[126] Quoting a couplet from the sufi poet Iraqi,

> When He divulged His secret Himself
> Why should He blame poor Iraqi?[127]

He commented that this betokens an abdication of all moral struggle and that the moral fibre of society has thus been sapped of all vitality.[128]

Having thus traced the elements in sufism which Fazlur Rahman found to be inhibiting the intellectual *jihad* needed to reinvigorate Islam, he asked,

> Where is the effort to build a moral-social order on earth - the unmistakable stand of pristine Islam?... Sufism, at bottom, undoubtedly speaks to certain fundamental religious needs of man. What is required is to discern these necessary elements, to disentangle them from the emotional and sociological *débris* and to reintegrate them into a uniform, 'integral' Islam. Since *Ijtihad* and *Ijma* - the effective framework of Islamic thinking - came to an early stop, the inner integrity of Islam was destroyed, each element forcing its own way out in a direction it pleased or happened to take and thus parallel, indeed mutually opposed 'Islams' developed throughout the later centuries.[129]

The philosophical movement constituted one of the richest treasures in Islamic intellectual culture, analysing and systematising the physical, biological and human sciences as well as bringing order to an exploration of theological speculation, which must be the sole focus of this study.[130]

In tracing the development of philosophical thought, Fazlur Rahman reached the conclusion that,

> *on all points where the frontiers of religion and rational thought met, the two neither reached utterly different results nor yet were they identical but seemed to run parallel to one another*.[131]

This parallelism of methodology, which ran right through their two systems, led the philosophers to what Fazlur Rahman succinctly described as their '*saltus mortalis*'.[132] This resulted in three conclusions on the part of the philosophers,

> (1) that philosophy and religion were ultimately tackling exactly the same questions, dealing with exactly the same facts and in exactly the same way, (2) that the Prophet was, therefore, primarily a philosopher, but (3) that since the Prophet's addressees were not the intellectual *élite* but the masses, who could not understand the philosophical truth, the Prophetic Revelation naturally catered for their needs and 'talked down' to their level in terms intelligible to them.[133]

This parallelism was exemplified by Fazlur Rahman on questions such as the origin of the world; was it contingent on God, as the philosophers taught, or a *creatio ex nihilo*, according to religion;[134] and the physical or spiritual resurrection of the body.[135]

Speaking of Ibn Sina, "whose doctrines have been historically the most important",[136] Fazlur Rahman concluded,

> The perilous belief, therefore, became firmly implanted in his mind that *religious and philosophical truths are identically the same; only religion, since it is not limited to the few but is for all, necessarily accommodates itself to the level of mass intelligence and is, therefore, a kind of philosophy for the masses and does not tell the naked truth but talks in parables*.[137]

The natural consequence of this was that there was a danger of the emergence of a 'double truth' theory, a religious truth and a rational one; a position which Ibn Rushd "came very near to asserting".[138]

The ultimately significant misfortune of the philosophers, in this context, was the position which they took regarding the nature of religio-moral truth. As Fazlur Rahman put it,

> In particular, the most capital mistake made by al-Farabi and Ibn Sina was to assimilate religious or moral truth to intellectual or "natural" truth. In their theory of knowledge, when they treat of religious cognition their statements, which are at points very profound and original, simply make no distinction whatsoever between higher religio-moral cognition and other forms of intellectual cognition. For them a moral principle is, in its cognitive aspects, exactly like a mathematical proposition. They do not realise that religio-moral experience, although it certainly has a cognitive element, radically differs from other forms of cognition in the sense that it is full of *authority*, *meaning* and *imperiousness* for the subject whereas ordinary form of cognition is simply informative. A man who has a genuinely religious experience is automatically transformed by that experience.[139]

The decisive move taken by the orthodox theologians against the philosophers associated with the names of al-Ghazali and later Ibn Taymiya requires no further statement here. The 'dangers' of philosophy to religion meant that all pure intellectualism was shunned and philosophy was reduced to the level of some study of logic to sharpen the minds of *madrasa* students.[140] However, Fazlur Rahman pointedly noted that the reaction was against the philosophy of the known Muslim philosophers of that period and not against *all* philosophy *per se*. It would have been, and still is, possible for different philosophies to be developed which might be more 'Islam-minded'.[141]

> If an al-Farabi or an Ibn Sina had outraged, on certain points, the dogmatic theology and perhaps exceeded in interpreting the Qur'an, the orthodoxy, in al-Ghazali and others afterwards, equally outraged humanity as such including its own very being, by condemning all philosophy as such and its necessary instrument, the human reason.[142]

Not only were the institutions of higher learning in Islam "swept bare of pure thought" after al-Ghazali, but "philosophy was effectively outlawed from the Muslim world".[143] This resulted in the decay of Muslim culture and civilization, as Fazlur Rahman concluded,

> Intellectual liberalism is of the essence of a great and advancing culture. But for allowing latitude to the mind of man and trusting basically in its goodness, soundness and sanity, modern culture should commit suicide not merely in its liberal aspects but also in its conservative side. For conservatism can remain meaningful and enlightened only when there is liberalism; should conservatism become unenlightened (i.e., fail to see why it should be conservative, on what points and to what extent it should exert the pressure), the entire culture must decay. This is what unfortunately happened in Islam.[144]

Turning to the question of education, it is noteworthy that Fazlur Rahman headed this section in *Islamic Methodology* 'Character of Education'.[145] In this way he typified his aim "to characterise, in broad terms, the Muslims' concept of knowledge, as it developed, in order to bring out its historical interaction with Islam".[146]

Beginning with the usage of the Qur'an and the Prophet, Fazlur Rahman held that,

> the term *'ilm* and its derivatives [was used] in the general and comprehensive sense of 'knowledge' whether it is through learning or thinking or experience.[147]

In the formative period of Islam, particularly after the generation of the Companions, he discerned a limitation of the term *'ilm* to that knowledge which was learnt, particularly from the past generations (i.e., from the Prophet onwards). At the same time, "the exercise of understanding and thought on these traditional materials was termed '*fiqh*' (literally: understanding)".[148] "The essential point we wish to make here is that the term *'ilm* had early on received a traditionalist rather than a rational bias in Islamic history."[149]

This traditionalist approach to the acquisition of knowledge was typified for Fazlur Rahman in the customary practice of education which consisted in travelling in search of knowledge by sitting at the feet of successive *shaykhs*, thus acquiring their stores of tradition.[150] Later, there emerged a division of knowledge as is typified in the adage, "Knowledge is of two kinds: that of religious matters and that of human bodies (i.e., medicine)".[151]

Similarly, the term *fiqh* underwent a process of development from its original meaning signifying *the process* of thought and understanding, to its technical legal usage to signify the acquisition of the body of established legal knowledge, i.e., the product of that process in earlier generations.[152]

At this stage, the structures of education developed in the Muslim world played a part. As higher education was *shaykh*-based, rather than institution-based, no systematic

cognitive development and interaction between various disciplines was necessarily employed until the first orthodox colleges were established in the eleventh century (CE). This unfortunately coincided with the ascendancy of philosophical thought and the counter-action by the orthodox theologians, with the concomitant disinclination towards free thought and intellection.[153] This led Fazlur Rahman to conclude,

> No structure of ideas can ever hope to make good or even command respect for a long time - let alone be fruitful - unless it is in constant interaction with living, growing stream of positive and scientific thought. It is a sheer delusion to imagine that by stifling free, positive thought one can save religion for by so doing, religion itself gets starved and impoverished.[154]

Having surveyed the anti-philosophical and anti-rational approach of al-Ghazali, al-Shatibi (8thAH/14thCE century), Ibn Taymiya and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi,[155] Fazlur Rahman concluded,

> The names cited here are august indeed. These personalities have made positive contributions to the spiritual history of Islam whose importance may be said to range between 'immense' and 'capital'. Yet, towards positive knowledge their attitude can be characterised only as fatal. In their criticisms of actual philosophers and of actual products of reason one must agree. We ourselves have underlined the excesses to which certain philosophical doctrines had gone. But when the orthodoxy condemned - generation after generation - human reason as such, this extreme and wholesale attack was not only not healthy but downright suicidal. Free-thought, by its very nature, is bound to exceed on certain points; it is a consequence of its very life. Its remedy is not to stifle it but to keep on criticising it. Intellectualism is something so frail that in shackles it surely dies. In other words, 'free-thought' and 'thought' have exactly the same meaning; you cannot remove freedom and then hope that thought would survive... *Islam was subjected to extremes and the orthodoxy, as though by some inexorable law felt impelled to crush positive thought out of existence*... [The ensuing hard and fast distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' fields of learning] caused an incalculable deterioration in the quality and standards of Islamic education and thought itself.[156]

In order to combat this disintegration of education within the Muslim world, Fazlur Rahman stressed the need for an integrated approach both to knowledge itself but also to the educational system which sustains it. He commented on the need for the study of academic systems and disciplines rather than the learning of books, so that subjects should not be learnt by rote but rather "by understanding, criticising them and analysing them".[157]

In speaking of the kind of educational system which is needed to serve modern Islam, Fazlur Rahman commented,

> ...the function of a good educational system is to keep the *normal intellectual level* high enough both in the interests of the normal products to realise the best in them and to give a 'take-off' advantage to the exceptionally gifted ones. The trouble with the Muslim system was that its normal standards were kept at a very low point so that it neither produced good normalities nor afforded a 'take-off' advantage to the exceptional cases as they deserved. Indeed, many a modern scholar has been led by this phenomenon to ask the question whether intellectual barrenness is not a concomitant of Islam, and a few more dogmatic ones have even answered it in the affirmative.[158]

To conclude this analysis of the development, or lack thereof, of Islamic methodology in the post-formative period, a constant thread can be detected running through the five divisions of Fazlur Rahman's thought, viz., politics, moral principles, spiritual life, philosophy and education. In the earliest 'pristine' period of Islam, the great themes of the Qur'an, as exemplified in the life of Muhammad, where allowed to exercise a creative impact on the life of the Muslim community. This developed into the on-going and dynamic Living Sunna, in which diverse interpretations, generated by *ijtihad*, were welded into a common whole by the process of *ijma*. For the best of reasons, namely to counter life-threatening vicissitudes, the Living Sunna was consolidated by the Hadith-movement into a balanced equilibrium which was immensely creative for the immediately subsequent period. As time progressed, the emphasis on one side of the balance became an extremism in its own right, thus bringing about a decline in political and moral responsibility, in an engagement with creating a just socio-economic order, in the creativity of free thought and, finally, in the necessary educational philosophy to sustain growth and development. What began as a balanced foundation, became in Fazlur Rahman's estimation, an ossified empty shell in which, over successive generations, the ability to perform the necessary intellectual tasks of on-going development became first stultified and then lost completely.

Looking for a way forward, Fazlur Rahman surveyed the contribution of modern revivalist movements, which he saw as attempting to re-create the seventh century (CE) in an effort to re-capture 'pristine' Islam.

> In sum, they believe that if the Muslims were to 'follow', i.e., repeat and reproduce exactly what their seventh-century forefathers did, they would recover their rightful position 'with God', i.e., both in this world and the next. But the big question is: how can a piece of history be literally repeated?[159]

In answer to his own question, Fazlur Rahman did not see any future in attempting to repeat the structure of seventh-century life but rather the necessity to examine what happened then to recapture the lessons of history in terms of understanding the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunna in that context in order that that same guidance may be applied to life today.

> This is because the Qur'an and the Prophet's activity guided and were actually involved in society-building. Besides, therefore, certain general principles that

> lie enunciated in the Qur'an and certain Prophetic precepts, their *actual* handling of social situations is fraught with meaning for us. But the meaning is not that we should repeat that very situation now, which is an absurd task, but rather to draw lessons from this concrete historic paradigm.[160]

Ijtihad in the later centuries

At this stage in *Islamic Methodology*, Fazlur Rahman included a chapter tracing the limitations placed on *ijtihad* in the subsequent centuries of Islamic development. In a sense, it breaks the flow of his thought from his earlier analysis to the developments needed in the modern period and yet it contains certain valuable insights which will be described briefly here; before returning to the logical rather than the historical sequence.

Fazlur Rahman's reading of Islamic intellectual history uncovered no definitive ruling by a great authority that the 'gate of *ijtihad*' was formally closed. Rather, he found references to this as a *post hoc* phenomenon. Writers, that is to say, spoke in the past tense of the state of affairs in the generations which preceded them which led them to the conclusion that *ijtihad* was at an end. Nevertheless, "a *state of affairs* had gradually but surely come to prevail in the Muslim World where thinking on the whole, and as a general rule, ceased."[161]

The limitations placed on rational thought in the development of *kalam* had their impact in jurisprudence. If reason cannot arrive at a distinction between right and wrong, then the human will becomes ineffective and consequently limitations are placed on the use of free thought in jurisprudence.[162] In order to defend the perfection of divine knowledge, the imperfection of human knowledge was stressed to the extent that it was held to be unreliable as a ground for discerning correct human actions.

> This entire argument, therefore, rests on the obviously wrong assumption that if human knowledge is always *imperfect*, it must, for that reason, be absolutely *inadequate* and hence quite *unreliable*.[163]

The inexorable conclusion of this argument is that, "Man is incapable of knowing anything true or doing anything good without being commanded by authority".[164] In which case, all the laws of *shari'a* must be based on revealed authority, to which the human will must acquiesce. This is the route to divine ethical voluntarism, in which an act is defined as good solely on the basis that it is declared so to be by God acting as though by caprice, and hence to moral relativism.

> [Such moral relativism] has been resorted to by the upholders of the *Sunnah* in order to counteract the Mu'tazilite thesis of the power of human reason to know good and evil. So strong was the orthodox reaction against the Mu'tazilah that they were prepared to employ any arguments, sceptical, cynical, relativistic - indeed anything they could lay their hands on in the rich armoury of Greek philosophical ideas - no matter how obviously incompatible this might be with the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an and the actual *Sunnah* of the Prophet.

> Where does the Qur'an say and, indeed, how can it ever tolerate that man can neither know anything nor act? How can any religion befriend scepticism? And, strangest of all, can any genuine moral system accept this kind of relativism?[165]

One of the consequences of the diminution in the rôle played by reason in Islamic thinking is that rationally contradictory positions can be taken by the same scholar on different questions and by different scholars on the same question. Fazlur Rahman traces many such contradictions in the centuries under consideration.[166] From this welter of positions, two may be drawn out as representing Fazlur Rahman's own understanding. First, that "the Qur'anic summons to think and reflect are universal and include all humans";[167] with each exerting her/himself to the limits of his/her potential. Second, that "human reason, although fallible, is not unreliable".[168] The logical consequence of this is a commitment to a process in which people strive *towards* an understanding of the one truth, in the knowledge that each person is limited in their capacity to understand, that each person's capacity is open to change, that there will be a multiplicity of essays at describing truth (all of which will be to some extent inadequate) and that the surest consolidation rests in the collective judgement of the community, which is itself open to further refinement and development in understanding. Such could be summed up in the necessity for *ijtihad* leading to *ijma*, both of which need to be on-going.

Finally, Fazlur Rahman addressed the question of the necessary qualifications to be able to render independent judgement in jurisprudence (*mujtahid*). He traced the development in medieval thought which distinguished between fields of competence for a *mujtahid*.[169] To a certain extent, Fazlur Rahman held these distinctions to be arbitrary, but more importantly, he followed al-Ghazali and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in identifying the most essential requirement in such a person as being the intellectual capacity to make deductions. Given this and the requisite general knowledge, he was of the opinion that such a person could work up the specific knowledge required on a particular question.[170] With Muhammad Iqbal, Fazlur Rahman agreed on the reasons in practice why *ijtihad* effectively disappeared,

> The denial of *Ijtihad* in practice has been the result not of externally over-strenuous qualifications but because of a deep desire to give permanence to the legal structure, once it was formulated and elaborated, in order to bring about and ensure unity and cohesiveness of the Muslim *Ummah*.[171]

Social change and the early Sunna

After devoting great efforts to analyse and express the interaction between intellection and the Islamic heritage, Fazlur Rahman concluded his *Islamic Methodology* by looking at present needs. He saw two general disasters beckoning the Muslim community; one, to compromise its ideals and be swallowed up by 'secularism', and the other to recoil upon itself and seek shelter in delusion. Of the two, he held the latter to be perhaps both the most enticing and most dangerous.

> Should a society begin to live in the past - however sweet its memories - and fail to face the realities of the present squarely - however unpleasant they be - it must become a fossil; and it is the unalterable law of God that fossils do not survive for long: "We did them no injustice; it is they who did injustice to themselves" (XI:101; XVI: 33, etc.).[172]

The efforts which many emerging Muslim countries have made to enter the industrial age have been remarkable, encompassing economic productivity, mass-communications and popular education,

> But these vast and massive impacts require a creative response *of equal dimensions* if our society is to progress Islamically. This calls for a relentless process of hard, clear, systematic and synthetic thinking, which is not yet visible in the Muslim World.[173]

In keeping with the trends which have emerged in the course of this book, Fazlur Rahman saw the way forward to lie in a return to the text of the Qur'an, interpreted against the background of its revelation, and in the light of the way in which it was creatively elaborated and interpreted by the Prophet and the early Muslim community, as exemplified historically by the Living Sunna. By a clear understanding of this formative process, he hoped to draw out pointers for future developments, which could be offered to the *ulama* and wider society for consideration and possible adoption. The challenge is aptly summed up by him thus,

> There is only one sense in which our early history is repeatable - and, indeed, in that sense it must be repeated if we are to live as progressive Muslims at all, viz., just as those generations met their own situation adequately by freely interpreting the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet - by emphasizing the ideal and the principles and re-embodying them in a fresh texture of their own contemporary history - we must perform the same feat for ourselves, with our own effort, for our own contemporary history.[174]

In order to exemplify the kind of creative interpretation of the tradition which he envisaged, Fazlur Rahman gave a number of examples drawn mainly from the legislative decisions of the Caliph Umar as contained in the *Muwatta* of Malik, as these sources portrayed a similar task at a time of great sociological expansion and upheaval in the early Muslim community.[175]

One important example cited is the way in which the Caliph Umar broke with the "unambiguous pronouncement"[176] of the Prophet, "who undoubtably confiscated the territories that had fallen after a fight"[177] for distribution as booty amongst the Muslim army, by deciding not so to distribute the vast territories of Iraq and Egypt. In Fazlur Rahman's judgement, this move was inspired by a fundamental consideration for socio-economic justice.[178] As such, it was an overriding principle which took precedence over even the explicit precedent of Muhammad himself.

> What Umar and those who agreed with him... felt most strongly was that the Prophet was acting within a restricted *milieu* of tribes, *that, therefore you cannot carry on the same practice where vast territories and whole peoples are involved; otherwise you violate the very principles of justice for which the Prophet had been fighting all his life.* One thing is certain; that although Umar obviously departed formally from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet on a major point, he did so in the interest of implementing the essence of the Prophet's *Sunnah.*[179]

Two important methodological points emerge from the examples cited by Fazlur Rahman. First, the need to study the appropriate historical and sociological background behind particular incidents, in order that their precise relevance may be gleaned.[180] Second, that Fazlur Rahman regarded the application of *fiqh* to be atomistic rather than a coherent system,

> Broadly speaking, therefore, *Fiqh* constitutes *materials* for a legal system but is *not* a legal system itself. We do not, however, deny that *Fiqh* is endowed with a sufficiently definite character which marks it out from other legal systems - this character being the result of its Islamicity - what we deny is that it is a logically connected, intellectually worked out, and, therefore, a closely enough knit legal system.[181]

Having thus traced the necessary intellectual tools for reinvigorating Islam in the modern era and identified some examples from the formative period to show the way forward, Fazlur Rahman concluded with the challenge facing contemporary Muslim society,

> ... our earliest generations looked upon the teaching of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet not as something static but essentially as something that moves through different social forms and moves creatively. Islam is the name of certain norms and ideals which are to be progressively realised through different social phenomena and set-ups. Indeed, Islam, understood properly, ever seeks new and fresh forms for self-realization and finds these forms. Social institutions are one of the most important sectors of the Islamic activity and expression. Social institutions, therefore, must become proper vehicles for the carriage and dispensation of Islamic values - of social justice and creativity, etc.[182]

Conclusion

As has been indicated throughout this study, the political context in which Fazlur Rahman worked, particularly during the years in Pakistan, was of capital importance. The articles in *Islamic Studies* first began to appear in 1962 which was the same year that a new Constitution was promulgated in Pakistan. Where the preceding 1956 Constitution had used the words 'Holy Qur'an and Sunna' to denote the sources of Islamic doctrine and practice, the 1962 Constitution substituted the single word 'Islam'. This fuelled the concern that the Sunna of the Prophet was being eliminated as the

second binding source of Islam and raised the suspicion that Ghulam Ahmad Parvez and his *Ahl al-Qur'an* had exerted influence behind the scenes. There was some justification for this as he had influential supporters amongst the Civil Service. In that same year, a *fatwa* was issued declaring Parvez to be a *kafir*. This *fatwa* had been signed by over a thousand *ulama*, including scholars from the Middle East.[183] Even though Parvez had no claim to first-rate Islamic scholarship, the *ulama* and the general populace of Pakistan had been alerted to these questions at the very time that Fazlur Rahman's scholarly articles appeared.

As has been demonstrated in the foregoing, the conceptual framework of the Sunna of the Prophet and the Living Sunna was strongly put by Fazlur Rahman. His systematic analysis of the impact of the Hadith-movement, as a foundation for the 'Golden Age' and at the same time, as the seed which germinated into the decline of Islamic intellection in later centuries, represented the signal contribution on Islamic methodology contained in the writings under consideration.

It is noteworthy that he defended the primacy of intellectual capacity and general knowledge of the Islamic sciences as the essential qualifications for general *ijtihad* (*ijtihad mutlaq* as performed by a *mujtahid*). After all, this was precisely the justification for his own position as a commentator on many fields of Islamic scholarship in which he lacked the depth of knowledge of those who specialised in one science alone. His position, exemplified herein, was that his intellectual training, coupled with the grounding which he had received from his father and his subsequent study, equipped him to read up the specialist body of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects and tender an informed opinion. It is clear from the foregoing that his opinion was most convincing when it focused on an analysis of intellectual interaction (e.g., in the post-formative period developments) and defended an original presentation of an Islamic principle (e.g., the development of the Living Sunna), rather than when he sought to exemplify this by detailed analysis of a more general field (e.g., in sociological developments).

His own analysis of Islamic methodology in history, which must be regarded as a piece of general *ijtihad*, should, with justice, be read in the context of his general thesis about the place of *ijtihad* in the intellectual life of the Muslim community. He would have been the first to call for alternative analyses to his own and for a critical appraisal of the opinions which he tendered. Only in the light of such alternative readings, based on the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet, could an *ijma* be reached by the community at large. Again, his own contribution was an exemplification of the intellectual model which he upheld to be required in Islamic scholarship.

Finally, it is worth noting the impact of the controversy which raged in Pakistan over Fazlur Rahman's views on these questions. First, the conservative opposition defended the historical authenticity of Hadith and were not prepared to accept that a particular Hadith might be historically unsound but still contain a genuine religious impulse as an encapsulation of the Living Sunna. Second, that, in spite of the opposition, Fazlur Rahman was never declared a *kafir*, as had happened to Parvez; rather the charge was

that he was over-influenced by western scholarship. Finally, that the First Amendment Act, which was passed by the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1963, re-introduced Sunna as the second binding source of Islam.[184] Writing in 1976, Fazlur Rahman remained true to his position in saying that, "On *hadith*, the more I investigated, the more the results of modern scholarship seemed confirmed", and, "Thus, while on *hadith* I agreed more or less with Parvez, on *sunnah* I was with the conservatives".[185]

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[1]Goldziher, I., *Muslim Studies*, Vol. II, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971.

[2]Schacht, J., *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950.

[3]Al-Azami, M.M., *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1996 [1985].

[4]Al-Azami, op. cit., p. 4.

[5]cf. Al-Azami, op. cit. p. 1. Asaf A.A. Fyzee, the respected legal scholar of the Sulaymani Bohras; author of the textbook on Islamic law: *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1949, [4th edition 1974].

[6]Al-Azami, op. cit., p. 16.

[7]"Now, the overall picture of the Prophet's biography - if we look behind the colouring supplied by the medieval legal mass - has certainly no tendency to suggest the impression of the Prophet as a pan-legist neatly regulating the fine details of human life from administration to those of ritual purity. The evidence, in fact, strongly suggests that the Prophet was primarily a moral reformer of mankind and that, apart from occasional decisions, *which had the character of* ad hoc *cases, he seldom resorted to general legislation as a means of furthering the general Islamic cause*." Al-Azami, op. cit., p. 16; citing *Islamic Methodology in History*, p. 10 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 10-11] (italics added).

"For one thing, it can be concluded *a priori* that the Prophet, who was, until his death, engaged in a grim moral and political struggle against the Meccans and the Arabs and in organising his community-state, could hardly have found the time to lay down rules for the *minutiæ* of life." Al-Azami, op. cit., p. 16-17; citing *Islamic Methodology in History*, p. 11 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 11].

[8]Al-Azami, op. cit., p. 17.

[9]*Islamic Methodology in History*, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, 1965.

[10]Chapter One: Concepts of *Sunnah, Ijtihad* and *Ijma* in the Early Period (*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*); Chapter Two: *Sunnah* and *Hadith* (*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*); Chapter Three: Post-Formative Developments in Islam [in two parts] (*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962* and *Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*); and Chapter Five: Social Change and Early *Sunnah* (*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*).

[11]*Islam*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966, chaps. III and IV. Page references to the paperback edition: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

[12]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 1-5 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 5-8]; and *Islam*, p. 43-49.

[13]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 1-3 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 5-6]; and *Islam*, p. 44-45.
[14]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 1 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 5].
[15]cf. Q. 33: 21; 60: 4, 6.
[16]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 7 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 8].
[17]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 2 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 5].
[18]cf. *Islam*, p. 43.
[19]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 22 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 18]; *Islam*, p. 51; and Q. 3: 159; 48: 38. This led Fazlur Rahman to comment that, "In the Prophetic Sunna indeed democracy and religious authority were balanced with a *finesse* that defies description" (*Islam*, p. 51).
[20]cf. *Islam*, p. 44-48.
[21]cf. *Islam*, p. 44 on Goldziher, and p. 47 on Schacht.
[22]cf. *Islam*, p. 45, 48, 50 and 52.
[23]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 5 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 7].
[24]cf. *Islam*, p. 57.
[25]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 6 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 7].
[26]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 6 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 7].
[27]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 6 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 7].
[28]cf. Q. 33: 62; and 35: 43.
[29]cf. Q. 33: 21; and 60: 4,6.
[30]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 7 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 8]; and *Islam*, p. 50. For a discussion of the lexicography of 'Sunna', cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 2-4 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 5-7].
[31]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 7 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 9]; and *Islam*, p. 55-56. Hasan al-Basri died in 100AH.
[32]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 7-8 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 9]. A probable dating for this poem is cited as *circa* 100AH or even before.
[33]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 8 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, 9-10], citing Abu Yusuf: *Kitab al-Kharaj*, Cairo, 1302AH, p. 8. line 22.
[34]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 8-9 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 9-10]. Noteworthy in this context is a comment by Fazlur Rahman in another place: "... the life and character of the Prophet himself were permeated with a religious spirit. Even if we may *theoretically* suspect each individual statement in the medieval Muslim records about him, the nature of the case forbids us concluding otherwise than that to his Companions his life was a religious paradigm and as such normative." (*Islam*, p. 51-52).
[35]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 9 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 10]. Such a comment provides an interesting sidelight on the question of the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet. Given the way in which the Qur'an was sent down upon the heart of the Prophet and that his whole being was invaded by the revelation so that he was preserved from error and yet quintessentially human, how could people fail to take his conduct as a model to be followed?
[36]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 10-12 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 10-12]. N.B. "pan-legist" can be described as "one who legislates for every eventuality".
[37]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 10 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 11].

[38]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 10 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 11].
[39]citing Q. 4: 64.
[40]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 11 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 11-12]; and cf. *Islam*, p. 51.
[41]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 12 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 12].
[42]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 12 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 12].
[43]cf. *Islam*, p. 55-56: A letter was written by Caliph Abd al-Malik (ruled 65AH/684CE to 68AH/688CE) to Hasan al-Basri (21AH/642CE to 100AH/728CE) commenting with disapproval on the views held by the latter concerning human freedom and responsibility. Part of the text read:

"The Commander of the Faithful has been informed of your views on human freedom (*qadar*) such as he never heard before from anyone else from among the bygone generation... So write to him about it - whether it is a *verbal transmission* (*riwaya*) from anyone of the Companions of the Prophet of God, or your own considered opinion (*ra'y*) or anything that may be confirmed by the Qur'an..." (citing *Der Islam*, XXI, 67ff. (text edited by H. Ritter)).

Part of Hasan al-Basri's response was also reproduced by Fazlur Rahman:

"There was none among our (Muslim) predecessors who rejected this (viz., that human beings are free to choose); nor did anybody dispute with regard to this since they were (tacitly) agreed and unanimous about it. *We have introduced* this theological discourse (*kalam*) on the point since (some) people have *innovated* a rejection of it..." (same citation).

[44]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 12 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 12].
[45]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 12 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 12].
[46]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 13-14 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 12-13].
[47]In *Islam*, p. 54-55, Fazlur Rahman noted that the later usage "is a derivative from the former and the two are related *secundum prius et posterius*" (following [or secondary] both in time and in importance).
[48]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 14 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 13].
[49]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 14 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 14].
[50]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 15 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p.14].
[51]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 15 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 14].
[52]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 15 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 14].
[53]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 15 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 14]. In discussing the nature of the term 'Sunna' in *Islam*, p. 55, Fazlur Rahman introduces the illuminating idea that, "In regard to content, as we shall see, it [Sunna] was not so much like a path as like a river-bed which continuously assimilates new elements; but the *intention* of the term Sunna was always directed towards the Apostolic model."
[54]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 15-18 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 14-16].
[55]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 19 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 16-17].
[56]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 19-20 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 17].
[57]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 20 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 17-18].
[58]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 21 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 18].

[59]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 21-23 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 18-19].
[60]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 23 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 19].
[61]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 23 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 19]; citing al-Shafi'i, *Kitab al-Umm*, VII: 255, 8 lines from the bottom et seqq.
[62]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 23 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 19-20]; citing al-Shafi'i, op. cit., p. 246, line 15.
[63]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 24 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 1, 1962*, p. 20].
[64]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 27-29 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 1-3].
[65]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 29 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 2].
[66]cf. e.g. Q. 10: 24 and 12: 109.
[67]cf. *Islam*, p. 57.
[68]cf. *Islam*, p. 58.
[69]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 31 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 4].
[70]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 32 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 4]. The reference to "those who attempt to deny it" ought to be read in part as a reference to Ghulam Ahmad Parvez and his *Ahl al-Qur'an* in Pakistan, who was a contemporary of Fazlur Rahman and had been denounced for his wholesale rejection of the Sunna as a source for Muslim living.
[71]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 35 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 6], citing Abu Yusuf, *al-Radd 'ala Siyar al-Awza'i*, Hyderabad, n.d., p. 31-32.
[72]*Islam*, p. 58.
[73]*Islam*, p. 58.
[74]cf. *Islam*, p. 59.
[75]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 44-45 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 12-13].
[76]"It is strongly requested that the readers should read this article *in full*: a partial reading is liable to create grave misunderstandings. Readers are also requested *not* to quote *any part* of the article which, when torn from its context, does not represent the article *as a whole*." *Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 1.
[77]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 36 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 7].
[78]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 36 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 7].
[79]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 36 and 61f [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 7 and 22f].
[80]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 46-49 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 13-15].
[81]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 56-57 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 19-20].
[82]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 59-60 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 21-22].
[83]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 65-66 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 24].
[84]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 67 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 25].
[85]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 52 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 17].
[86]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 53f [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 17f].
[87]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 80 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 33].
[88]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 77 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 31].
[89]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 81 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 34].
[90]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 80 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 2, 1962*, p. 33-34].
[91]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 85 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 1].
[92]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 86 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 1].
[93]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 105 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 14].

[94]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 87 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 2].
[95]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 88 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 3].
[96]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 89 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 3].
[97]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 89 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 3].
[98]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 89 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 3-4].
[99]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 90-93 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 4-6].
[100]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 94 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 7].
[101]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 94 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 7].
[102]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 96 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 8].
[103]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 95 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 8].
[104]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 96 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 8].
[105]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 96 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 8].
[106]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 97 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 9].
[107]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 97 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 9].
[108]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 98 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 10].
[109]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 98 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 10].
[110]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 99 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 10].
[111]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 99 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 10].
[112]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 99 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 10-11].
[113]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 101 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 12].
[114]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 101-102 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 12].
[115]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 102 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 12].
[116]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 102 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 12]. Fazlur Rahman was at pains to stress that there were noble exceptions to this and other norms within the orthodox community, but this does not detract from the normativity of his argument. In particular, he stressed the attempts by reformers such as Ibn Taymiya, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah to emphasise the moral imperative of the Qur'an and thus the need for human action and responsibility.
[117]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 103 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 13].
[118]'Organisational origins' here, as opposed to its spiritual origins which Fazlur Rahman accepts went back to the time of the Prophet (cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 106-107 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 15]).
[119]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 106 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 14].
[120]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 107 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 15]. Whilst it would be true to say that many of Fazlur Rahman's references to popular sufism have a certain harshness, it would be false to describe him as 'anti-sufi' and rash to attempt to summarise his comprehensive position in the space of this study. It would require a study in its own right. In general terms it might be said that he was positive about the richness which the mystical tradition could and should bring to Islam whilst being firmly critical of certain 'accretions' which had adhered to the purity of Islamic mysticism.
[121]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 107-109 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 15-16].
[122]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 109-111 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 16-18].
[123]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 114 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 20].
[124]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 114-115 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 20].
[125]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 116 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 21].

[126]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 115 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 20].
[127]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 116 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 21].
[128]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 116 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 21].
[129]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 117-118 [*Islamic Studies, vol 1, No 4, 1962*, p. 22].
[130]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 118-119 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 297-298].
[131]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 119 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 298].
[132]Literally 'mortal leap' but here perhaps best translated as 'fatal error'.
[133]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 120 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 298].
[134]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 120-121 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 298-299].
[135]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 122-123 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 300].
[136]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 119 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 298].
[137]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 121-122 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, 299].
[138]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 122 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 299].
[139]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 124 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 301]. In this context, reference should be made back to Fazlur Rahman's criticism of the philosophers' understanding of the psychology of prophethood and the 'corrections' of the orthodoxy in his book *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*.
[140]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 127 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 303].
[141]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 123 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 300].
[142]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 126 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 302].
[143]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 127 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 303].
[144]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 126 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 302].
[145]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 129 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 304].
[146]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 129 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 304].
[147]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 129 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 305].
[148]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 130 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 305].
[149]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 130 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 305].
[150]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 130 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 305].
[151]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 131 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 305].
[152]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 131 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 305-306].
[153]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 131-132 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 306].
[154]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 132 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 307].
[155]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 133-134 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 307-308].
[156]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 134-135 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 308].
[157]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 138 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 311] and cf. pp. 135-138 [pp. 308-310].
[158]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 139 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 311].
[159]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 143 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 314].
[160]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 144 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 3, 1963*, p. 314].
[161]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 150.
[162]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 151-152.
[163]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 153-154.
[164]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 154.

[165]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 155-156.
[166]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 157-167.
[167]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 161.
[168]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 165.
[169]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 168-169 for a distinction between *ijtihad mutlaq*, *ijtihad muqayyad* and *ijtihad fi'l-madhhab*; being respectively, absolute *ijtihad*, *ijtihad* limited to certain areas, and *ijtihad* within a given school of law.
[170]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 168-171.
[171]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 172. Although Fazlur Rahman naturally wanted to draw attention to the "gradual deterioration of intellectual standards and the impoverishment of the intelligentsia of Islam... through a gradual narrowing down of the educational system" (*Islamic Methodology*, p.172).
[172]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 176 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 205].
[173]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 176-177 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 206].
[174]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 178 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 207].
[175]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 179 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 207-208].
[176]Such as "later legists used to term *muhkam* or *mansus*" (*Islamic Methodology*, p. 181 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 209]).
[177]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 181 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 209].
[178]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 180 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 208].
[179]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 181 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 209].
[180]cf. *Islamic Methodology*, p. 183 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 211].
[181]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 184-185 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 211].
[182]*Islamic Methodology*, p. 189 [*Islamic Studies, vol 2, No 2, 1963*, p. 214].
[183]cf. Fazlur Rahman, "Some Islamic issues in the Ayyub Khan era", in *Essays on Islamic Civilisation presented to Niyazi Berkes*, (ed) Donald P Little, Leiden: Brill, 1976, p. 286.
[184]cf. Some Islamic issues in the Ayyub Khan era, p. 288-289.
[185] Some Islamic issues in the Ayyub Khan era, p. 287.