

A FORGOTTEN THEORETICAL CONNECTION OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Tazul Islam
M. Y. Zulkifli

ABSTRACT

Each classification of science propounded by al-Ghazālī is generally based on a specific theoretical background. For religious science, which is relatively more focused in his discussion, he ascribed the entire discourse to a theory called “lubāb al-Qur’an” (essence of the Qur’an). This particular theory was born in another concept he calls ‘maqāsid al-Qur’an’ (objectives of the Qur’an) which is increasingly fashionable in contemporary Islamic scholarship. Despite this attention from scholars, the concerned discussion in previous literatures seems more interested in outlining the branches religious science that are enumerated by Al-Ghazālī rather than in digging deep into the above-mentioned background theory. In this milieu, the existing gap of study provokes exploring this very theoretical basis and its implications. Hence, to explore various dimensions of this gap and to shed light on it, this research aims at exploring critically the conceptual background of al-Ghazālī’s classification of religious sciences. It is hoped that this study may lay a new direction for this emerging debate.

Keywords: al-Ghazālī, classification of Islamic sciences, theory of Islamic knowledge, lubāb al-Qur’ān and Maqāsid al-Qur’an.

INTRODUCTION

While discussing the classification of sciences in general, Al-Ghazālī (c.1058-1111) points out the theoretical basis for each. For the classification of religious sciences or Islamic sciences, he connects the entire debate with a theory called *Lubāb al-Qur'an* (essence of the Qur'an) and applies it as a methodological device for classifying religious or Islamic sciences. However, this singular theory, in the same connection, seems absent in the scholarly works of other prominent Muslim scholars like *al-Farābī* (c.872-950), *Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī* (c.1236-1311), *Ibn Khaldūn* (c.1332-1406). Interestingly, this unique theory originates from another theory called *maqāsid al-Qur'an* (objectives of the Quran) and has been discussed elaborately with much difference by both traditional and contemporary Muslim scholars. In their discussion, “*maqāsid al-Qur'an*” is generally used as a means for understanding the Quranic themes and objectives. Nevertheless, al-Ghazali's scholarship takes a step forward and implicates this very theory with Islamic epistemology whence *lubāb al-Qur'an* is born. This exclusive approach might develop a new perspective in classifying Islamic sciences wherein lies the significance of this study. Despite the fact that a number of researches have been conducted on *al-Ghazālī's* classification of sciences in general and classification of religious sciences in particular, the theoretical implication of his classification of religious sciences, in some cases, still remains beyond a scholarly treatment. Consequently, this problem might hinder taking advantage of the general usefulness of the classification of religious sciences. Indeed, a strong theoretical background of the classification of religious sciences could promote the general understanding of Islamic sciences. It also could enable learners to choose a preferable specialized field of study. Furthermore, it may facilitate to understand the interrelation between various divisions and subdivisions of religious sciences. Osman Bakar, a Malaysian scholar, observes why a discussion of this classification is necessary. According to him, in modern times, some Muslim scholars speak of the importance of the traditional classifications of the sciences for the search and the realization of a genuine Islamic educational system, the formulation of Islamic philosophy of science, and the conduct of

an authentic discourse on Islamization of knowledge.¹ Moreover, benefits of classification of the sciences, which is described by *al-Ghazālī* himself, are to let students know the components of these sciences and to teach them how to prioritize studying the sciences. He adds that for the teachers, this classification may give an extra advantage of determining the starting point of an educational process according to a student's cognitive capacity.² However, *al-Ghazālī* classifies sciences in his book, *al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, in response to a claim that science comprises only of jurisprudence, *kalām* and *tafsīr*. He points out that “man who reckons that knowledge consists only of jurisprudence and scholastic theology and prophetic commentary, apparently does know the different branches of knowledge and their distinctions and classes.”³ For *al-Ghazālī*, the classification of religious sciences is more important than all other sciences. By this classification, a Muslim may know which science is *fard 'ayn* (individually obligatory) and *fard kifāyah*” (collectively obligatory) to learn. Furthermore, it helps the learners to differentiate between ‘praiseworthy sciences’ such as medicine, objectionable sciences such as magic, and ‘permitted sciences’ such as poetry or history.⁴ However, an understanding of *al-Ghazālī*'s classification of Islamic sciences fundamentally lies in understanding its theoretical implication. However, the available literatures in this subject, including those paid relatively broader treatment such as Osman Bakar's *Classification of Knowledge in Islam : a Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (2006), al-Rabe's *Muslim Philosophers' Classifications of the Sciences: al-Kindī, al-Farābī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Khaldūn* (1984), Hasan Asari's *The Educational Thought of al-Ghazālī* (1993), Frank's *al-Ghazālī and Ash'arite School* (1993) and others, are mostly devoted to outlining the themes rather than discussing theoretical implications. Hence, this inadequacy leaves a

¹Osman Bakar, *Traditional Muslim Classifications of the Sciences: Comparative Notes on Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi and Ibn Khaldun*, p. 3. www.i-epistemology.net

²Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥat al-'Ulūm* (Cairo: N.P, 1322H.), 62.

³Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, in *al-Jawāhir al-Ghawālī* (Cairo: n.p, 1934), 21.

⁴Ahmad Abdulla al-Rabe, “Muslim Philosophers' Classifications of the Sciences: al-Kindi, al-Farabi, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Khaldun” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1984)121.

huge gap of study in this connection. This study finds it interesting to focus on this existing gap in the sense that *al-Ghazālī's* classification of religious sciences may not be understood well unless its theoretical foundation is squarely comprehended.

CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCES AND ITS THEORETICAL BASIS

Al-Ghazālī's Definition of Religious Science

Since *al-Ghazālī's*⁵ view of classification of religious sciences has become a matter of academic study, first of all, his definition of religious science should be explored and analysed for better and precise understanding of his classification. He made it easy when he outlined what he meant by religious science. He says, "by *ulum shar'iyah* (religious sciences) I mean those which have been acquired from the prophets and are not arrived at either by reason, like arithmetic, or by experimentation, like medicine or by hearing, like language."⁶ Seemingly, this definition makes an explicit distinction between religious and other sciences as the first part affirms that if sciences are derived from a divine source through the prophetic media, it then is called religious. Obviously, this definition makes an explicit distinction between religious and other sciences. *Al-Ghazālī'* argues that if religious science or knowledge descends from divine source through the prophetic media, it should be called religious science. In contrast, he negates the idea that sciences which derive from sources other than prophetic media such as sciences that originate from efforts of human intellect should be included as religious science. However, in pursuance to this definition of religious science, two things are to be fundamentally taken into consideration, the holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, a practical explanation of Qur'anic teachings implemented by the Prophet

⁵Al-Ghazālī was born (1058-1111A.D) in the city of Tus in Khurasan to a Persian family. He is one of the most celebrated thinkers of Arab-Islamic culture. The scope and high quality of his prolific intellectual career reflect on many diverse branches of learning including Islamic jurisprudence, theology, logic, metaphysics, ethics, Sūfism, and Qur'anic studies.

⁶Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, *Revitalization of the Sciences of Religion*, trans. by Ahmad A Zidan (Egypt, Cairo: Islamic Inc, 1997, Vol. 1), 15.

(s.a.w.) in his life time. Yet in theoretical points of view, these two may not be considered as sciences rather they are thought to be the prime sources for them. In fact, the systematic approaches that promote an understanding of knowledge of those sources should be called sciences and *al-Ghazālī* himself asserts this view. He puts an unequivocal emphasis on the fact that “religious sciences can be acquired by learning and understanding the meanings of the Qur’ān and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).”⁷ Thus, ironically, the systematic way to understand and learn the contents of the Qur’ān and Sunnah can precisely be called the religious or Islamic sciences.

Classification of Religious Sciences

Al-Ghazālī’ illustrates his classification of religious science inconsistently in his three treatises; *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān*, *Ihyā’* and *al-Risālah al-Lā’duniyyah*. However, despite the presence of terminological inconsistency, there is an internal conceptual correlation between them. In *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*,⁸ the author categorizes the classification into two, praiseworthy and blameworthy. The praiseworthy category of sciences is further classified into four of which each has sub-classes as follows:

1. Fundamentals (*uṣūl*)

- a. The Book of God (the Qur’ān)
 - b. *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s.a.w.)
 - c. Consensus (*ijmā’*) of all Muslims
- Traditions relating to the Companions (*āthār al-sahābah*)

2. Branches (*furū’*)

Sciences that are understood from “sources” (*usūl*)

⁷Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: n.d, Dār al-Marifah, vol. 3), 17.

⁸The book, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revival of the Religious Science) is the encyclopedic work of al-Ghazālī recognized as his most famous composition.

3. Auxiliary (*muqaddimāt*)

Linguistic science and syntax

4. Supplementary (*mutammimāt*)

- a. The Qur’ānic sciences including the science of interpretation
- b. The sciences of prophetic traditions such as transmission of *hadīths*
- c. The science of principles of jurisprudence (*usūl al-Fiqh*)
- d. Biography of the Prophets, the Companions and illustrious men⁹

The theoretical basis of *al-Ghazālī*’s classification of Islamic sciences into praiseworthy and blameworthy sciences is the concept of well-being (*maṣlahah*) and harmfulness (*mafsadah*). There would not have arisen the necessity of such classification, since *al-Ghazālī* asserted that religious sciences are all praiseworthy, unless there are sciences which are confused with religious sciences.¹⁰ So this blending of non-Islamic sciences with the Islamic ones necessitates this classification into praiseworthy and blameworthy.¹¹ However, as far as the praiseworthy sciences, which are truly Islamic, are concerned, it seems that the category of ‘fundamentals’ is not in itself a class of Islamic science, but the fundamental source from which the Islamic sciences could be understood. More specifically, for example, the Book of Allah (the Qur’ān) itself does not represent a science of Islam, but is the main source of it. The situation is almost the same for other elements of ‘fundamentals’. For this category of science, *al-Ghazālī* does not mention its source, yet source is a must for a science to attain the status of science. However, he asserts that sources for other categories of Islamic sciences, and all of these are referred to as the ‘fundamentals’. For example, he observes that the attachment of the ‘branches’ (*furū’*) with the ‘fundamentals’ (*usūl*) is “what has been drawn from the fundamentals” in order to “promote a

⁹Al-Ghazālī, *Revitalization of the Sciences*, 16-18.

¹⁰Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā* (vol. 1), 16.

¹¹Al-Ghazālī, *Revitalization of the Sciences*, 16.

comprehensive understanding of what could bring mundane as well as other worldly well beings.”¹² Similarly, the third category of Islamic sciences is, according to him, the instruments that help understand the first category, i.e., fundamentals. He names them ‘auxiliary’ (*muqaddimāt*) which “act as the instrument for the religious (*shari’yyah*) sciences” because of their being linguistic science and syntax and are designed to be “instruments for the knowledge of the Book of God and the usage (*sunnah*) of His Prophet.”¹³ Finally, ‘supplementary’ (*mutammimāt*) as the last category of science refers to the science of the Qur’ān which is also concerned with the ‘fundamentals’ as evidently the science of the Qur’ān is solely devoted to understanding the Qur’ān. In addition, this category supplements the role of the third category of science on the ground that “language alone cannot treat exposition or its technicalities”.¹⁴ Thus, auxiliary’ science becomes necessary for the pronunciation of the Qur’ānic text such as “learning the different readings and the enunciation of the different letters, and what pertains to exposition which also rests on authoritative transmission.”¹⁵

Therefore, the above discussion reveals that the first category of science, the ‘fundamentals’ is not in fact a science. Revelation is, without any qualification, a source of knowledge about God. More specifically, it is only the primary, ultimate and authoritative source. It is the final standard by which adequacy of any other source is judged.¹⁶ It is also the source of the rest of the categories of sciences such as branches, auxiliary and supplementary. While it takes the center, the other categories revolve around it.

In regard to blameworthy category, *al-Ghazālī* mentions three reasons which make a science blameworthy. Firstly, when it leads to any harm whether it befalls its doer or somebody else; secondly, when for most of the time it is harmful; and lastly when the pursuit of

¹²Ibid., 17.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 18.

¹⁵Ibid., 18.

¹⁶Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazālī's Unique Unknowable God: A Philosophical Critical Analysis of Some of the Problems Raised by Ghazali's View of God as Utterly Unique and Unknowable* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 55.

that kind of knowledge does not give the doer a scientific advantage.¹⁷

Al-Ghazālī's classification of sciences in his other work entitled "*al-Risālah al-Lā'duniyyah*" partially differs from the classification he offers in *Ihyā*. In this treatise, the classification of sciences is as follows:

1. **Fundamentals (*usūl*)**

- a. *Ilm al-Tawhīd*
- b. *'Ilm al-Tafsīr*
- c. *'Ilm al-Akhhbār*

2. **Branches (*furū'*)**

- a. Religious rites
- b. Jurisprudence
- c. Ethics and morals¹⁸

The theoretical roots of the first category of Islamic sciences, namely 'fundamentals' in *al-Risālah*, are concerned with three basic fountainheads of the entire Islamic discourse, namely God's self and attributes, His word or revelation, and His Prophet. Under this head, *al-tawhīd*, derives its existence from God's self and attributes, the situations of the prophets, their companions, conditions of life and death, events of Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, seeing Him by means of God's signs in the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad's reports, intellectual and analogical evidences.¹⁹ Al-Ghazālī explains why the sciences of God's Unity (*'ilm al-tawhīd*) should be placed in the most exalted position in religious sciences. According to him, "the honor (or nobility) of a science depends on the honor of its subjects (*ma'lūm*); the rank of the learned on the rank of the knowledge. There can be no doubt that the most excellent, the highest, the most noble and the most exalted of things to know is God, the Creator, the Real, the One. Thus, knowledge of Him, which is the science of His Unity, *tawhīd*, will be the most excellent, the

¹⁷Al-Ghazālī, *Revitalization of the Sciences*, 38-39.

¹⁸Al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah*, 245-247.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 244.

most glorious, and the most perfect branch of knowledge.”²⁰

Al-Ghazālī considers that this science, though excellent in essence and perfect in itself, does not dispense with the other types of knowledge. Indeed, one cannot attain knowledge of this branch of science unless he gathers knowledge in some antecedents like the science of the heavenly bodies and the spheres and things that God has made.²¹ The second category, science of *tafsīr*, is considered one of the fundamentals of religious sciences as the entire concern of this science is to understand the Qur’an which is, according to al-Ghazālī, the loftiest, most eloquent and admirable subject and contains all sorts of sciences.²² *‘Ilm al-akhbār*, in al-Ghazālī’s view, is the third fundamental science as it deals with understanding the reports of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), who is the most eloquent among human beings and the master inspired by God. Moreover, he was endowed physical and metaphysical knowledge.²³

Al-Ghazālī defines branches (*furū’*) as secondary sciences. In his observation these sciences are practical and include three issues firstly, fundamental religious rites which cover cleanliness, prayer, alms giving, pilgrimage, jihad, eulogy, etc., which are the rights of Allah; secondly, jurisprudence such as transactions and contracts the subject matters of which are purchase, debit, credit, capital punishments, blood money, wedlock, divorce, emancipation of slaves, etc. and designated as the rights of people and finally, ethics and morals which are classified as the rights of the soul.²⁴

The classification of religious science in *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān* seems, with the two other works discussed later in this study, relatively comprehensive and theoretically well-grounded as the author presents the classifications in this book by outlining their theoretical implications. This proves the level of maturity of the writer in the field of Islamic knowledge. It is to be noted that al-Ghazālī’s composition of *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān* bears the glimpses of

²⁰Al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah*, 240.

²¹Al-Rabe, *Muslim*, 135.

²²Al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah*, 244.

²³Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, in *Majmuah Rasāil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, ed. Ibrahim Amin Muhammad (Cairo: al-Tawfiqa Bookshop, N. D), 245.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 246.

his superb intellectual and spiritual achievement which he occupies in the early days of his life.²⁵ Thus, as a later composition, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* bears a conclusive significance in comparison to other works. However, this treatise appears as a composite of many subjects that have been elaborated, in his *magnum opus*, *Ihyā' and 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

In *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*,²⁶ al-Ghazālī classifies the religious sciences as “essential” (*'ulūm al-lubāb*) and “peripheral” (*'ulūm al-ṣadaf*) sciences. Again ‘essential’ is categorized into higher and lower grade sciences. The higher grade of sciences [of the Qur'ān] consists of those important sciences which are the precedents and roots of the three sciences namely knowledge of God,²⁷ knowledge of the Last Day and knowledge of the straight path and of the manner of traversing it. The lower grade includes three sciences such as the knowledge of the stories [narrated] in the Qur'ān, God's argument with the infidels and His dispute with them [the science of theology (*'ilm al-kalām*)²⁸ stems from this division], and the knowledge of the

²⁵ Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Jewels of the Qur'ān: al-Ghazālī's Theory* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989)11.

²⁶In *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* there is a strong emphasis upon employing what the author considered to be the correct method of apprehending the Holy Book, i.e. upon penetrating into the depth of the inner, hidden pearls and treasures. A very clear-cut and complete, but brief theory concerning the aims (Maqāṣid) of the Qur'ān is given in this book - a theory which is recognized as important and is often quoted by al-Suyūfī (d. 911 A.H.) and other later scholars of the Qur'ān. Inseparably connected with this theory is another, in which al-Ghazālī demonstrated that all diverse branches of Islamic learning have stemmed from the Qur'ān; this is a demonstration of the view usually held by Muslims that the Holy Scripture constitutes the sole source of all forms of Islamic knowledge. (ibid)

²⁷In English, the phrase “knowledge of God” can suggest that God is “either the subject or the object of knowing”. This ambiguity of language (in addressing the matter) is less possible in Arabic, for it has particular terms for God as either the subject or object of knowing. The term “*marīfah Allah*” is employed to refer to man's knowledge of God, in the meaning of “the knowledge God bestows upon mankind of Himself or the like. Andi Nurbaethy, *Development of al-Ghazālī's Concept of the Knowledge of God in His Three Later Works: Ihya, al-Munqidh, and Ijām al-'Awamm*, MA thesis, 1998, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, p.29.

²⁸Kalām is defined by al-Ghazālī simply as the study of God, and it has four principle topics: the existence and fundamental nature of God, His attributes, His

legal bounds²⁹ (*ḥudūd*).³⁰

Knowledge of God, in al-Ghazālī's view, includes three things which are His Self, Attributes and Works. Al-Ghazālī, devotes his *al-Iqtisād fī al-'Itiqād* in explaining these aspects. The first part of this book concentrates on treating the Self or Essence of God. In illustrating this point, the author introduces ten propositions that could help to understand what the Self of God stands for. The propositions includes that God exists, He is eternal a *parte ante*, is everlasting, is not an atom, is not corporeal, is not accident, is not bounded, has no spatial locus such as a throne, is visible in the sense of being cognizable, and is One. In the second part of the book, he deals with Allah's attributes that applies (being super-added) to God's essence. He discusses the seven attributes that are typically posited of God, for example, knowledge, power, will, life, sight, hearing and speech.³¹ The acts of God, on the other hand, are either the products of God's activity, all that is and all that happens, or the

actions, and His prophets and revelation. [al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-'Itiqād*, ed. Cubukcu and H. Atay (Ankara, 1962), p. 4.] *Kalām* is most general and architectonic religious science, which determines the sphere of each of the more specialized religious sciences. [George F. Hourani, *Ghazālī on the Ethics of Action*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 93, Issue 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1976), p. 69.] al-Ghazālī considers the *Tahāfut* as a *kalām* work for it serves one of the two essential functions he assigned to this discipline. This primarily negativist function concerns the defence of the common orthodox creed, by the refutation of conflicting views. The second function he assigned to *kalām* concerns dispelling doubts that may plague the average believer's mind, by providing persuasive proofs (*dalail*) for the orthodox creed. Given these two objectives that he specified for *kalām*, al-Ghazālī held that this discipline should be reverted to only when opponents or doubts appear; otherwise, it should be avoided. Learning and practicing *kalām* becomes a collective obligation (*fard kifaya*), not an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*). [Ayman Shihadeh, *From Al-Ghazālī To Al-Razi: 6th/12th Century Developments In Muslim Philosophical Theology, Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, DOI: 10.1017/S0957423905000159 _ 2005 Cambridge University Press, (2005), vol. 15 p. 144.

²⁹This is the normative religious science that deals with the legal limits of the man's actions in this world.

³⁰Abul Quasem, *The Jewels*, 37-40.

³¹Dennis Morgan Davis Jr., "Al-Ghazālī on Divine Essence: A Translation from the *Iqtisad fī al-Itiqad* with Notes and Commentary" (PhD diss., The University of Utah, 2005) 61-62.

activity itself which brings things and events about, such as the activity of creating, giving, guiding, etc.³²

The question of how a person knows that God is such and such may be understood as a question about various ways of knowing. On the basis of a pre-analytic glance at al-Ghazālī's thought, there are four ways of knowing which are *naql* (transmission) or *taqlīd* (literally, imitation), *'aql*³³ (intellect), *dhawq* (immediate experience), or *ilhām* (inspiration), or *mukāshafah* (intuitive knowledge) and *waḥī* (Revelation).³⁴

1. Sciences of the Periphery ('*ulūm al-ṣadaf*):

- a. The Arabic linguistics stems from the Qur'ānic words.
- b. Arabic grammar derives from the Qur'ānic syntax.
- c. The science of reading originates from the various syntaxes of the Qur'ān.
- d. The science of phonetics emerges from the manner of pronouncing Qur'ānic letters.
- e. The outward exegesis of a word carries an apparent meaning.³⁵

As far as the theoretical implication of this classification is concerned, al-Ghazālī relates it to a theory he called *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* (basic objectives of the Qur'ān). He develops this theory and expounds it in his *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. In this theory, he identifies six basic objectives of the Qur'ān which are divided into two categories as "main" and "secondary". The objectives which come within the purview of the secondary one are complementary to the

³²Shehadi, *Al-Ghazālī's Unique*, 50.

³³The term '*aql*', as al-Ghazālī himself points out, is ambiguous. It refers commonly in the usage of theologians to demonstrative reason. It is the activity or faculty that proves, defends, elicits conclusions implied by premises. In more general sense, *aql* is man's basic apprehending faculty which distinguishes him from animals, and by which he has theoretical knowledge. But the term also refers to the *sūfī*, "light of inner perception" or "light of certainty (*yakin*)". Al-Ghazālī maintains that "*aql*" as man's basic reason-instinct refers to the same thing denoted by the *sūfī* terms just mentioned. [Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazālī's Unique Unknowable God* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), p. 55.]

³⁴Shehadi, *Ghazālī's Unique*, 53.

³⁵Abul Quasem, *The Jewels of the Qur'an*, 34-35.

main.

However, the main objectives of the Qur'an are:

1. The definition of God to Whom man is called.
2. The definition of the straight path perseverance which is required when advancing towards Him.
3. The definition of the condition at the time of attaining to Him.

The complementary three objectives of the Qur'an are:

1. The first division describes the conditions of those who answer to the call to God, and His delicate dealings with them, the secret and the purpose of this being to excite [in others] a desire [for the attainment of these conditions] and to encourage them [to it]. It also describes the conditions of those who shrink from answering the call and the manner of the suppression and punishment of them by God, the secret and the purpose of this being to provoke consideration and fear.
2. The second division narrates the conditions of those who deny God and reveals their disgrace and ignorance in disputing and arguing against the truth. The secret and the purpose of all this being, on the side of falsity is to make manifest and to create aversion, while on the side of truth, clear apprehension, confirmation and constraint.
3. The third division defines the stages of the path to God and the manner of taking provision and preparation for it.³⁶

These main objectives of the Qur'ān and their categorization are the foundation of al-Ghazālī's classification of religious sciences. In his understanding, both are mutually integrated. This integration promotes a theoretical relationship as the Islamic sciences are classified as per the categorization of these objectives. While the six main objectives are categorized into two, main and secondary, the Islamic sciences are coherently classified into two, core and peripheral. More precisely, the sciences of the core (*'ulūm al-Lubāb*) derive from the main objectives of the Qur'ān and the sciences of the

³⁶Ibid., 21-22.

periphery are drawn from the secondary objectives. As al-Ghazālī asserts, the secondary objectives follow, enrich and complete the main objectives while the sciences of the core are similarly complemented or followed by peripheral sciences.³⁷ However, the sciences of the core are named so because they are used as tools of understanding the main objectives of the Qur’ān. Likewise, the sciences of the periphery are called so because they are used as tools of understanding the secondary objectives.

This expresses a unique methodological approach in classifying Islamic sciences because it derives from concrete and well-established roots, the main objectives of the Qur’ān which are equivocally defined by the Qur’ān itself and of which all the Qur’ānic themes, concepts and precepts revolve around. The Qur’ān is unequivocal about this issue such as regarding *hajj* (pilgrimage) it says, “They ask you (O Muhammad s.a.w.) about the new moon. “Say: These are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind and for the pilgrimage. It is not al-Birr (piety, righteousness, etc.) that you enter the houses from the back, but al-Birr (is the quality of the one) who fears Allah. So enter houses through their proper doors, and fear Allah that you may be successful.” (Al-Qur’ān, 2:189). It reveals that being successful is one of the objectives of the rituals of pilgrims.

While the importance of the objectives is ascertained by the two main sources of knowledge in Islam, i.e., the Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.),³⁸ their role in dealing with classification of

³⁷Ibid., 21.

³⁸The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (s.a.w.), also decisively asserted the importance of the attainment of purposes that are laid behind any enjoined performance in Islam. According to him, any performance should remain void if its sole purpose is remained unattained. For example, he said as to fasting “Allah has no interest in any person’s abstention from eating and drinking, if that person does not give up lying and dishonest actions” [narrated by Abu Hurrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*]. In another tradition he asserted that “There are some people who fast, but their fasting is nothing more than abstention from food, and there are many who pray (at night), but whose praying is no more than being awake at night.” [*Musnad Aḥmad*, narrated by Abu Hurairah] Evidently, attaining purposes is the main concern of the Qur’ān. These Qur’ānic and Prophetic directions indicate that attaining the purposes of actions or activities is recommended by the Divine Wisdom. Ritual, actions are not aimed in the Quran. Rather, they are the means by which certain aims could be

Islamic sciences appear dominant and certain. Thus, making the objectives of the Qur'ān as a basis of the classification of Islamic sciences, al-Ghazālī perhaps approaches relatively a better methodological way which may not randomly be seen in the approaches of other scholars in the same subject.

However, if al-Ghazālī's argument on the role of the objectives of the Qur'ān in classifying the Islamic sciences appears logically sound and persuasive, the objectives of the Qur'ān should also be identified precisely and methodologically because they are the determinants of the Islamic sciences. Al-Ghazālī's identification of the objectives of the Qur'ān neither follows any particular methodology nor makes any reference to any of the verses that directly speak of them. The Qur'ān's own identification of some of its objectives are outlined as follows:

First, leading mankind to the right path:

{الرَّ كِتَابَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ {إبراهيم}

Alif. Lam. Ra. (This is) a Scripture which We have revealed unto thee (Muhammad) that thereby thou mayst bring forth mankind from darkness unto light, by the permission of their Lord, unto the path of the Mighty, the Owner of Praise (Al-Qur'ān, 14:1).

{ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ {البقرة} ٢

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah (Al-Qur'ān, 2:02).³⁹

The key word in this statement is 'guidance'. It expresses the essence and nature of the Qur'ān.⁴⁰ The word *Hudā* here is grammatically used as an object of a skipped subject "It", pronoun of *al-Kitāb*

achieved. The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) make it crystal clear that if the purpose of any function or ritual work in Islam is not achieved, the very function will remain a nominal performance devoid of substance.

³⁹Al-Qur'ān, 3: 138; 4: 174; 10: 57; 27: 2; 40: 54.

⁴⁰Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān* (al-Qāhīrah: Dār al-Shurūq, n.d. [vol. 4]). See verse, 2: 2.

mentioned in the previous verse. It therefore seeks to inform the position of the *kitāb* as a guidance. Information given by using verbal noun or by the infinitive refers to the affirmation of the purposefulness in meaning. Evidently, the use of *hudā* (guidance) here refers to purposefulness.⁴¹ Al-Rāzī agrees that *hudā* refers to a conductive indication to the purpose.⁴² The following verses also present some additional evidence to the fact that providing guidance to the right path is a basic objective of the Qur’ān.

Second, certification of the prophethood:

﴿نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ
﴿آل عمران ٣﴾

It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong) (Al-Qur’ān, 3: 03).

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْكِتَابَ آمَنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهَا أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّا أَصْحَابَ السَّبْتِ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا﴾ النساء ٤٧

O ye People of the Book! believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you, before We change the face and fame of some (of you) beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers, for the decision of Allah Must be carried out (Al-Qur’ān, 4: 47).⁴³

Most of the commentators agree that *ma bayna yadayhi* denotes “the revelations which came before it”, i.e., before the

⁴¹Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir bin Muḥammad Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (Tunis: Dār Sahnūn, 1997, vol.1), 69.

⁴²Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Maftīḥ al-Ghaib* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Kutub ‘Ilmiyyah, 2000, vol.1) 285.

⁴³Al-Qur’ān, 4: 47; 6: 92; 35: 31; 46: 12.

Qur'ān. The pronominal *ma* refers to earlier revelations. It refers to an objective reality with which the Qur'ān is "confronted", that is, something that was *coexistent in time* with the revelation of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is a confirmation of *whatever was extant* of its basic teachings at the time of its revelation of and it is this that the phrase *ma bayna yadayhi* expresses in this context as well as in verses 5:46 and 48 or in 61:6 (where it refers to *Jesus'* confirming the truth of "whatever there still remained [i.e., in his lifetime] of the Torah".⁴⁴ However, the Qur'ān's certification of the previous revealed truths adversely certifies its own truthfulness.⁴⁵ This interchangeable certification proves that the Qur'ān aims to attest the originality, succession, identicalness and unity of Messengership.

Third, making mankind aware of the consequences of their deeds:

﴿قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً قُلِ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَنتُمْ لَتَسْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً أُخْرَى قُلْ لَأَشْهَدُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ { الأَنْعَامُ ١٩

(Muhammad), ask them, "What is the greatest testimony? God testifies of my truthfulness to you. He has revealed this Quran to me to warn you and the coming generations (against disobeying God). Do you believe that other gods exist besides God? I solemnly declare that He is the only Lord and that I am not guilty of believing in what the pagans believe (Al-Qur'ān, 6: 19).

﴿أَوْعَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ { الأعراف ٦٣

Do you wonder that a reminder has come to you from your Lord through a man from among you, that he may warn you and that you may guard against evil, and that

⁴⁴Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus,1980), see verse 3: 3.

⁴⁵Muhammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (n.p: Mua'ssarah al-Risālah, 2000, vol. 21) 292.

mercy may be shown to you (Al-Qur'ān, 7: 63).⁴⁶

All the above mentioned verses present “warning or making aware of the consequences of human deeds” as a *ta'wil* (raison d'être) for the Qur'ānic revelation. This repeated occurrence of *ta'wil* for the Qur'ānic revelation affirms that warning mankind or making them aware of the consequence of their deeds is one of the basic objectives of the Qur'ān.

Fourth, establishing ruling based on justice:

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
البقرة: ٢١٣﴾

At one time all people were only one nation. God sent Prophets with glad news and warnings. He sent the Book with them for a genuine purpose to provide the people with the ruling about disputed matters among them. No one disputed this matter except those who had already received evidence before. Their dispute was only because of their own hostility. To deal with this dispute, God, through His will, sent guidance to the believers. God guides to the right path whomever He wants (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 213).

﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا﴾ النساء: ١٠٥

We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between men, as guided by Allah: so be not (used) as an advocate by those who betray their trust (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 105).

The word ‘balance’ in *Qur'an* 57:25 signifies the commands and directives enjoining justice and equality. The objective of that verse is to indicate that God has revealed the edicts and injunctions of

⁴⁶Al-Qur'ān, 46: 12; 7: 63; 14: 52.

justice through His Apostles in the same way as He had sent down the Scriptures so that His bondmen may pursue the path of devotion and fidelity and observe fairness and justice in their dealings with each other, individually as well as collectively.⁴⁷

In the terms “*li taḥkuma*” and “*li yahkuma*”, “*lam*” is used as a reason descriptive particle⁴⁸ which refers to the cause of revealing the Qur’ān⁴⁹ as a guiding tool for judgment or a constitution for regulating human affairs. The basis of this ruling or judgment is justice on which rests the balance in life and scheme of the universe.⁵⁰ Justice forms an essential part of Islamic ethics. The entire fabric of human society is held together by the attribute of justice.

Fifth, establishing methodology of thinking:

To develop a standard thinking faculty, the Qur’ān outlines some methodologies such as *tadabbur* (pondering), *tafakkur* (reflecting), *ta’āqqul* (understanding), *tadhakkur* (remembering), etc. All these are introduced as its basic objectives. The verses are presented hereinafter:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (ص ٢٩)

(This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder its revelations, and that men of understanding may reflect (Al-Qur’ān, 38:29).

Al-Shāṭibī asserts that the term *tadabbur* in this verse stands for reckoning on *maqāṣid* of the Qur’ān because it addresses those who overlooked them.⁵¹

⁴⁷Mohammad Monzoor Nomani, *The Qur’ān and You*, trans., by Mohammad Asif Kidwai (Lucknow: India Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1978), 174.

⁴⁸Ibn ‘Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr*, (vol. 4) 213.

⁴⁹Maḥmūd al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-M’ānī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, n,d, vol. 2) 190.

⁵⁰Abul Kalam Azad, *Basic Concepts of the Qur’ān*, ed. Syed Abdul Latif (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2003), 79.

⁵¹Al-Shāṭibī, Ibrāhīm bin Mūsā, *Al-Muwāfaqāt* (N,p: Dār ibn ‘Affān,1997 vol.4) 209.

{بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ { النحل: ٤٤

(We sent them) with Clear Signs and Books of dark prophecies; and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought (Al-Qur'ān, 16: 44).

{كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ { البقرة ٢٤٢

Thus Allah expoundeth unto you His revelations so that ye may understand (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 242).

{اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ
{ الأعراف: ٣

(Saying): Follow that which is sent down unto you from your Lord (the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah), and follow no protecting friends beside Him. Little do ye recollect (Al-Qur'ān, 7: 3).

In the above mentioned verses, all the methodologies of thinking, i.e., *tadabbur* (pondering), *tafakkur* (reflecting), *ta'āqqul* (understanding) and *tadhakkur* (remembering) are mentioned with either *ta'līl* or *tarajjī* for the Qur'ānic revelation. This evidently proves that one of the basic objectives of the Qur'ān is establishing the methodology of thinking.

Sixth, gaining God-consciousness:

Taqwa is a widely discussed subject in the Qur'ān which is introduced as both universal and secondary *maqṣad* of the Qur'ān. The evidence of being a universal *maqṣad* could be found in the following verse:

{وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحَدِّثُ
لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا { طه ١١٣

And thus have We bestowed from on high this [divine writ] as a discourse in the Arabic tongue, and have given therein many facets to all manner of warnings, so that

men might remain conscious of Us, or that it give rise to a new awareness in them (Al-Qur'ān, 20: 113).

This verse establishes a connection between *taqwa* and Qur'ānic revelation. Many exegetes of the Qur'ān such as al-Rāzī, al-Alūsī, al-Khāzin, Al-Shawkānī, Al-Biqā'ī, Al-Qurṭūbī, Ibn 'Āshūr and others agree on the fact that this verse describes that the Qur'ān has been revealed for the reason that people could be God-conscious.⁵² In this respect, they mostly consider “the Qur'ānic revelation” (*anzalnahu Qur'āna*) as a causative for gaining *taqwa*. Al-Alūsī, while interpreting this verse, says, “the Qur'ān was revealed for the objective of achieving *taqwa*. If in case it is not achieved, it could at least develop the sense of remembrance.”⁵³ Likewise, Al-Khāzin says, “the Qur'ān was revealed for the reason that people could be God-fearing and restrain from what they should not do.”⁵⁴ Ibn 'Āshūr attempts to prove the same idea from the philological angle. He asserts that '*la'alla*' mentioned in this verse is a particle signifying “expectation” with a meaning that the concern of the Qur'ān is to encourage people toward *taqwa* and remembrance.⁵⁵

Seventh, being a source of welfare and divine grace:

﴿وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾ {الأنعام ١٥٥}

And this is a blessed Book (the Qur'an) which We have sent down, so follow it and fear Allah (i.e. do not disobey His Orders), that you may receive mercy (i.e. saved from the torment of Hell) (Al-Qur'ān, 6: 155).

﴿وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُبَارَكٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ﴾ {الأنبياء ٥٠}

And this is a blessed Reminder (the Qur'an) which We have sent down, will you then (dare to) deny it? (Al-Qur'ān, 21: 50).

⁵² Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, see verse, 20: 113. God-conscious means being cautious of not doing something that one should not do.

⁵³ Al-Alūsī, *Rūh al-M'ānī*, (vol. 20) 113.

⁵⁴ Al-Khāzin, 'Alā al-Dīn bin Muḥammad, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, (Beyrūt: Dar al-Fikr, 1979, vol. 20), 113.

⁵⁵ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, (vol. 16), 315.

The goal to be achieved through the realization of the values that govern Islamic society has been enshrined by the Holy Quran in the concept of *falah*, i.e., welfare, which is related explicitly and directly both to society and the individual. Then, the concept of collective welfare has been presented in all dimensions: spiritual, moral, physical, economic, political, etc, in contrast with the emphasis on economic welfare alone.⁵⁶

Eighth, wise sermon:

Wise sermon (*al-maw'izah*) is introduced as a basic purpose of the Qur'ān. The following verses can attest the reality:

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ { البقرة: ٢٣١ }

Do not treat Allah's Signs as a jest, but solemnly rehearse Allah's favours on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well acquainted with all things (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 231).

{ هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ { آل عمران ١٣٨ }

Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah (Al-Qur'ān, 3:138).

The above verses exert a clear distinction between choice of terms and themes of objectives expressed in the Qur'ān and those of al-Ghazālī'. Obviously the Qur'an's choice is more comprehensive and diversified than those of al-Ghazālī. It should also be argued that the Qur'ān's own identification of its objectives is the most precise and apt. Hence, any inconsistency with its identification, no matter in terminology or theme, should be considered less accurate and less expressive of the Divine wisdom. However, the total appearance of this theory is highly influenced by al-Ghazālī's intellectual makeup. This could be seen when he gives the first and foremost place for *tawhīd* among the objectives of the Qur'ān. This single issue occupies perhaps the biggest portion of his entire intellectual

⁵⁶Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Anasari, *The Quranic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, vol.1, 2001), 92.

production. The second and last element of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān* is ethics which is overwhelmingly discussed in his writings. Being limited to these particular objectives might be caused by the narrowness of the extent of the *Lubāb al-Qur'ān*. This very term, for the first time, comes to view when Ibn Mas'ūd (32AH/652CE), a companion of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), narrated the following *ḥadīth* that “everything has a hump, and the hump of the Qur'ān is *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, the second chapter of the Qur'ān. And likewise, everything has an essence (*Lubāb*), so the essence of the Qur'ān (*Lubāb al-Qur'ān*) is *al-Mufaṣṣal*”⁵⁷ and *al-Mufaṣṣal* refers to a group of chapters of the Qur'ān which begins with *Sūrah Qāf* or *al-Huzurāt* and ends with *Sūrah al-Nās*.⁵⁸ In another narration from Ibn Abbās, *Lubāb al-Qur'ān* is *ḥawāmīm* which refers to the seven chapters of the Qur'ān from *Sūrah* 40 to 46, of which each begins with an introductory alphabet *ḥawāmīm*.⁵⁹ It is notable that both of the above mentioned narrations explicitly indicate to the extent of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān* which represents a rather small portion of the whole Qur'ān. It is reasonable to assume that the narrowness of al-Ghazālī's view with regard to the objectives of the Qur'ān may be resultant from the narrow scope of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān*. The acceptable identification of the objectives of the Qur'ān must be based on the whole Qur'ān rather than being limited to any particular portion.

However, a precise identification of the main objectives of the Qur'ān could be a well-grounded tool for classification of religious sciences because they are the means by which Qur'ānic objectives could be actualized. This would provide the sciences a sublime value as “a science derives its value from its relation to the goal.”⁶⁰ Hence, religious sciences could be devised and classified according to Qur'ānic objectives.

⁵⁷Abdallah Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Dārimī, *Sunan al-Dārimī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1986, Vol. 2), 539.

⁵⁸Muhammad Naṣīr al-Dīn Albānī, *al-Silsilah al-Ṣāḥīḥah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Maarif, vol. 2), 82.

⁵⁹Al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 39.

⁶⁰Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*, (vol. 1), 26.

Contemporary Development of the Theory of *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān*

So the concept of *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* needs to be defined before one proceeds to understand the contemporary development of it. Though hardly any attempt has been made by traditional Muslim scholars in this field, several definitions could be traced in contemporary Quranic scholarship. Muhammad Khalil defines *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* “the intents of Allah (s.w.t.) which are aimed from the Qur’ānic texts due to the fact that those texts consist of sentences and phrases which have connotations of meanings and substances which revolve around an objective or some objectives that form that objective or those objectives”.⁶¹ Abd al-Karim Hamidi points out that “*Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* is the intents for which the Qur’an has been revealed, so that the interests of people are actualized.”⁶² He then furthers an explanation of the term “intents” used in the definition. According to him, it refers to “intended meanings and wisdoms behind revelation of the Qur’an which are distributed over general, specific and partial categories.”⁶³ He adds that the general intents could be noticed in the whole Qur’an or at least in most parts of it; the specific intents could be seen in a specific case of Qur’ānic legislation; the partial intents could be observed in a single case of Qur’ānic laws.”⁶⁴ However, scholars’ views and portrayals of *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān*, in general, provide some considerable salient features of the subject that could be facilitating elements for constructing a definition for it. Al-Ghazālī, for instance, presents *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* as a science (‘ilm) and the loftiest core of the Qur’ān⁶⁵; Rashīd Riḍā considers it as a kind of *fiqh*⁶⁶; Izzat Darwazah finds it as a unity between *maqāsid* and *wasāil* (means) representing the whole Qur’ān⁶⁷ and

⁶¹ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Al-Maqāsid al-Qur’āniyyah ‘Inda al-Ustāz al-Nūrsī wa Maqṣad al-Risālah Namūzajan*, in *Fiqh al-Maqāsid wa al-Ḥikam fī Badī’uzzamān al-Nūrsī* (Istanbul: Yenibosna-Bahcelievler, 2009), 153.

⁶² Abd al-Karim Hamidi, *Al-Madkhal Ila Maqasid al-Qur’an* (Beirut: Maktabah al-Rashad, 2007), 33.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid, *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Dār ‘Iḥya al-‘Ulūm, 1985), 23.

⁶⁶ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*....vol. 5, p. 329.

⁶⁷ Izzat Darwaza, *al-Tafsīr al-Ḥadīth*vol. 1: 157.

Ibn 'Āshūr introduces it as a method of understanding the intents of Allah (s.w.t.) and a criteria and principle of Qur'ānic exegesis.⁶⁸ In light of these aforementioned findings, *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* could be defined as “a science of understanding the Qur'ānic discourse in light of its purposes (*Maqāsid*) which represents the core of the Qur'ān and corroborated by their means (*wasā'il*) and distributed upon the understandable (*muḥkam*) verses of the Qur'ān.”⁶⁹

Prominent Muslim scholars, both early and modern, consider *maqāsid al-Qur'ān* as a type of Islamic science, a lofty axis of the Qur'an and a particular approach to the Qur'an. To them it promotes an exclusive *maqāsidic* (purposive) understanding of the Qur'ānic discourse. Their efforts in outlining this discourse have left a brilliant conceptual development. The genesis of this development formally comes to light when, perhaps for the first time, this precise term *maqāsid al-Qur'ān* apparently gets used in al-Ghazālī's treatise, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. Since then, it has kept abreast with every fresh development in Qur'ānic studies. At some point in time, it finally reaches the stage where some prominent Qur'ānic exegetes (e.g., Ibn Ashur and Darwazah) include it as the prerequisite principles of Qur'ānic Exegesis (*adab al-tafsīr*).⁷⁰

In order to understand these conceptual developments, it is necessary to explore how the scholars of the subject approach it. Thus, some of the early and contemporary scholars' views are as follows:

Al-Baghawbi (d.510 A.H./1116 C.E.) is one of the well-known exegetes of the Qur'an and al-Ghazālī's contemporary. He says that *maqāsid* of the Qur'ān are the commands, warnings, good tidings and advice contained in the Quran and aimed by remembrance (*tadhakkur*); stories of past nations aimed at teaching a lesson (*'itibār*); examples aimed at pondering (*tadabbur*); and indications to the Unity of Allah (swt) aimed at thinking (*tafakkur*). According to

⁶⁸Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa Al-Tanwīr*vol.1: 36.

⁶⁹Tazul Islam, *Maqasid al-Quran: A Search for a Scholarly Definition*, in Al-Bayan: Journal al-Quran and Hadith, University of Malaya, May, 2011, vol. 9, p. 203.

⁷⁰Tazul Islam, *The Genesis and Development of the Maqasid al-Quran*, in American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, USA, Herndon: AMSS & IIIT, Vol. 30: 3, Summer 2013, p. 40.

him, these *maqāsid* could not be known without sound knowledge of Qur'ānic exegesis, context of its revelation, comprehension of its abrogation, and an understanding of its generality and particularity.⁷¹ This methodological approach in identifying the objectives of the Qur'an ensures a unique position to *al-Baghawī* which is different from al-Ghazali and later scholars like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.606A.H/1209C.E.).

Al-Rāzī, while interpreting *Surah al-Fatiha*, points out that this *surah* is named as the mother of the Qur'an since it comprises the whole Qur'ānic theme and its *maqasid*. In his observation, *maqasid* are four in number such as the theology (*al-ilāhiyyāt*), Last Day (*al-mī'ād*), prophesy (*al-nabawāt*) and divine determinism (*al-qaḍā wa al-qadr*). According to him, "All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds, The Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace" refers to 'theology'; "Lord of the Day of Judgment!" which refers to the 'Last Day'; "Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid" and "Guide us the straight way" and "The way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings" indicate 'divine determinism'.⁷²

Two centuries later, Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī (d.885A.H) comes up with translating the maqasidic theory into practical work of exegesis of the Qur'an. One could find this tendency in his two works namely *Maṣā' d al-Nazar li al-Ishrāf 'Ala Maqāṣid al-Suwar* and his tafsīr *Naẓm al-Durar* which comprehensively focuses on *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*. The first book overwhelmingly outlines the specific *maqṣad* of every *surah* of the Qur'ān. He points out that every *surah* has a particular objective and all the verses in it are instances of that objective.⁷³ Moreover, he places *maqāṣid* in an attributive position while pointing to the reasons which makes the Qur'ān glorious. He then includes "the highness and abundance of objectives (*maqāṣid*)" in some other reasons such as the Qur'ān's miraculous reach to the unity of meanings, sublimity of synthesis,

⁷¹Abū Muḥammad al-Husain al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, ed. by Abd al-Razzaq al-Mahdī (Beirut: dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 1420 A.H., vol.1), 45.

⁷²Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, vol.1: 144.

⁷³Al-Biqā'ī, Burhān al-Dīn Abu al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm, *Maṣā' d al-Nazr li al-Ishrāf 'Ala Maqāṣid al-Suwar* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif, 1987), vol. 1: 182.

grandness of vocabularies, harmony in alphabets, loftiness of coherence and artistic beauty of minute exposition which attribute the Qur'ān to be exalted.⁷⁴ However, al-Biqā'ī's views of the higher objectives of the Qur'ān seem inconsistent on the ground that he, to the same tune of al-Rāzī, mentions that the Qur'ān's higher objectives are recognition of four fundamentals namely divinities, prophecies, hereafter, and determinism.⁷⁵ With apparent variation from the first, he further mentions similarly as al-Ghazālī that the higher objective of the Qur'ān is to enlighten human beings with knowledge.⁷⁶ He, however, asserts that *maqāṣid* are centralised within the illustration of belief system, stories and laws mentioned in the Qur'ān.⁷⁷

Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān grabs a significant attention from contemporary Muslim scholarship. The most pioneering works on this subject are produced by prolific scholars of the time such as Muḥammad 'Abduh (d.1905), Rashīd Riḍā (d.1935), Badī'uzzamān Sa'īd Nūrsī (d.1960), Ibn 'Āshūr (d.1973), Ḥasan al-Bannā (d.1949), Muḥammad Iqbāl (d.1938), Sayyed Quṭb (d.1966), Abul 'Ala Mawdūdī (d.1989), Izzat Darwazah (d.1987), Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996), Yusūf al-Qaradāwī (b.1926) and others.

Contemporary literature witnesses the paramount conceptual and numerical extension over the identification of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* in the pre-modern era. The numerical variation ranges from one to ten, and the conceptual diversity exceeds the theological boundary and covers, ethics, education (*tarbiyah*), socio-political reforms, Qur'ān's inimitability, civil rights, establishment of Qur'ānic laws and others. A brief detail of these variations is presented in the following paragraphs.

Muḥammad Iqbāl (d.1938) detects only one main purpose of the Qur'ān which is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe.⁷⁸ Muḥammad Husaīn

⁷⁴Al-Biqā'ī, *Maṣā' d al-Naẓr li al-Ishrāf 'Ala Maqāṣid al-Suwar*, vol. 3: 14-15.

⁷⁵Ibid., vol. 4: 282.

⁷⁶Ibid., vol. 2: 191.

⁷⁷Ibid., vol. 8: 593.

⁷⁸Muḥammad Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1996), 7.

Al-Dhahabī (d.1977) identifies two universal purposes of the Qur'ān, firstly, to be the miracle (*M'ujiza*) for the Prophet (s.a.w.) and giving testimony to the authenticity of *D'awah* and his messengership; secondly, to be a constitution for the Islamic *Ummah* where *hidayah*, righteousness, dignity in this world and happiness in the hereafter are ensured.⁷⁹

Abul 'Ala Mawdūdī (d.1989) is the proponent of three fundamental purposes of the Qur'ān. He refers to establishing God's law on His earth, make mankind true vicegerents according to His guidance on earth and make Qur'ānic observers superior to this world.⁸⁰ Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d.1963) also finds three purposes. To him, first comes the belief system which purifies the mind from the seeds of polytheism and paganism, encompasses it with the policy of pure spirituality and comprises it with what is obligatory to believe in Allāh and His attributes, Revelation, angels, divine Books, prophets, resurrection and requital; second comes Ethics which disciplines minds, upraises honor of persons and society, strengthens brotherhood and cooperation among mankind, includes truthfulness, patience, fulfillment of covenant, tolerance, etc. and finally *Aḥkām* which refers to the rulings of Allāh (swt) mentioned in the Qur'ān, including sets of worships, social norms, judicial laws, financial interactions, military rules, etc.⁸¹ Sa'īd Nūrsī (d.1960) sees the universal purposes of the Qur'ān as *tawḥīd*, Prophethood, Resurrection and Justice.⁸²

Hasan al-Banna' (d.1949) is also a proponent of four purposes. To sum up, they, in the first place refer to the exposition of Islamic rulings comprehensively and practically in conjunction with contemporary style; in the second place they refer to the introduction of Islam as a complete social code, not merely a theoretical dogmatic religion; in the third place they uphold the preservation of true belief in Allah (s.w.t.) in times of atheism; and finally they imply helping

⁷⁹Al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad Husaīn, *Al-Wahy wa Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktab Wahbah, 1986), 39.

⁸⁰Abul 'Ala Mawdūdī, *Fundamentals of Islam* (Pakistan: Lahore, Islamic Publication, 1982).

⁸¹Maḥmūd Shaltūt, *'Ila Al Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq), 5-6.

⁸²Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness*, p. 19.

the human mind in the period of transgression of materialism.⁸³

Muḥammad 'Abduh (d.1905) points out that the main purpose is divine unity, the promise of a generous reward for embracing the Qur'ān, admonition of those who do not embrace it and threaten them with punishment, worship to revive the heart with the affirmation of Divine unity and establish it firmly in the soul, explanation of how that path should be followed which is the way of happiness and lead to the bounties of the hereafter, and know the stories of those who obeyed the path of Allah and those who did not.⁸⁴

Ibn 'Āshūr (d.1973) finds eight purposes. They are identified as the amendment of beliefs and education of the intellect in line with the straight path; the purification of morals; legislation, consisting of general and particular rulings; welfare of the *Ummah*, and observing its order so that a sound unity is shaped; stories and information about past nations for the purpose of encouragement to emulate good and warning against evils; educating its addressees suitably to the conditions of the ages in which they live in; advising, warning, restraining, and encouraging; and the Qur'ān's inimitability as a sign of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) veracity.⁸⁵

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b.1926) also identifies the following eight purposes which are the correction of beliefs, and of the conceptions of the Deity, prophethood, and requital; the acknowledgement of man's position on the earth and rights, particularly of those of the weak; inspiring humanity to worship God and fear Him; inviting men to purify their souls; the establishment of a sound family structure, and the preservation of women's rights; the building of a model *Ummah*; and summons to mutual assistance in the world of humanity.⁸⁶

Rashīd Rīḍā (d.1935) mentions ten purposes as exposition of the basic pillars of the religion; Prophethood and Divine

⁸³Hasan Al-Bannā', *Ḥadīth Al-Thulāthā*', compiled by Aḥmad 'Īsa 'Āshūr (Cairo: Maktabah Al-Qur'ān).

⁸⁴Muḥammad 'Abduh, "Fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān" in *Al-A'mal al-Kāmilah li al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh*, ed. by Muḥammad 'Imārah (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūk, 1993), vol. 4: 23.

⁸⁵Ibn 'Ashūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr*, vol.1, p. 36.

⁸⁶Al-Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf, *Kayfa Nat'āmal Ma'a Al-Qur'ān Al-Aẓīm* (Qatar: Markaz Al-Buhūth Al-Sunnah wa Al-Sīrah, University of Qatar, 1997), 63.

messaging, and those as assignments of the prophets; perfection of man's mind; the humanistic, socio-political and national reforms; exposition of responsibility in Islam and the general advantages of its prohibitions; explanation of the manners, foundations and general principles of universal Islamic political ruling; guidance to financial reform; reforming of war policy and philosophy and eliminating its evils and predicaments; giving all humans, religious and civil rights; and guidance of Islam to rid of slaves.⁸⁷

In short, the concept of *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* in the aforesaid works receives a significant treatment from some prominent Muslim scholars. Their contributions are reflected in both theory and application of the subject concerned. These works provide some important basic theoretical understandings and precise use of the term *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān*; its classification into main and secondary; its identification and illustrations, though mostly they are not corroborated by sufficient evidence from the Qur'ān or sound persuasive logical arguments. These scholarly contributions also manifest the function and relation of *Maqāsid al-Qur'ān* with the exegesis of the Qur'ān, irrespective of the fact the concept mainly remains as indication to the rank of *maqāsidic* exegesis without referring to any methodological formula.

CONCLUSION

The classification of religious sciences in three selected books is commonly referred to as a structural identity of religious sciences. This structure consists of two levels of religious sciences, fundamental and secondary. According to al-Ghazālī's views in *Jawāhir* and *Iḥyā*, while the fundamentals represent the core of religious sciences, the secondary complements the fundamentals. However, with an exception, the secondary level of religious sciences in *al-Risālah* are not seen by the author as a complementary agent. The terms and concepts in both fundamentals and secondary classes, in these three books, are also enormously inconsistent. For fundamental religious sciences, which he termed, in *Jawāhir*,

⁸⁷Muhammad Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Waḥy Al-Muḥammadī* (Beirut: Foundation of 'Izz Al-Dīn, 1306 H), 191.

knowledge of God, knowledge of the Last Day and knowledge of the straight path, in *Iḥyā*, they are termed as the *Qur'ān*, *Sunnah*, *Ijmā'* and traditions of Prophet Muhammad's companions. The terms in the former are similar to the major themes of the *Qur'ān* rather than being an organized body of knowledge or science. Moreover, as to the latter, they are also not sciences, rather the major sources for them. However, the author's choice of the terms in *al-Risālah*, i.e., science of *tawḥīd*, science of *tafsīr* and science of *akḥbār* seems apt on the ground that these are the organic bodies by means of which Islamic knowledge is understood. In spite of this problematic situation in classifying the fundamental sciences, there is no ambiguity in the secondary class of religious sciences as al-Ghazālī names them in a clear manner which include Arabic linguistics derived from the *Qur'ān*, science of readings of the *Qur'ān*, science of phonetics, science of *Qur'ānic* exegesis, science of *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence and its fundamentals, *sīrah* (biography) of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and ethics. Yet, there is an interchangeable use of religious sciences in his views, such as while the science of exegesis is listed in fundamental sciences in *al-Risālah*, it is listed in secondary class in both *Jawāhir* and *Iḥyā*. The general theoretical basis of the classification of religious sciences remains thematic. In other words, the most exalted sciences are derived from the most exalted themes in Islam and even if several exalted sciences are traced, they are organized according to the level of their exaltedness. The most important comes first, and then comes the lesser one followed by the least. This could clearly be seen in *al-Risālah* where he prioritizes the science of *tawḥīd* over the sciences of *tafsīr* and *akḥbār* because, according to al-Ghazālī, it deals with the most exalted subjects namely God's Self, Attributes and Works. The subsequent priority is given to sciences of *tafsīr* since it deals with His words and then *akḥbār* which is concerned with Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).