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The Foundations of Islamic Civilization Between the Quranic Text and the Interpretations of Thinker Malek Bennabi

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Abstract

This scientific paper examines the components of Islamic civilization through the lens of the Quranic text and the intellectual contributions of Malek Bennabi. Bennabi argues that religion constitutes the driving force behind the rise of nations, a view that converges with Quranic principles which place faith and righteous action at the heart of progress; for him, the Qur'an is not merely a legislative text but an intellectual energy that reshapes the human being into an active agent of civilizational construction. Building on this premise, the paper contends that restoring the civilizational role of the Islamic nation requires a conscious return to Quranic teachings, which orient human beings toward creativity and productive contribution, within an integrated vision linking thought and action in the advancement of societies.

Keywords: *Foundations; Islamic Civilization; Civilizational Project; Universal Laws (Sunan); Quranic Text; Islamic Thought; Malek Bennabi; Conditions for Renaissance; Civilizational Renewal.*

Introduction

The question of how civilizations arise and endure has long preoccupied human thinkers. Philosophers and sociologists alike have sought to formulate theories that account for the dynamics of civilizational construction, and their views have accordingly multiplied: some attribute this dynamic primarily to economic factors, others emphasize the cultural or political dimension, while still others regard religion as the decisive element in shaping civilizations. Within this context, Islamic civilization stands out as an integrated civilizational model that has left a profound imprint on the course of human history and influenced a wide range of fields. This raises the question that this paper sets out to address: what foundations underlie Islamic civilization, and to what extent does it reflect an interaction between the Quranic vision and modern intellectual endeavor?

This problem gives rise to two central questions:

1. What foundations did the Quranic text establish for the construction of Islamic civilization, and how have they manifested in its doctrinal, political, economic, and social dimensions?
2. To what extent do Malek Bennabi's interpretations of the conditions for civilizational construction align with Quranic principles, and what did he contribute to the understanding of religion's role in the rise of civilizations?

To address this problem, the study draws on the analytical method to examine the Quranic texts pertaining to civilizational construction, the comparative method to trace points of convergence and divergence between the Quranic vision and Malek Bennabi's thought, and the historical method to survey how these foundations have manifested themselves in the Islamic civilizational experience.

The study is organized into an introduction and four main sections. The introduction addresses the significance of the topic, the research problem, the methodology adopted, and the detailed plan of the study. The first section examines the foundations of Islamic civilization in light of the Quranic text, focusing on its doctrinal, political, economic, and

social dimensions. The second section explores the foundations of civilization as conceived by Malek Bennabi, through his analysis of three constitutive elements: man, soil, and time.

The third section sheds light on the role of religion in the construction of civilizations, both within the Islamic experience and in other civilizational models. Finally, the fourth section discusses the extent to which Bennabi's vision harmonizes with Quranic principles regarding civilizational construction, before the study closes with a set of findings and recommendations intended to deepen understanding of the civilizational foundations of Islamic thought and their potential relevance to the contemporary context.

I. The Foundations of Civilization in Light of the Quranic Text

Through its legislative and historical methodology, the Noble Qur'an presents an integrated vision of the rise of civilizations, classifying the factors that shape their emergence and endurance into four fundamental components that interact with one another within the framework of fixed social laws (*sunan*). The doctrinal component constitutes the referential foundation that determines a nation's identity and orientation, while the political component reflects the extent of its institutional maturity and its capacity to achieve justice and stability. The economic component, for its part, indicates the efficiency of resource management and wealth distribution, whereas the social component reflects the nature of relationships within society and the degree of cohesion among its members within a unified system of values. Through this integration, the Qur'an sets out a comprehensive conception of the trajectory of civilizations, in which deficiency in any one of these components leads to weakness and collapse, in accordance with a divine law governing the movement of history. Each of these components is examined in detail below.

The Doctrinal Component

Doctrine (*al-'aqidah*) represents one of the fundamental components underlying the rise of human civilizations. It is not merely a system of belief pertaining to the individual alone, but rather a foundation for shaping collective consciousness and orienting societies toward construction and stability. Every civilization that has left its mark on history has done so on

the basis of a clear doctrinal vision—whether religious or philosophical. When doctrine is sound, it yields a moral and value-based system that drives individuals toward work, justice, and progress, thereby contributing to the construction of a strong and sustainable civilization.

In this respect, Islam stands as a prominent example of a civilization founded upon a solid doctrinal basis: it was never merely a religion of ritual worship, but a comprehensive way of life that regulated the affairs of individuals and societies, linked doctrine to conduct, and established an integrated social, political, and economic order. God promised those who fulfil the conditions of faith and righteous conduct that He would grant them dominion (tamkin) on earth,¹ as He, the Exalted, says:

(وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يُعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ)²

"God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors upon the earth, just as He made those before them successors, and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely replace their fear with security, provided that they worship Me alone and associate nothing with Me. Whoever disbelieves thereafter — those are the truly defiant."

God, the Exalted, likewise states the law by which He raises up or destroys nations according to their adherence to truth:

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا يَقُومُ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ)³

"Indeed, God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves. And when God intends ill for a people, there is no repelling it, nor do they have any protector besides Him."

This promise was fulfilled throughout Islamic history, beginning with the era of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, when he and his Companions were driven out of Mecca as a persecuted

¹Abdul Rahman ibn Nasir Al-Sa'di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, ed. Muhammad Zuhri al-Najjar (Riyadh: General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta, 1404 AH/1984 CE), 573.

²Sūrat al-Nūr 24:55.

³Sūrat al-Ra'd 13:11.

minority, only to return as conquerors once faith had taken root in their hearts and been translated into practice.

This dominion continued under the rightly-guided caliphs, who spread Islam eastward and westward, until the Islamic nation became a distinguished civilizational, military, and political power, securing safety and stability throughout its territories.

Yet such dominion is not an unconditional promise granted to any nation merely by virtue of bearing the name of Islam; rather, it is contingent upon clear conditions specified by God, foremost among them adherence to sound doctrine, righteous conduct, sincere devotion to God alone without associating partners with Him, and steadfastness upon the path of truth. When Muslims failed to meet these conditions, they forfeited the means of dominion and fell into periods of weakness and fragmentation, exactly as had happened to earlier nations that turned away from God's command, as He, the Exalted, says:

(وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ)⁴

"And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people; then they will not be like you."

The Political Component

God, the Exalted, says:

(إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ)⁵

"Judgment (sovereignty) belongs to none but God."

This noble verse establishes clearly that ultimate authority belongs to God alone, and that the legislation He ordains is the sole source of justice and truth in every sphere of life. Islam encompasses every aspect of human existence and holds that sovereignty belongs to God in all matters of this world and the next, including the determination of political, social, and economic systems. In this light, politics in Islam is not separate from religion; rather, it forms an integral part of the Islamic message, which seeks to establish justice and tranquility within society.

⁴Sūrat Muhammad 47:38.

⁵Sūrat al-An'ām 6:57.

History bears witness to the impact of Islamic governance on the construction and stability of civilizations, as the Islamic polity succeeded in securing justice and prosperity through the application of God's law. Islamic governance is not merely a political system but a comprehensive order that directs individuals and societies toward the highest moral standards and strives to achieve equality and justice among people. On this basis, Islam obliged the nation to refer its affairs to what God has revealed, rather than leaving matters to personal caprice or to human opinions that might contravene the truth.⁶

God, the Exalted, says:

(أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْتَغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ)⁷

"Is it then the judgment of [pre-Islamic] ignorance that they seek? But who is better than God in judgment for a people who are certain [in faith]?"

This verse expresses God's rebuke of those who refuse to refer their affairs to His judgment, substituting for it either the judgment of pre-Islamic ignorance (jahiliyyah) or human opinion. Implicit in this rebuke is an explicit call for Muslims to be certain that God's judgment is the most just and the wisest, and that nothing surpasses it in securing justice and rights.⁸

God, the Exalted, also commands the establishment of justice in every sphere of social and political life, saying:

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ)⁹

"Indeed, God commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice."

This verse underscores the importance of justice in governance, whether at the individual or the societal level, as God requires Muslims to apply justice in every matter, including the

⁶Abdul Qader Odeh, *Al-Mal wa al-Hukm fi al-Islam* [Money and Governance in Islam], 5th ed. (Cairo: Al-Mukhtar al-Islami, 1397 AH/1977 CE), 88.

⁷Sūrat al-Mā'idah 5:50.

⁸Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad Salāma, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (n.p.: Dār Ṭayyiba, 1420 AH/1999 CE), 313.

⁹Sūrat al-Nisā' 4:58.

affairs of governance and politics. This makes Islamic governance a foundation for realizing equality and justice among people, whether in rights or in duties.

The establishment of Islamic governance is thus a path toward securing the nation's happiness in this world and the next, resting as it does on principles of faith and law aimed at instituting justice and equality among people. Through the application of the Sharia, the rights of individuals and society are safeguarded, order is preserved, and a civilization is built on cooperation, mercy, and justice.

The Economic Component

God, the Exalted, says:

(وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَاشًا)¹⁰

"And We have made for you therein means of living."

This verse shows that God, glorified and exalted, has subjected the earth, with its diverse resources, to meeting human needs—food, drink, clothing, and all that sustains life and stability. Economic activity is thus one of the foundations upon which human life is built; indeed, it is a basis for the development of nations and the flourishing of civilizations,¹¹ and the wise management of economic resources in any civilization is among the factors contributing to its progress and continuity.¹²

Likewise, when Adam, peace be upon him, was commanded to descend to earth, the purpose was not mere subsistence but cultivation (i'mar) and the pursuit of sustenance. God, the Exalted, says:

(قَالَ اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا)¹³

"He said, 'Descend, all of you, therefrom.'"

This descent to earth thus marked the beginning of an economic responsibility that human beings must bear, the earth being a place to be cultivated through work and the pursuit of

¹⁰Sūrat al-Mu'minūn 23:18.

¹¹Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān, 1st ed., vol. 12 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1421 AH/2001 CE), 358.

¹²Yāsir Maḥmūd Abū Ḥusayn, "Usus al-Iqtisād al-Islāmī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm" [Foundations of Islamic Economics in the Noble Qur'an], Journal of the Islamic University for Islamic Studies 27, no. 2 (2019): 4.

¹³Sūrat Ṭāhā 20:123.

livelihood. The Qur'an indicates that human beings would exert effort in seeking sustenance on this earth, which expresses the significance of economic activity within the trajectory of civilization.¹⁴

The Qur'an also affirms the importance of work and economic activity as a pillar of a dignified life. God, the Exalted, says:

(قَادًا قَرَعْتَ قَانِصَبْ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ قَارَعَبْ)¹⁵

"So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship], and to your Lord direct your longing."

This verse encourages the exertion of effort in work and production, so as to achieve economic stability for the individual and society alike. Economics in Islam is thus not merely a desire for material gain, but a path toward divine satisfaction through sincerity in work and lawful endeavor.

In addition, the Qur'an speaks of wealth and the necessity of directing it toward the benefit of society as a whole. God, the Exalted, says:

(وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ)¹⁶

"And establish prayer and give zakah."

This verse calls upon the Muslim community to pay zakah as a means of redistributing wealth and ensuring social justice among its members, which contributes to improving the economic conditions of society and achieving balance among individuals.

God, the Exalted, also says:

(وَلَا تُبْذِرْ تَبْذِيرًا)¹⁷

"And do not spend wastefully."

This verse urges moderation in expenditure and warns against extravagance, calling for a rational economy that directs resources to their proper ends. This principle contributes to

¹⁴Samāh Jamāl Bassiouni and Subhī Rashīd al-Yāzī, "Ḥaḍarāt Dhukirat fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm ('Awāmil Qiyāmihā wa-Inhiyārihā)" [Civilizations Mentioned in the Noble Qur'an: Factors of Their Rise and Fall], *Journal of the Islamic University for Human Sciences* 30, no. 3 (2022): 105.

¹⁵Sūrat al-Sharḥ 94:7–8.

¹⁶Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:110.

¹⁷Sūrat al-Isrā' 17:26.

the sustainability and preservation of resources for future generations, thereby strengthening a civilization's capacity to endure and grow.

Through these Quranic verses, it becomes evident that the Noble Qur'an laid down vital economic foundations that contribute to building a strong civilization based on justice and economic balance, thereby enhancing the nation's capacity for progress and advancement across various fields.

The Social Component

As for the social component, civilization is not confined to being a mere cultural or material aggregate; rather, it is a social space that brings individuals together and works to unify them, thereby enhancing productivity and improving living conditions. A successful society is one capable of coordinating among its members and creating an environment of cooperation and solidarity, thereby achieving common goals that drive its members toward progress and well-being. Social factors have accordingly received considerable attention in the Noble Qur'an, with numerous verses affirming the importance of unity and cooperation among members of the Islamic community as among the most significant foundations contributing to the construction and flourishing of civilization.¹⁸

The Qur'an has likewise placed emphasis on strengthening moral values among people, directing Muslims to adhere to the values that reinforce social bonds and achieve justice and cooperation among individuals. The relationship between the individual and the community is not one of separation but of interdependence, whereby the individual influences society and is in turn influenced by it—reflecting the importance accorded to social solidarity and mutual responsibility in Islam.

God, the Exalted, says:

(وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ)¹⁹

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression."

¹⁸Bassiouni and al-Yāzji, "Ḥaḍārāt Dhukirat fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm," 105.

¹⁹Sūrat al-Mā'idah 5:2.

This verse affirms the necessity of cooperation among members of society in all that leads to good and reform, while warning against cooperation in sin and corruption. Cooperation among members of a society is among the greatest factors contributing to the construction of civilization, for it creates an environment of positive collaboration and contributes to the development of society.

The Noble Qur'an has likewise given great attention to social justice, which forms a fundamental pillar in the construction of a just and balanced society, affirming in numerous verses the importance of dealing justly with others and avoiding oppression. God, the Exalted, says:

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ)²⁰

"Indeed, God commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice."

The Qur'an has, moreover, encouraged the values of mercy and equality, affirming their role in strengthening the social fabric and in raising the social standing of individuals while securing their rights. God, the Exalted, says:

(وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا)²¹

"And speak to people good [words]."

This verse urges good communication and equality among people, encouraging mutual respect and dealing with flexibility and mercy, which contributes to strengthening social bonds and creating a cohesive community capable of shared life and fruitful cooperation.

The Noble Qur'an has, in addition, accorded particular attention to the Arabic language as the language of the Qur'an and an essential means of communication and expression of Islamic values. Arabic served as a means of understanding the divine message, thereby becoming one of the most prominent elements of Islamic civilization, as it became the language that bound the members of the Muslim community together and united them

²⁰Sūrat al-Nisā' 4:58.

²¹Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:83.

around the meanings of their religion, contributing to the spread of Islamic civilization across the world.

God, the Exalted, says:

(إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ)²²

"Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand."

In this light, moral values, social cooperation, justice, and the Arabic language emerge as principal factors that contributed to the construction of Islamic civilization and to the cohesion and progress of the Muslim community. These values continue to constitute a strong foundation in modern Islamic societies, sustaining the forward march of Islamic civilization.

II. The Foundations of Civilization According to the Thinker Malek Bennabi

Malek Bennabi defines civilization as the environment that provides individuals with the conditions conducive to growth and development across the various stages of their lives, from childhood to old age, through the availability of a set of moral and material conditions that ensure their support and care.²³

He affirms that the manifestations of civilization are embodied in the institutions and services that a society provides to its members, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and security—factors that he divides into material ones, represented by tangible facilities and capacities, and moral ones, embodied in the values and principles that guide social conduct.

Bennabi further indicates that civilization is the outcome of the interaction among these factors, since no society can achieve progress except through the integration of its material dimension, which provides the necessary means of life, with its moral dimension, which anchors values and determines the direction of development. From this standpoint,

²²Sūrat al-Zukhruf 43:3.

²³Malek Bennabi, *Al-Qadaya al-Kubra* [The Great Issues], 1st ed. (Syria: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), 43.

civilization reflects a society's capacity to ensure social stability and secure prosperity for its members.²⁴

Beyond this, Malek Bennabi holds that civilization is the product of the interaction of three fundamental elements: man, soil, and time. Man is the active element endowed with the capacity for creativity and thought, and thus the essential axis of any civilizational development. Soil represents the natural resources that can be exploited and transformed into tools and means that support the growth of societies. Time, in turn, is the element that gives production, social, and economic processes their temporal dimension, since no civilizational project can be realized without the effective use of time.²⁵

Bennabi affirms that the combination of these three elements gives rise to civilization, in a manner analogous to industrial processes; he illustrates this with the example of the electric lamp, in which man stands behind the industrial process, while the elements of soil enter into its composition as conductors and insulators, and time is what allows for its development and production. On this basis, civilization can only arise through a harmonious interaction between man, resources, and time, whereby man invests his available resources according to a long-term vision.²⁶

As for religion, in Bennabi's view it is the essential engine of these three elements, for it is what confers upon them moral and intellectual orientation and makes of man a responsible agent who strives toward construction and reform rather than chaos and destruction.²⁷ Religion is thus the driving force that gives man an awareness of his civilizational mission and directs him toward achieving balance between his material needs and his spiritual values, thereby ensuring the continuity of civilization and endowing it with its moral and

²⁴Malek Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar fi al-'Alam al-Islami* [The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World], 1st ed. (Algeria: National Foundation for Graphic Arts, 2005), 32.

²⁵Khalid al-Sa'd, *al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i fi Fikr Malek Bennabi (Dirasa fi Bina' al-Nazariyya al-Ijtima'iyya)* [Social Change in the Thought of Malek Bennabi: A Study in the Construction of Social Theory], 1st ed. (Saudi Arabia: Al-Dar al-Sa'udiyya, 1997), 178–179.

²⁶Malek Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahda* [The Conditions of Renaissance] (Syria: Dar al-Fikr, 1976), 49.

²⁷Ibrir Taher and Bennadi Muhammad Taher, "Al-Hadara fi Fikr Malek Bennabi" [Civilization in the Thought of Malek Bennabi], *Pensée méditerranéenne* 9, no. 2 (2020): 114.

human dimension. The role of religion in the construction of civilizations is examined in greater detail in the following section.

III. The Role of Religion in the Construction of Civilizations

Religion functions as a civilizational fuel: it contributes to shaping the human being and motivating society toward work and production, while also organizing social relationships and directing human energies toward progress, innovation, and creativity.

1. Religion as a Catalyst for Civilization: Building Man and Releasing His Energies

Malek Bennabi holds that civilization begins with man, but that man requires a driving force to spur him toward work and creativity, and that this driving force is religion, whose role becomes apparent in the following:

- **Instilling moral values:** for morality is the foundation upon which societies are built, as the Prophet ﷺ said:

(إِنَّمَا بَعَثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ)²⁸

"I have been sent only to perfect noble character."

- **Giving man a motivation that transcends self-interest:** as in God's saying:

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا يَقُومُ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا يَأْنفُسِهِمْ)²⁹

"Indeed, God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves."

which confirms that change begins from within.

- **Instilling the ethic of work and production:** as the Prophet ﷺ said:

(إِذَا قَامَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَفِي يَدِ أَحَدِكُمْ فَسِيلَةٌ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا يَقُومَ حَتَّى يَغْرِسَهَا فَلْيَفْعَلْ)³⁰

"If the Hour should come while one of you has a palm-shoot in his hand, and he is able to plant it before the Hour comes, let him do so."

²⁸Hadith graded ḥasan, narrated by Imam Aḥmad in his Musnad, no. 10557.

²⁹Sūrat al-Ra'd 13:11.

³⁰Hadith graded ṣaḥīḥ, narrated by Imam Aḥmad in his Musnad, no. 15709.

a principle that reflects the continuity of constructive endeavor even under the most difficult of circumstances.

2. Religion as a Factor of Unity and Social Order

No civilization can rise amid division and chaos; religion is what secures social stability through:

- Establishing standards of justice and equity: as in God's saying:

(وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ)³¹

"And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance."

- Reinforcing unity among individuals: as God, the Exalted, says:

(وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا)³²

"And hold firmly to the rope of God all together and do not become divided."

which historically occurred with the unification of the warring tribes of the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam.

- Establishing legitimacy and identity: for legislation in Islam derives from divine revelation, providing a firm foundation for governance, as in God's saying:

(إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)³³

"Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for God, Lord of the worlds."

3. Religion as a Catalyst for Creativity and Knowledge: Harnessing Soil and Time

Knowledge and technological progress are two essential elements of civilization, and religion impels toward both, through:

- Encouraging the pursuit of knowledge: as in God's saying:

(وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا)³⁴

"And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge.'"

³¹Sūrat al-Raḥmān 55:9.

³²Sūrat Āl 'Imrān 3:103.

³³Sūrat al-An'ām 6:162.

³⁴Sūrat Ṭāhā 20:114.

and as the Prophet ﷺ said:

(من سلك طريقًا يلتمس فيه علمًا، سهل الله له به طريقًا إلى الجنة)³⁵

"Whoever treads a path in search of knowledge, God will thereby make easy for him a path to Paradise."

- **Realizing scientific renaissance:** Muslim scholars such as Ibn al-Haytham, al-Khwarizmi, and Ibn al-Nafis regarded scientific research as part of their religious mission, which contributed to the flourishing of the sciences.
- **Transforming resources into productive tools:** through the development of economic and social jurisprudence (fiqh), religion was never merely an act of worship but a comprehensive framework governing every aspect of life.

IV. The Consonance of Malek Bennabi's Vision of Civilizational Construction with Quranic Principles

Malek Bennabi's vision of civilizational renaissance is one that draws its inspiration from the Noble Qur'an, while offering a modern and integrated interpretation of how an Islamic civilization capable of confronting the challenges of the contemporary era might be constructed. This vision can be further elaborated by considering several aspects that may not have been prominent in the discussion above.

1. Intellectual and Spiritual Foundations

The spiritual and moral dimensions constitute the foundation of any nation's formation and the establishment of its character, determining the degree to which others accord it respect; without these values, a nation cannot properly be regarded as civilizational in the true sense of the word. The intellectual and material dimensions, by contrast, are generally bound up with economics and with people's material advancement and well-being; for despite the strength of Western economies, poverty continues to afflict large segments of their

³⁵Ḥadīth graded ṣaḥīḥ, narrated by al-Albānī in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi', no. 3687.

populations. Accordingly, spiritual and moral foundations remain indispensable for any nation seeking to ascend the ladder of civilizational glory.³⁶

In light of the foregoing, we find Malek Bennabi insisting on the importance of balance between the intellectual and spiritual dimensions in the formation of civilizational man. This balance in Bennabi's thought accords with the Noble Qur'an, which emphasizes that piety (taqwa) and reason must complement one another in the construction of the nation. In the verse:

(وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا)³⁷

"But seek, through that which God has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and do not forget your share of this world."

the connection is clearly drawn between the worldly demands of work and reason, on the one hand, and the spiritual dimensions that guide the human being toward loftier matters, on the other. Malek Bennabi emphasizes the necessity of investing in knowledge while adhering to the spiritual values offered by religion, observing that civilizational well-being is achieved only when spirituality meets sound rational thinking.

2. Overcoming the Colonizer through Cultural Renaissance

Malek Bennabi links colonialism to the weakness of civilization, arguing that a nation cannot confront colonialism in its various forms except through cultural and intellectual independence.³⁸ He insists that genuine liberation begins with freeing minds from the effects of colonialism before anything else, which requires foundations rooted in culture and civilization; true independence, therefore, is not achieved by the mere withdrawal of

³⁶Ghalib ibn Ali 'Awaji, *al-Madhab al-Fikriyya al-Mu'asira wa Dawruha fi al-Mujtama'at wa Mawqif al-Muslim minha* [Contemporary Intellectual Schools, Their Role in Societies, and the Muslim Position toward Them], 1st ed., vol. 1 (Jeddah: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya al-Dhahabiyya, 1427 AH/2006 CE), 185.

³⁷Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ 28:77.

³⁸Abdullatif Abbada, "Manhaj Malek Bennabi fi Muwajahat Tahaddiyat al-Hadara al-Gharbiyya al-Mu'asira" [Malek Bennabi's Approach to Confronting the Challenges of Contemporary Western Civilization], *Majallat Ru'a*, Year 4, no. 79 (2003): 20.

colonial armies or the proclamation of a constitution, but demands a profound intellectual transformation.³⁹

This idea accords with the Noble Qur'an, which stresses the necessity of establishing dominion (tamkin) for Muslims on earth through knowledge and work, as in God's saying:

(قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ)⁴⁰

"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'"

Bennabi holds that cultural awareness is the most important means of liberation from colonial hegemony, an orientation which indicates that a civilization becomes independent only once the human being rebuilds his own culture—an idea that accords with the Quranic discourse calling for reflection and contemplation, as God, the Exalted, says:

(قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ)⁴¹

"Say, 'Are the blind and the seeing equal? Then will you not give thought?'"

3. The Social Dimension in the Construction of Civilization

Malek Bennabi recognizes that the construction of civilization is not an individual responsibility alone, but requires the collective participation of all members of society. This vision accords with the Noble Qur'an, which highlights the importance of social solidarity and cooperation among the members of a society in building the nation, as in God's saying:

(وَتَعَاوُزُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالْتَّقْوَىٰ)⁴²

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety."

In this respect, Bennabi regards collective consciousness and the spirit of cooperation among the members of the nation as the essential pillar for achieving civilizational renaissance, which accords with Islamic teachings that stress the necessity of cooperation in achieving the common good.

4. Innovation within the Framework of Islamic Values

³⁹Abbada, "Manhaj Malek Bennabi," 20.

⁴⁰Sūrat al-Zumar 39:9.

⁴¹Sūrat al-An'ām 6:50.

⁴²Sūrat al-Mā'idah 5:2.

Bennabi's vision emphasizes that innovation and scientific and technological development must take place within the moral framework determined by Islamic values. In the Noble Qur'an, one finds a call to innovation and diligent work in every field, on condition that the ultimate goal remain the common good, as in God's saying:

(وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)⁴³

"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds."

Bennabi holds that Islamic civilization cannot rise without being accompanied by technological and scientific progress, but insists that such progress must be directed toward serving and reforming society, in a manner consistent with the moral values enjoined by Islam.

5. Engagement with Global Challenges

Through his interpretation of the factors of civilizational renaissance, Malek Bennabi believes that Islamic civilization must be capable of engaging with contemporary challenges. Such engagement requires drawing on modern sciences and dealing creatively with issues such as globalization and technology, grounded in Islamic values. This orientation accords with the Noble Qur'an, which encourages development and the use of natural resources, as in God's saying:

(فَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ)⁴⁴

"So We opened the earth with springs, and the waters met for a matter already predestined."

In this respect, Bennabi holds that the Islamic nation must strive to be at the forefront of nations in the fields of science and technology, while remaining committed to the humane values enjoined by the Islamic religion.

6. Critical and Creative Thinking

Malek Bennabi holds that one of the causes of the absence of critical thinking is our reliance on importing everything from the Western world, even though its reality differs radically

⁴³Sūrat al-Anbiyā' 21:107.

⁴⁴Sūrat al-Qamar 54:12.

from our own Islamic reality. Experience has shown that the construction of a comprehensive political system with an Islamic character can only emerge from the very core of our nation's civilizational heritage and its authentic cultural environment, since politics, in essence, is above all a reflection of the making of culture.⁴⁵

With regard to the imitation of the European West in matters of economic organization, Bennabi holds that the economy is not an independent entity but a reflection of the political system, much like a mirror reflecting its orientations. He expressed this notion by stating that economics is nothing but a projection of the political dimension onto a given field of human activity, meaning that any attempt to replicate the Western economic model without regard for its political and social context will remain incapable of achieving genuine renaissance.⁴⁶

Bennabi thus encourages critical and creative thinking in addressing the questions of civilization—a vision that finds strong support in the Noble Qur'an, which urges reflection (tafakkur) upon the signs of God and the cultivation of reason. In God's saying:

(وَكُلِّ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا)⁴⁷

"And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge.'"

one finds a call to broaden intellectual horizons and to embrace rationality, which accords with Bennabi's vision that civilizational renaissance begins with intellectual independence.

These various aspects show that Malek Bennabi's vision is not confined to a traditional view of Islamic civilization, but seeks renewal and reform by blending Islamic traditions with contemporary challenges—rendering it broadly consonant with Quranic principles, while offering a modern interpretation suited to global change and technological innovation.

Conclusion

⁴⁵Malek Bennabi, *Bayn al-Rushd wa al-Tih* [Between Right Guidance and Bewilderment], 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1988), 89.

⁴⁶Bennabi, *Bayn al-Rushd wa al-Tih*, 75.

⁴⁷Sūrat Ṭāhā 20:114.

Having examined the foundations of Islamic civilization in light of the Quranic text and the interpretations of the thinker Malek Bennabi, it becomes clear that civilizational renaissance is neither a random process nor a matter of purely material development, but an integrated construction resting on solid intellectual and cultural foundations. Islamic civilization, as portrayed by the Noble Qur'an and affirmed by Malek Bennabi, with all the glorious past it carries within it, thus stands as a future project requiring awareness of the demands of the age and the sound investment of the factors that shape civilizational and intellectual renaissance. The following is a summary of the study's findings:

- The Noble Qur'an delineated the contours of civilization through its doctrinal, political, economic, and social components, rendering it an integrated and balanced civilization capable of achieving justice and development.
- Malek Bennabi held that civilization is not merely material or political progress, but a composite process resting on three principal elements—man, soil, and time—affirming that genuine renaissance can be achieved only through the conscious and responsible interaction of these factors.
- Religion in Islam has never been a factor of stagnation; on the contrary, it has always been a driving force toward work and creativity, as Islamic values contributed throughout history to building strong and cohesive societies by motivating individuals toward production and the realization of social justice.
- There is a clear consonance between Malek Bennabi's vision and Quranic principles regarding the construction of civilization, as both call for directing human energies toward construction and development, while emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness and intellectual independence.
- Civilizational renaissance is not merely a restoration of past glories, but a future project requiring a deep understanding of the foundations of civilization and their conscious and purposeful activation, with due regard for contemporary challenges and for benefiting from the experiences of other nations without dissolving into their cultures.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings reached in the course of this research, the following recommendations are offered, which may deepen understanding of the topic and serve as a starting point for future research projects:

- Strengthening civilizational awareness among individuals through education and the media, and working to highlight the Islamic values that contribute to the construction and renaissance of societies.
- The necessity of investing in the human being, as the essential element in the process of civilizational construction, through the development of his intellectual and scientific capacities and by encouraging his creativity and effective contribution to society.
- Reactivating the elements of civilization—man, soil, and time—through sustainable economic, social, and cultural policies that ensure the fullest possible benefit from available resources.
- Achieving a balance between authenticity and contemporaneity, by developing a civilizational model grounded in Islamic values while remaining capable of adapting to the changes and challenges imposed by the modern age.
- Emphasizing the link between religion and work, by highlighting its role in building societies and reinforcing the values of productivity, discipline, and justice, so as to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable civilizational renaissance.

Through this integrated vision, it becomes possible to work toward rebuilding Islamic civilization on solid foundations combining authenticity and renewal, thereby contributing to a genuine renaissance that restores to the Islamic nation its pioneering role in the world.

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