

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Understanding Islamic Sciences

Philosophy, Theology, Mysticism, Morality,
Jurisprudence and Islamic Law

UNDERSTANDING ISLAMIC SCIENCES

Philosophy, Theology, Mysticism, Morality,
Jurisprudence and Islamic Law

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī

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Preface

This book is a collection of martyr Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's essential papers and articles on (1) philosophy (2) theology (*al-kalām*) (3) Islamic mysticism (*'irfān*) (4) the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) (5) Islamic law (*fiqh*) and (6) morality (*ḥikmat-e-'amali*). The six parts together serve both as a comprehensive survey of the essentials of different branches of Islamic studies and a general guide to understanding the basic teachings of Islam, along with the main points of difference among various sects of Muslims.

Martyr Muṭahharī's important work is probably the most thorough of all introductions to Islamic studies and deserves to be prescribed reading for all students of Islam. It is also very useful for non-specialists who wish to acquaint themselves with Islamic knowledge. All introductory books that have been published to date in this field are written either by Orientalists or by Muslim scholars. Orientalists are naturally biased and fail to give a true picture of the development of the different Islamic sciences. Muslim scholars consciously or subconsciously incorporate in their writings certain misleading notions propagated by Orientalist scholars about Islamic studies and its various branches. It is also true to say that no other introductory text covers all Muslim schools of thought and their specific views. Martyr Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's exposition and evaluation of various theories are objective and unbiased, which makes them uniquely suitable for students looking for a fair, clear and comprehensive introduction.

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī was born in a village some forty kilometres from

Mashhad in 1338/1919–20. He received his earliest education mostly at the hands of his father and while still a child entered the *hawza-yi 'ilmiya*, the traditional educational establishment, of Mashhad, but soon afterwards left for Qum, the centre for religious education in Iran. While he was pursuing elementary studies there he was greatly affected by the lessons in *akhlāq* (Islamic ethics) given by Ayatullah Khumaynī, which Muṭahharī himself described as being, in reality, lessons in *ma'ārif wa sayr-u-sulūk* (the theoretical and practical approaches to mysticism). He later studied metaphysics (*falsafa*) with him, as well as jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). He was especially attracted by *falsafa*, theoretical mysticism (*'irfān*) and theology (*kalām*), known as 'intellectual knowledge', and he went on to study these

subjects with ‘Allama Tabataba’i. His teachers in law (*fiqh*) were all important figures

of the time, especially Ayatullah Burūjirdī, who became the authoritative jurisconsult (*marja’ al-taqlid*), as well as head of the *hawza-yi ‘ilmiya* of Qum, in 1945. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī studied both *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* in the classes of Ayatullah Burūjirdī for ten years. He was also deeply affected at about this time by lessons on *Nahj al-Balāghah* given by Mirzā ‘Alī Aqā Shirāzī Isfahānī, whom he had met in Isfahan. He later said that, although he had been reading this work since his childhood, he now felt that he had discovered a ‘new world’. Subsequently, Muṭahharī became a well-known teacher in Qum, first in Arabic language and literature, and later in logic (*mantiq*), *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *falsafa* and *mysticism*.

In 1952 Murtaḍā Muṭahharī moved to Tehran, where, two years later, he began teaching in the Theology Faculty of the University. Not only did he make a strong impression on students, but his move to Tehran also meant that he could become involved with organizations for political and social change. These Islamic associations were groups of students, engineers, doctors, merchants, etc., set up during the 1950s and 1960s; they formed the nucleus of the movement that was eventually to become the revolution. He was also a founder member of the Husayniya-yi Irshād, which played a central role in the religious life of the capital during the four years of its existence until its closure by the authorities in 1973. At the same time he maintained his contact with traditional religious activities, teaching first in the Madrasa-yi Marvi in Tehran and later back in Qum, and also preaching in mosques in Tehran and elsewhere in the country. Through his lectures, articles and books he became a famous and much-respected figure throughout Iran, but it was mainly among the students and teachers of the schools and universities that he was most influential, setting an example and inspiring them as a committed and socially aware Muslim with a traditional education who could make an intellectually appropriate and exciting response to modern secularizing tendencies.

His wide-ranging knowledge and scholarship are reflected in the scope of his writings, which cover the fields of law, philosophy, theology, history and literature. He was also one of the few high-ranking ‘*ulamā*’ to be in continuous contact with Ayatullah Khumaynī during the fifteen or so years in which the movement that led to the revolution was developing. He was actively engaged in all the stages of this movement. His life came to an abrupt and untimely end when he was shot in the street by an assassin after a

P R E F A C E

meeting of the Revolutionary Council on the evening of 1 May 1979. Many mourners accompanied his funeral cortege from Tehran to Qum, where he was buried near the shrine of the sister of the eighth Shi'ī Imām. Shahīd Muṭahharī contributed a great deal to Islamic scholarship through his many publications, most of which have been translated into English. They include: *Islamic Modest Dress* (Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1990); *Universal Prototype*, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar (Abjad Book Designers & Builders, 1989); *Hijab*, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar (Abjad Book Designers & Builders, 1993); *Iqbal* (Abjad Book Designers & Builders, 1993); *Reviving Islamic Ethos; Master and Mastership; Jurisprudence and Its Principles; Spiritual Discourses; The Awaited Saviour; Light within Me; The Goal of Life; Man and Universe; Polarization Around the Character of 'Alī ibn Abī Talib; Woman and Her Rights; and Anecdotes of Pious Men.*

Apart from the above-mentioned books, there are many other published works in Arabic and Persian. The first edition of this book was published by Islamic College for Advanced Studies (ICAS) in London. Now that Al-Muntazar Resources in Kuala Lumpur is blessed to be able to republish this book, would like to thank The Islamic College for the granted permission. We hope we are able to introduce some of Martyr Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's most important writings to the English-speaking world in the near future, Insyallah.