



Abdul Hamid Ben Badis (1307-1359 A.H.) And Discourse on Development

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Introduction

Joseph Kechechian, an American political science specialist of Armenian Lebanese origin, visited Jeddah, Saudi Arabia more than ten years ago to collect data for his book on the security of Saudi Arabia¹. The United States Information Agency invited a number of Saudi academics and intellectuals to meet the guest. Kechechian began the session by reading excerpts of a paper he was writing about 'fundamentalism' in the Arab World. It began as follows: "Once the Fundamentalists are in power they will pull their countries back to the Middle Ages when the church killed scholars, inventors and thinkers." Having said that, he went on to say: "women were bound to suffer from maltreatment, and so would the minorities".

Though the definition of "Fundamentalists" is a real problem to any specialist whether in comparative religion or journalism, the context of the paper proposes that everyone promoting the Islamic views of modernization is considered as such.

Another example of the Western views of Islam and development is found in the article written by Daniel Pipes who is also a Political Science specialist². In his article Pipes mentions seven central characteristics of the Fundamentalist Islam: Anti-democratic, anti-Western...etc.

Even Richard Dekmijian described those calling for revitalizing Islam "Muslim fundamentalists" and gave a full account of their descriptions.

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One of the traits he ascribed to them is their attitude towards modernity and western civilization. He believed that those “fundamentalists” are against modernization.³

Bernard Lewis, a well-known Orientalist gave the Thomas Jefferson Lecture at the Library of Congress (1990) in which he claimed that Islam is against modernity and therefore Muslims are against the Western civilization.⁴ He continued to spread this message even more vigorously after the 9/11/2001 incidents through his books, lectures, articles and T.V appearances. Lewis became quite influential in the White House and ruling circles in the USA.

The inevitable question may well be asked: Why do scholars of such high caliber and intellect tend to view Islam in this way. This question of modernity or modernization has been raised for centuries since the days of the Ottoman Caliphate. This same question is still asked until this day.

In this paper I have taken the example of Ben Badis (1307-1359 A.H. / 1889-1940 A.D.) an Algerian scholar and a political leader, who tackled this problem on the intellectual as well as the practical level. The purpose for taking this example is mainly because Ben Badis was known as an educator and political leader in the struggle for liberating Algeria from the French occupation and not so much as a philosopher and thinker. His views are barely exposed outside the limited circles of researchers in modern Algerian history. The importance of the Ben Badis example is that he was aware of the modernizing trend in Europe, particularly in France. At the same time his knowledge of Islam was so deep that it allowed him to deal with the problem of bringing Algeria to the twentieth century.

This paper is divided into four parts: **the first** part is a brief biography of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ben Badis. **The second** will give a brief idea about Islam’s comprehensive outlook that includes the issue of social development. **The third** deals with the criticism directed against the ideas and thoughts of Ben Badis and the Algerian Ulema accusing them of ignoring the issue of development. **The fourth** part will focus on the discourse of Ben Badis on social development.

Part I

A brief Biography of Ben Badis

Abdul Hamid Ben Badis was born on 11/4/1307 A.H. corresponding to December 4, 1889 A.D. He is from the Amazighi tribe called Sinhaja. To say a word about the physical appearance of Ben Badis, he was neither tall nor short though he was closer to be considered short. He was very thin. The little physique of Ben Badis reminds me of the Prophet's companion Ibn Masoud whom the Prophet said once to those who laughed at the thinness of his legs that those legs weigh in heaven more the mountain of Uhud. His complexion was white. He wore the Algerian thobe called 'Gandourah' woven in Algeria. He had the head cover called Imama. Ben Badis was known to eat lightly. One type of food was generally sufficient to him. He did not drink coffee or tea excessively. Ben Badis was a person with charisma. He was regarded with respect and even awe sometimes. His colleague and longtime companion Al-Ibrahimi Said once: "Though I might be considered more knowledgeable than Ben Badis, he received much more respect and dignity. It must be more than mere knowledge, it was rather spiritual influence".⁵

His early schooling was at the hands of Sheikh Muhammad Almadasi who taught him Qur'an till he finished learning the Qur'an by heart. Then he moved to take lessons in other Arabic and Islamic sciences such as Fiqh, Hadith, Arabic language and Qur'anic exegesis. Then he moved to Tunis to study at the Zaitonah Mosque, where he finished his studies in the year 1330 A.H. / 1912 A.D.

Ben Badis came back to Algeria to start teaching at Al-Akhdhar Mosque in Constantine, but soon it was the Hajj time. He went to the holy places where he met another Algerian scholar and activist, namely, his longtime companion Sheikh Muhammad Basheer Al-Ibrahimi. They both discussed the situation in Algeria for a few months and agreed on a plan of action after their return to Algeria. Even though Ben Badis was advised by his former mentor to immigrate to Al-Madinah, another Madinese Scholar told him that Algeria is the land of jihad and work and he should not leave his country.⁶

On his way back home Ben Badis visited Egypt where he met some prominent scholars and became better informed about the Islamic World situation and plight with colonialism. Once he settled, he resumed

his lessons at the same mosque and tried to attract students from all Algerian provinces. Soon he was able to provide housing and boarding for the all students from outside Constantine. Not only did he take care of their education, he was also interested in all their livelihood and social behavior. He appointed some senior students to monitor the behavior of the new comers to Constantine.

Journalism

Ben Badis discovered the importance of journalism in promoting his campaign to free Algerians from French occupation through education and improving the lives of the Algerians economically, socially, religiously, and culturally. He joined *Al-Najah* newspaper in the early years of the twenties of the last century, and then he established his first newspaper called *Al-Muntaqid* (The Critique) in 1925. When the French suspended this newspaper, he established *Al-Shihab* Magazine as a bi-weekly newspaper on November 12th 1925. *Al-Shihab* became a monthly magazine and continued to be published until the beginning of the Second World War.

In 1930, France was preparing to celebrate its centennial of occupation of Algeria or rather the annexation of Algeria to France or in other words the permanent defeat of the crescent against the cross. The Algerian Ulema aware of the situation, held a series of meetings which resulted in the establishment of the Association of Algerian Ulema in 1349/1931. In that meeting, Ben Badis was elected to be the first president even though he did not attend.

The leadership of Ben Badis was a great asset to the organization since he was known by his leadership qualities and wisdom. The association activities started with establishing schools all over Algeria. The French authorities took this type of activity seriously. The researcher has found a map with two colors blue and red showing the influence of the Association. The red depicted full influence of the association while, the blue meant partial influence. The association did not have the means and resources to have its own branches on the entire soil of Algeria, so they depended on the local organizations and groups to spread the message of the Association.

The association also was active in the social field through establishing social clubs and charity organizations to care for the needy, poor, orphans and to combat westernization and Christian missionaries.

Ben Badis and Politics

Though the general charter of the organization stated that the organization did not indulge in politics, Ben Badis, however, looked at the subject differently. He would be involved in politics in his personal capacity as a normal citizen. But as a president of the association he would refrain from politics. Ben Badis clarified this by saying: “The scope of working in this association is vast. However, there are many fields that I will indulge in not in the name of the association but in my own name if my name had any importance to my people”.⁷ These fields included addressing the French government in Paris and the French administration in Algeria about issues such as education, social and economical conditions, and the political rights of the Algerian nation.

Ben Badis was a firm believer that there should not be any separation between politics and religion. He also believed that Islamic scholars should not distant themselves from working in politics. Once he was invited to give a lecture about the educational situation in Algeria and said:” We talk today about education and politics together. Some may see that this is a difficult task because they are accustomed that scholars exclude politics in their activities, though we should combine politics and education and education will not prosper unless politics prospered.”⁸

Ben Badis insisted on the rights of religious scholars’ involvement in politics. His statement that was made more than seventy years ago can be a real call to Islamic Ulema of today. He said: “What wrong is attached to Islamic Ulema if they participate in politics? Have the higher and lower houses of the French Parliament been lacking the presence of men from other religious clergies? Has the French Academy been lacking of the influences of the priest minister Richelieu? Is it acceptable when the matter comes from the French side and not acceptable if it is from our side? No, there is no blame or shame as everyone makes his own choice to praise or blaspheme according to his behavior in his choice”.⁹

To speak of Ben Badis political involvement one needs to write a separate paper. However’ given here are few examples of this involvement:

- i- In 1934, an upheaval took place between the Muslims and the Jews in Constantinople. The role Ben Badis played was to help calm down the situation.

- ii- In 1936 Ben Badis took upon himself to call for and organize the “Algerian General Conference” with the main objective of preserving the Algerian Arab/Muslim identity and at the same time obtaining their political rights. The real importance of the efforts to preserve Arab/Muslim identity was in face of the French colonial efforts to assimilate Algerians which meant that they gave up their own distinct identity and their adhering to Islamic Jurisprudence.
- iii- The French prime minister issued a decree in 1938 limiting the freedom of the Algerians to establish schools and to consider Arabic as a foreign language. Ben Badis led the campaign to combat this decree.
- iv- Ben Badis never shied away from calling for Algerian independence in his speeches and writings. He wrote in 1930 saying:

“Turn the pages of the world history, and look into that truthful record. Would you find any nation that was conquered and occupied and deprived of independence and then regained its independence as a gift from the one who deprived them from their independence and then gave to them as a gift? No, we have never seen that freedom is given; what we know is that freedom is taken. We have never seen independence given as a gift. Independence is obtained through jihad and sacrifice and accepting death. And we have never seen in the records of history disappointment of those who fight, but we have seen disappointment of those who beg for independence.”¹⁰
- v- Ben Badis departed from the theoretical level of calling for independence. He moved to the practical level of preparing Algerians to fight for independence. He paid special care to those students who had served in the army or were well versed in the knowledge of war. It was narrated by Ben Badis’ close disciples that he was once in a meeting with them (Hamza

Bokousha and others) and said to them: “Would you promise me to do something?” They said: “Of course if you are with us?” He then said: “Would I ask you to do something if I am not with you?” Then they added what is it that you want us to promise you? He said: “Once Italy announces war against France, we announce our war against France.”¹¹ This was apparent during his teaching in which he singled out the students who had served in the army and gained some military knowledge. He used to tell them, “We will need you someday”. One of these students was Al-Fudhail Al-Wertalani.

From the above we can conclude that Ben Badis believed that politics is part of Islam. He did not shy away from talking and discussing politics. He went steps further to the prepare for military action once the circumstances allow that.

Part II

Islam and Social Development

Sayyid Qutb stressed the fact that before any scholar looks for an Islamic theory in economy and politics, he should review the total outlook of Islam on the universe, as well as on humanity as an active part of our life prior to passing any judgment. He added that these issues of economy or politics are but branches of the total perspective of Islam¹². On the other hand, Muhammad al-Mubarak who supports the views expressed by Qutb reiterated that: “It does not belittle Islam that it is now considered to be an ideal system for many people of different faith, simply because it is not fully implemented in any country since all other systems began like that”. It is a characteristic of Islam that it should be preceded by sound belief in its doctrine and the principle of its system since it is generally held that every system has its own doctrine.¹³

On social justice in Islam Qutb stresses the fact that: “Islam sets the foundations for social justice and above all it insures the rights of the poor in the wealth of the rich”. Islam also establishes equitable foundations for politics and economics and therefore does not need to ecstasize the feeling of the masses nor ask them to compromise their rights on this earth and expect to regain them in Heaven¹⁴.

Muslims have always relied on a vast reservoir of literature

containing theory and practice in the fields of Social Sciences. Therefore, they are required to become aware of these experiences before they turn to other sources. Qutb emphasizes the fact that Muslims' experience stems from a comprehensive perspective and firm foundations. He goes on to say: "Of course a businessman does not resort to borrowing from others when his bank accounts are intact or when they are in the credit. The same can be applied to states and nations." Is it not more appropriate to reevaluate one's balance of inherited theories, practices and spiritual resources before looking for borrowing from outside sources?"¹⁵

Jamal al-Din Al- Afghani had touched upon this problem when he leveled his criticism against those who were infatuated with the West. He wrote: "We have learned from the experience and previous events that those imitating other nations are no more than agents for the enemies to attack their own people. They are part and parcel of foreign armies helping them to establish their power and authority."¹⁶

This infatuation with the west continued from the days of Al-Afghani till today. It has become more of a chronic illness with many Arabs and Muslims. Some even moved from the infatuation stage to blind love. They say that Islam has nothing to offer to humanity; or rather, it has never offered anything to human civilization.¹⁷ They take every chance to shed doubts and suspicions on any Islamic movements participating in any parliamentary elections. This was the case with *Al-Riyadh* newspaper writer Muhammad Ali Al-Mahmoud who wrote on the Egyptian parliamentary election saying that the Islamists would not be successful if they were ever allowed to control the parliament. He added: "Muslim Brotherhood raised the slogan "Islam is the solution" and this is a beautiful and acceptable slogan, but it does not specify anything in terms of procedural execution in real life."¹⁸ Then he goes on to mention Al- Hajjaj's behavior in killing without a legitimate cause was not in accordance with any means but applying the same slogan "Islam is the Solution."¹⁹

There are those who consider imitating the Western world patterns in social development was inevitable. The western colonizers when forced to give independence to Arab and Muslim countries, made certain that the leaders who were in power after their departure did not have enough knowledge of Islamic social development theory.²⁰ However Murad Hoffman believes that these countries (Arab and Muslim) followed the

Western patterns of freedom of speech, labor, nationalism, socialism, and communism. Islam, according to Hoffman, was not the popular trend in those days. He adds that even nationalism was secular at that time. Those leaders believed in the example of Mustapha Kamal, which is the same belief of the Arab and Muslim westernized scholars such as Arkoun in France and Bassam Teiby in Germany.²¹

Muhammad Qutb has something to say about old and new scholars called “the enlighteners”. He said: “The old ones we can consider to be truthful to their Umma while the contemporary ones are full of hatred to Islam and Muslims. They consider Islam to be the greatest enemy and obstacle that should be eliminated from earth.”²²

It is clear that the criticism of Islam in the field of social development is still alive in the minds of many Arab and Muslim Scholars. This may be because they have not studied Islam in depth, or that they are really ignorant of the Islamic history. They are also lacking the immunity of foreign influence. This immunity can be attained if a psychological barrier exists between Muslims and people of other faiths. It is known that Jews created walls against outside influences through spreading the claim or notion that they are “God’s chosen people” and through living in ghettos, which represent physical and psychological barriers. As for Christians, they believe that Jesus (peace be upon him) is the last Prophet who is the Savior and who died on the cross to save humanity.

Here is an example of misinterpretation by those who have studied Islam in depth: Muslims, of course, have their own barriers which can be found in many Qur’anic verses such: (You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin *al-Mavruf*) and forbid *Al-Munkar* (*forbidden*), and you believe in Allah. And had the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are *Al-Fasiqun* (disobedient to Allah and rebellious against Allah’s command.) (*Aal Emran* 110) and the verse : (you will be superior (in victory) if you are indeed (true) believers (*Aal Emran* : 139).

And the verse (Thus we have made you a just (and the best) nation, that you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger be a witness over you.) *Al-Baqara* : 143). These verses depict the uniqueness of the Muslim identity. They also portray the status of Muslim among others

when he or she really adheres to Islamic tenets.²³ But even with these barriers Muslims are called upon to spread justice, knowledge and love. They are to intermingle with others and not live in separation from others.

Alwani concludes in his introduction by saying: “The collapse of the psychological barrier between Muslims and their enemies made it easier for those who were brought up in the American, French and British intelligence cabarets to become leaders of the Arab Muslim youth in the last two generations. And these students are still in the leading positions in many Arab and Muslim countries.”²⁴

Abdu Allah Al-Nafisi spoke of the cultural shock that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which gave birth, to a case of Arab infatuation with the European example to an unhealthy degree. Some Arabs believed that to reach the European degree of modernity, we must get rid of all our heredity and imitate the European personality.²⁵

Therefore, adhering to Islamic identity prevent from dissolving and protect the *Ummah* from such false accusations in the field of development and other areas.

Part III

Critique of Ben Badis and the Association of Algerian Ulema

The previous sections of this paper ideas how Islam had its own views and theories of social development, and how some Arab and Muslim writers and thinkers did not believe that Islam has a theory in this field. I am going to discuss here the critiques directed towards Ben Badis in the field of Social Development and whether Islam does contain a social theory.

Though Ben Badis was alone to be criticized, Islam as a whole was the final target of their criticism.

First: Ali Merad

Ali Merad wrote in his Ph.D. thesis on the Algerian Ulema: “Their reserved judgment of the social struggle which was shaking Europe regarding the development of Communism and about the destiny of Capitalism was the result of the erroneous facts they received.” He added: “The Algerian people were living the Middle Ages cultural lives until the beginning of the forties of this century.” They were engulfed within the old conceptions in the areas of work, economy and social exchange.²⁶ Ali

Murad went further to say that the Ulema had taken a negative stand on the issue of capital in favor of the rich Muslim families who are credited for the success of the organization.²⁷

Ahmad Al-khatîb

Though Khatîb adopted the views of Ali Merad in criticizing the Ulema, he either added some of his views or interpreted those of Merad. Here is what Khatîb wrote:

- (1) The Ulema's lack of knowledge of foreign languages hindered their exposure to modern socio-economic theories in their original sources.
- (2) The Ulema's thinking was restricted by the *Salafiyya* creed, which encouraged Muslims to return to their 'golden age' and plan their lives accordingly.
- (3) The Ulema could not study the traditional structure of the Algerian Society scientifically and therefore were unable to deal with it according to the economic theories of the twentieth century. They were religious men restricted by their salafi conception of religious reform.

Third: Fahmi Jad'ân

Jad'an was another scholar who tackled the subject of modernity in his important work on this subject. He said that the Ulema were engulfed in their own one-sided outlook. He interpreted this by saying that the Ulema based their concept of modernity and backwardness on the cause of 'knowledge' and 'education and learning'. Jad'an also believed that the intellectual movement in the Arab World was not able to liberate itself from this methodology until the end of the Second World War. This liberation came about when new dimensions were added to the religious educational factors which were the socio-political factors and psychological and economical factors.²⁸

The list of those criticizing Islam or Islamic movement for lacking a theory of social development is an endless list. So I have chosen but a few of those writers and authors.

Part IV**Writings of Ben Badis**

This part will focus on the writings of Ben Badis besides the practical side of his life. However, one must keep in mind that Ben Badis was not trained in the field of Economics or other Social Sciences. He appeared on the Algerian scene when Algeria was suffering from hunger, poverty and oppression. It was more than sufficient for Ben Badis to motivate the Algerians to retain their identity in the face of the French strong efforts to assimilate them. Moreover, Ben Badis did more than this when he established 'the Society of Education and Learning' which was one of the real steps for the Algerians to set foot on the road to development.

Islam and Development

Ben badis wrote in 1934, "Islam is a comprehensive religion containing all that is needed by human beings as either individuals or nations for the improvement of their present and their future. It is a religion that enlightens the minds and souls and corrects the creed and practices. It guides humanity toward perfection and organization of society. It also constructs its civilization and establishes justice and spreads brotherhood".²⁹

Ben Badis had a regular monthly articles interpreting certain verses of the Qur'an. In one of these articles he wrote in interpreting the verse (And indeed We have written in *Az-Zabur* {i.e., all the revealed Holy Books – the *Turat* (Torah), the *Injil* (Gospel), the *Psalms*, The Qur'an} after (we have already written in *Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz*(the book that is in the Heaven with Allah) that My righteous slaves shall inherit the land (i.e., the land of Paradise) (*al-Anbiaa* : 105).

"Some people believe that Western civilization which is dominating these days on earth, is a materialistic civilization in its method and goals and results. To them power is over truth, justice, mercy and ihsan. They say that men of this civilization are the righteous men who Allah has promised will inherit the earth. They also claim that what is meant by "righteous" in the said verse are those suitable to build the earth. Alas to this fabrication and nonsense thinking as if building the earth is everything even if beliefs are distorted and works are wrong and morals are corrupt and situations are bad and humanity is tortured by the crisis (ÇâĈäÉ) and threatened

by chaos and destroying and devastating wars and threatened by the greatest war demolishing humanity from its origins and civilization from its roots.³⁰

His firm belief in the tenets of Islam led him to address the general assembly of the Association of Algerian Ulema in 1936 about this matter. He stated: "Islam is a general social contract that contains all that is needed by human beings for their prosperity and advancement". "We have learned from the experience of the developed nations that the real salvation of what the world faces can only be found in the principles of Islam."^{1 3} His knowledge of the contemporary social thesis was evident. It was well known that Muslim scholars who had learned about the west were keen to spread their knowledge. Khayr al-Din Al-Tunisi, Rifaa Tahtawi, Taha Hussain, Ahmad Lutfi Al-Sayyid are but a few examples. When the socialist theory was popular in the West, the Arab/Muslim journalism was publishing many articles on this subject. Some Muslim writers were so infatuated by socialism that they tried to find some roots for it in Islam. Some even went further to call the prophet's companion Abu-Dharr the first socialist in Islam because he called upon the poor to ask for their rights from the rich, and also because he was against accumulating wealth and not spend it.

Not only that Muslims were exposed to the socio-political theories in their languages, Ben Badis also encouraged the learning of European languages and particularly French. He once said: "Europe is now carrying the banner of development. Therefore it is necessary to make use of these mature minds and this requires the knowledge of one of the European languages."³¹ Ben Badis supported the publication of an Algerian French speaking newspaper called '*La Defence*', headed by his friend, Al-Ameen Al-Amoudi.

Ben Badis must have known French as his brother told me when I met him in Constantinople in 1988 and this knowledge enabled him to discuss the contemporary European issues. Not only that, he wrote many times criticizing some articles published in French newspapers. His criticism of European social theories appears in the following quotation. "With Islam we do not really need what the Europeans struggle over in the areas of principles, parties, organizations which cannot improve the situation in the fields of politics or society, let alone in ethics and manners"³² He added, "None of these European parties is free from some elements that

negate the human nature or deviate from justice, or it is weak in reason and therefore the Muslim is far from these parties or organizations.”³³

Ben Badis used his interpretation of the Holy Qur’an to provide information about the subject of European modernity that some Muslims were infatuated with. While he was speaking of the verse (We have written in the psalms that the Earth will be inherited by the righteous subjects),³⁴ Ben Badis said: “Some people thought those righteous people to be the Europeans. This dominant civilization is a materialistic one in its methodology, goals and results. It purports that might is above righteousness, justice and mercy. They said that the men of this civilization are the ‘ righteous’ who are to inherit the Earth as if constructing the land is everything even if its creed is corrupt, ethics are spoiled, works are wrong. And Humanity was tortured with suffocating crises and threatened by the greatest wars that destroyed everything and eliminated humanity from its origins.”³⁵

Ben Badis was interested in modernity and development. He wrote a very philosophical article titled:” The Arabs in the Qu’ran.” He insisted in this article that the Arabs had a history of well-established civilization. The Qu’ran as Ben Badis stressed is full of citation of aspects of previous developed nations. The important thing that Ben Badis and other Muslim learned men adhere to is that any civilization must adhere to the right path and faith in the Creator.³⁶ He elaborated on this issue while speaking of the verses (Do ye build a landmark on every high place To amuse yourselves* and do ye get for yourselves fine buildings(Factories) in the hope of living therein (for ever?)³⁷ . Ben Badis said: “The traditional interpreters of the Qur’an mention that the factories mentioned in the verse are water supplies or they are palaces, and alas what made them turn away from the real meaning of factories. These are real factories built to manufacture the tools prerequisite for the civilized life. He added that the Qur’an did not object to the simple fact of these factories. The objection was against the goals and fruits since the factories that are built based on cruelty and power are not praised either in principle or for their goals. Any rational person does not doubt that the present factories are but tools of torture not mercy, and instruments for destruction and not construction. Therefore, they should not be praised indiscriminately.³⁸ Before we go further, we find some roots for Ben Badis’ apprehension of the situation of present factories. An American weekly magazine (Newsweek) published

a report about some owners of big business who have eliminated hundreds of thousands of workers because the profits' margin has gone down or to cut their losses. This was termed by the magazine as mass killing.³⁹ The magazine went on to say that those workers could go on unemployment benefits but living without work is like death.

Ben Badis is a keen advocate that Muslims should revitalize and do all that could take them towards development and civilization. He quoted from an article published by *Al-Ahram* saying: " So Islam inspires its adherents to learn vocations and it calls them "sciences' and considers them 'mercy'. It showed that the most honorable of people were well versed in certain vocation. Islam has no hostility towards any science or vocation. It is in fact considers having a vocation one of the duties that bring one closer to Allah.⁴⁰

Ben Badis showed great interest in development, as he had been keen to see the Algerians set foot on the road toward total development. He knew how deep the Qur'an moved them, so he utilized every opportunity to incite them and inspire them deeply regarding the problem of development. One of the verses he spoke of is the one that says (I do admonish you on one point : that ye Do Stand up before God – (it may be in pairs) or (it may be) singly, – And reflect (within yourselves)⁴¹ . He said this verse deserves to be called 'the verse of resurgence'. Because when it mentions getting up, it does not mean to stand on your feet, but it means to awaken. He added if the meaning the Arabs understood was to stand up they would not have this magnificent civilization that enabled them to become the masters of the universe.⁴²

The Practical Experience of Ben Badis:

Now we turn to the practical side of Ben Badis 'discourse on development'. When he established the 'Society for learning and education' (*Jam'iyat al-Tarbiya wa 'l-Ta'lim*) he included in the charter of this organization that an orphanage and a factory would be established as part of the society. The charter also stated that Algerian students would be sent to the big factories to be trained there. A textile factory was actually established.

Ben Badis thought of other means of development. He participated in the establishment of boy scouts and sports and folklore groups. He

believed that these activities were not only for recreation and for amusement, but at the end they would train the Algerian people to get used to and be prepared to work cooperatively.

Since there were Catholic and Jewish boy scout organizations, some Algerians recognized the importance of these activities. They turned to Ben Badis for support and asked him to accept the honorary presidency of some of these groups. Ben Badis also supported the establishment of art and sports organizations. He participated in establishing “Youth Art Organization” in (1936) The aim of this organization was to revitalize Islamic arts and to borrow from the Western theatre to serve the Islamic ideology. He accepted to be the honorary president. The activities of this organization included promoting high morals, containing sexual behavior, and preventing deadly diseases such as; alcohol, gambling and marrying foreign women.⁴³

Ben Badis used to tour the whole country where he would meet the Algerian people from all walks of life. These meetings were not exclusively for asking people to support the cause of Islamic education but to encourage them to excel in their various activities and call upon them for more cooperation. This was evident on his visit to Skakdah in 1936 where he spent most of the time at the store of a businessman there called ‘Muhammad Qalmeen’.⁴⁴ Another example was when he went to the city of Glizan. He visited the storekeeper named ‘Ibn Mansour al-Tlemsani’ and was inspired to call for the establishment of the “Society of Quasintinah Traders” (*Jam’iyyat Tujjar Qasantinah*) under the leadership of Belgasem Bou Shijja.⁴⁵ This regional society became after the Second World War a national organization for all Algerian businessmen under the name (*Amal*) which helped to unite the Muslim traders in the face of French and Jewish traders.⁴⁶ This organization according to Abdul Rahman Shaiban (former Minister of Religious Affairs) became so big that the businessmen of Algeria started their own ventures of importing and exporting and because of their real influence in Algeria the French colonial administration began monitoring their activities. The organization presence was felt in the fields of charity projects, building schools, mosques, social clubs and helping the poor.⁴⁷

Ben Badis did not forget the Algerian laborers and their problems such as wages, working conditions...etc. However, he believed that there

were more urgent problems to be dealt with at hand. He, for instance, resented concentrating on the problem of food since there are more sensitive issues at stake to be given priority. He wrote an article, which sounded as an outcry under the title: "Not only bread do we need". In this article, he wrote: "Bread to us is not everything, and if we were given the bread we will be so obedient like mules for France to use our backs. If they gave us the bread that is not every thing as there are other requirements namely social, economical and educational that is even more necessary than bread"⁴⁸ .

Ben Badis and Women:

Ben Badis paid a great deal of attention to Algerian women. He believed that no true development could take place without the women taking part in it. Therefore he gave much of his time and thinking to this issue. He wrote once: "The home is the first school and the original factory to produce men. The women's righteousness is the basis on which to preserve religion and ethics."⁴⁹ On another occasion Ben Badis wrote:" Why do we punish women by not educating them? Is learning a clear reservoir for the men and unclear one for the women? Does learning have two effects: good for the men, and ugly and bad for the women? "⁵⁰

Ben Badis was not a man of words; he was a man of deeds. He gave much of his time to give lessons to women. When he established the society for education (*Jam'iyyat al-Tarbiya wa'l-Ta'lim*) he stated in its charter that women should not pay any fees whether they were rich or poor.

His keen interest in teaching women was apparent in his continued speeches and personal contacts with Algerians to send their daughters or relatives to study in this institution. He would ask of his colleagues to promote the education among women.

The French documents took interest in the education of girls especially after the establishment of the Association. These documents gave some statistics about girls education all around Algeria. It indicated that lessons given to girls were not limited to schools, but there were private lessons given in mosques.⁵¹ Ben Badis' lessons in the mosque for women were very popular to the degree that the mosque did not have enough space⁵² .

Another document stated that girls' education differed from boys education. Girls teaching included basic principals of education, principals of ethics and morals, home making, childcare and other subjects. Girls also participated in art work.⁵³

He even went steps ahead by planning to send some Algerian girls to study abroad in Syria. He wrote to the director of the *Dawhat Al-Adab Al-Soriyya* (إتحاد الأدب السوري) asking her to accept a few Algerian girls to study at their school. But when the Second World War broke out, he could not finalize this mission.

Ben Badis' keen interest in women was also to combat writers and scholars promoting westernization. This trend was encouraged by the colonial administration with the collaboration of the Christian missionaries. In Tunis Al-Tahir ben Al-Haddad wrote his book about women and Shariaa in which he called for amendment to Islamic jurisprudence to be more in agreement with the Western World. The French newspapers and journals played a significant role in promoting western education for Algerian women. Al-Shihab reported that the French Newspaper *L'Echo de Tlemcan* published the answers of its editor in answering a question about the education of women saying "women's education would be better if it was in French". Here Ben Badis replied strongly "we know for sure that women's education if it was not in her mother tongue –however the degree of knowledge she reached- would misguide her from the righteous path."⁵⁴

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this paper with two quotations: one from a Canadian scholar who wrote about Ben Badis about ten years after the independence of Algeria. This scholar is Andre Dirlik. The other quotation is taken from a review on Dirlik's work written by Al-Rabie Maimoun, a professor of Philosophy in the University of Algeria. Dirlik wrote: "Abdul Hamid Ben Badis is best described as a man of action. His interests remained focused upon the regeneration of his society although his concerns ranged from those of the educationalist to those of the political agitator."

Dirlik elaborated on this point by explaining how Ben Badis executed his program to help develop Algeria. These steps were the following:

- 1- His respect of the Zakat establishment which prevents the

accumulation of wealth in the hands of the wealthy people according to the Qura'anic verse (*As-Sadaqat* (here it means *Zakat*) are only for the *Fuqara'* (poor) and *Al-Masakin* (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds) and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam) and to free the captives, and those in debt, and for Allah's Cause (i.e., for *Mujahidun*- those fighting in a holy battle), and for the wayfarer (a traveler who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is all knower, All Wise (*Al-Tawbahi* : 9)

- 2- He insisted on the urgency of reform in the economical behavior that has negative effects such as; usury, gambling, exploitation of labor by owners of business.
- 3- Ben Badis understood the grave impact of parsimony on the society, so he had written condemning this trait among some rich people, which prevent them from spending on charities and other noble causes.
- 4- He encouraged the collaboration and cooperation amongst the different sectors of the society which would help the farmer to improve his farming, the industry to be improved and business to flourish.⁵⁵

“Abdul Hamid ibn Badis had assumed a role which restricted him neither to that of the ideologue who formulates for his community a new system of thought, nor to that of the activist whose endless energy moves the masses of the people from their traditional inertia.”⁵⁶

Real development must start with preserving the national identity, then any borrowing from others will be accepted as long as it does not affect or clash in any way with his identity. Moreover, retaining self-respect is one of the main prerequisites for real development. At the earliest time of the Islamic History when the Muslims for the first time were exposed to other civilizations, such as the Persian, the Greek and the Indian, they were not infatuated by these civilizations to any extent of losing their own norms and values, neither had they despised them. On the contrary, they studied them impartially and contributed their own share which has enriched human knowledge ever since and at the end they handed it over to the humanity as a whole including Europe. To deny such contribution and hold a contributor to task is surely not a human act.

Notes and References

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4. A modified version of this paper was published under the title "The Roots of Muslim Rage." in the *New Republic*, Vol.266, No.3, September 1990, pp 47-61.
5. Mazin Motabagani, Abdul Hamid Ben Badis (Damascus: Dar–El Qalam, 1410/1990) p.
6. *Ibid*
7. (*al Shiahab*, Volume 12,part 8 Shaaban 1355/November 1936
8. *Al- Basaer* on 9/4/1356H/18/6/1937G)
9. *Al-Sirat Assawy*, Issue no. 15, Ramadan 8, 1352/ 25 December 1933)
10. *Al-Shihab*, Volume 6, part 5, Muharram 1349/ June 1930)
11. An interview with Sheikh Hamza Bokousha in his house on 10 Safar 1404/ 14 November 1983, and Bokousha is one of the prominent members of the Association of Algerian Ulema)
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13. Muhammad Al- Mubarak, *Islamic System- Economy*. Second edition. (Beyrouth: 1974) p 6.
14. Qutb, op.cit.p.16.
15. *Ibid*, p.3.
16. Gamal al- Dîn Al- Afghani, *Al-'Urwtu 'l-Wuthqa*, (Beyrouth 1970)p 59-60
17. *Ibrahim Al-Belaihi* , member of the Saudi Shura Council and regular writer in Al-Riyadh daily newspaper. He said this in an interview in Al-Arabia Satellites channel and in many of his weekly article.
18. Muhammad Ben Ali Al-Mahmoud, "Islamawiyah and Political Future," in *Al-Riyadh* Newspaper, December 1st. 2005.

19. *Ibid.*
20. Muhammad Qutb, *Waqiuana Al- Muaaser*, (Jeddah: Al-Madinah eoncorporation for Journalism and Publishing,)p
21. Murad Hoffman, *Islam as an Alternative*, (Riyadh: al-Obaikan ,)p 30
22. Muhammad Qutb, *Qadhitu al-Tanweer fil Alam allIslami* (Cairo: Dar Assorouq, 1420h/1999G) p33.
23. Taha Jabir Al-Alwany in his introduction to the book *Al-Nahy an Al istiaana Wa al- Istinasar fi Omor Al Muslimin ahl althimma wa al-Kuffar*. p8-10)Çááááí Úä ÇáÇÓÊÚÇäÉ æÇáÇÓÊäÖÇÑ Ýí ÆäæÑ ÇááÓááíä ÈÄááá ÇáĐäÉ æÇááÝÇÑ; ááÚáÇäÉ äÖØÝì Èä äíäí ÇáæÇÑíÇäí ; ÈĐíä æÈÚáíĐ æÈÍĐíĐ ; (ÇáÑíÇÖ:ÖÑBÉ ÇáÚÈíßÇä ááØÈÇÚÉ æÇááÖÑ; ÈÏæä ÊÇÑíí)
24. op.cit., p
25. ÚÈì Çááá Ýäí ÇááÝíÓí; ÇáÊÑÇÈ æÈííÇÈ ÇáÚÖÑ; (ÇáBæíÈ: ÖÑBÉ ÇáÈÑÈíÚÇä áááÖÑ æÇáÉæÒíÚ; 1986)Ö 10.
26. Ali Murad, *Le Reformisme Musulman en Algerie du 1925-1940*, (Paris:1967) pp 30-31
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28. Fahmi Jad'ân, *The Foundations of Modernity Held by Muslim Thinkers in the Modern Age*. (Beyrouth:1981) p 256
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33. *Ibid.*
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40. *Al-Shihab*, No.26, *Dhul Qiedah* 1344 (20 May 1926) quoting Abdul Baqi Surur.
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44. *Al-Shihâb*. vol.13,no.9, December 1936.
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47. An interview with Abdul Rahman Shaiban (former student of the association schools, then member of the board of directors and the president of the association nowadays.) the interview took place in his house in Algeria on *Safar* 9, 1404 (November 13th ,1983).
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