

Al-Ghazālī and the Crusades: Bennabian Perspective

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Abstract

Jerusalem fell into the hands of the crusaders at the end of the eleventh century. The fall of the city actually reflected the internal problem of Muslim civilisation. It was almost nine decades later that Jerusalem was successfully recaptured by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193). Some scholars have a view that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's victory was in fact an outcome of Sunni revival triggered by the spiritual thought or *taṣawwuf* of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). This view becomes even more interesting when examined with the theory of civilisation developed by Malik Bennabi (d. 1973), a twentieth century Algerian Muslim thinker. Some scholars have discussed Malik Bennabi's thought, but it seems few, if any, have used his theory to interpret certain historical chapter. This article attempts to re-read the history of the struggle for Jerusalem in the crusading period through Bennabi's perspective and discusses the importance of al-Ghazālī in this struggle.

Keywords: civilisation, crusades, al-Ghazālī, Islamic revival, Malik Bennabi, Jerusalem

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On 15 July 1099, at the end of the First Crusade, Jerusalem fell into the hands of the crusaders, followed by a massacre of its Muslim and Jewish population (France, 2006, 1:448). The Crusaders, or the so-called Franks, then established Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem; incorporating into it some of the principalities they had seized: Edessa, Antioch and later on Tripoli. Their control over Palestine did not significantly shrink except until Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193) defeated them in Hattin and regained Jerusalem in 1187 (Slack, 2003, 92). Between those years, there were hardly any effective efforts by the Muslims to reclaim the occupied territories from the crusaders.

This changing state of Muslim affairs, from serious defeat in the First Crusade to shining victory in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's era, did not only signify development in term of military prowess and strategy, but at the same time illustrated socio-religious transformation in Muslim society. Some authors, such as Mājīd 'Irsān al-Kīlānī and Abdul Rahman Azzam, suggest that a revival in the Ahl al-Sunnah's world had occurred during the period and they pointed at Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) as the person who played the most vital role behind the religious transformation of Muslim society that led to the revival. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his victory were in fact the fruit of this Sunni revival (Azzam, 2009, 7). Departed from this view, our article is going to answer this question: what is essentially the role played by al-Ghazālī in this revival and is there any theoretical explanation that can substantiate it?

This article, therefore, attempts to examine the above view and re-read the history of struggle for Jerusalem during the crusades using the theoretical framework on civilisation developed by Malik Bennabi (d. 1073), a twentieth century Algerian thinker. The use of Bennabi's thought is also important to see the extent to which the theory he developed can be utilised to explain existing historical phenomena. However, to ensure that this could be well understood by the reader, this article will start its explanation briefly with the defeat and the revival of the Muslims in the first nine decades of the Crusades, followed by a discussion on the role of Ghazālī and his *taṣawwuf*. After that, in the final part, it will discuss in depth the transformation occurred within the Muslim society during the crusade and the position of Ghazālī in that transformation through the theory of civilisation proposed by Malik Bennabi.

The Fall and the Revival of Muslim Society in the Eleventh and the Twelfth Centuries

As mentioned above, the Franks had won the First Crusade and taken Jerusalem from the Muslims. However, the success of the Franks in seizing some regions in al-Shām (Syrian-Palestinian territory) was in no way caused by their superiority of culture or military power. The victory of the crusaders was only made possible by the fact that the Seljuq Empire had severely disunited and declined, which occurred soon after the successive death in 1092 of the Seljuq vizier and the Seljuq great sultan, Nizām al-Mulk (r. 1063-1092) and Malikshāh (r. 1072-1092), leaving the Empire with no equal successors at the center of power capable of resolving the internal conflicts (Lane-Poole, 1979, 24). The Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, the highest leader of the Ahlu al-Sunnah at that time, only functioned as a symbol without real power, leaving the administration and the military to the Seljuqs.

Instability and conflict in the center of the caliphate occurred in Shām as well. This was the situation that enabled the crusaders achieving success in the First Crusade (Ibn al-Athīr, 2006, 22; Cahen, 1991, 2:64). City after city in Asia Minor and Shām fell into their hands without effective resistance from the Muslims. The horror of the slaughtering of the victims did not immediately foster solidarity among Muslim leaders to reclaim the fallen territories. Each emir in Shām only interested in defending his own territory and a real help from the central government in Baghdad could not be expected as well (Hillenbrand, 2000, 104).

More than half a century before the entry of the crusaders to Palestine, the Sunni world had actually suffered a serious blow from the Fatimid, a Shia caliphate based in Cairo. The western part of the Sunni Abbasid territory was gradually undermined by the Fatimid expansion. The entry of the Seljuq to Baghdad in the middle of the eleventh century became a new blood that delayed the Abbasid's death. However, the split of the Seljuq dynasty at the end of that century had stopped the pace of the expansion and even caused the great sultanate broke into pieces (Enan, 2009, 114).

The internal problem were not only occurred among the political leaders, but also among the members of the society and, most crucially, among the Muslim scholars. Frictions and conflicts had happened for a long time not only between the Ahl al-Sunna and the Shia, but also among the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence (*madhhabs*). This is not to mention differences among the other religious groups like philosophers, *ahl al-kalām* (theologians), and Sufis. There was a tendency of cursing each other and accusing the other followers of *madhhab* as misguided or even unbelievers. Fanaticism was so strong among the religious groups and schools of jurisprudence which made them hostile to each other and made unity seemed impossible (Al-Kīlānī, 2002, 42-43).

Sometimes fighting occurred and caused casualties. In 1012, for example, there was a riot at the College (Madrasa) of al-Sarakhsī between the Hanafites and the Hanbalites that caused the founder of the madrasa, Abū Sa'd al-Sarakhsī, killed (Makdisi, 1961, 18). In 1077, there was another riot involving the Hanbalis and the Ash'arites in the Nizāmiyya College, leading to the death of some students (Ibn al-Athīr, 2002, 193; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1992, 16:181). The tension between Sunni and Shia sometimes led to unrests and burnings of property, as happened in the west side of Baghdad in 1073 and 1086 (Makdisi, 1959, 290-291). Preoccupied with internal controversy, they paid little attention to the fall of some Muslim regions into the hands of the crusaders (Al-Kīlānī, 2002, 55-56). This situation had allowed the Franks to retain Jerusalem and some coastal regions of Shām for a long time.

Several decades after the fall of Jerusalem, however, a strong and pious leader arose in Syria, namely Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Zankī (d. 1174). The beginning of his leadership was marked by the occurrence of the Second Crusade (1147-1149), which exhibited the turning points in both parties: discord in the crusaders' camp and spirit of unity among the Muslim leaders in Shām (Azzam, 2009, 37, Runciman, 1987, 288). Later, after Nūr al-Dīn passed away in 1174, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, one of his ablest generals who few years earlier ended the already decayed Fatimid Caliphate, emerged as a new leader capable of uniting the Muslim territories from Egypt to Syria. At the height of his consolidation of power, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn successfully destroyed Frank's armed forces at Hattin in 1187 and then seized Jerusalem and most of the Frankish territories in Shām (Tyerman, 2004, 49-50). The following Third Crusade failed to reclaim Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslims. The efficacy of the crusaders continued to decline ever since.

The achievement in recapturing Jerusalem was coincided with the internal improvement within the Muslim society. The success of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was not only in the consolidation of power and the seizure of the crusaders' territories, but also in the earnest implementation of Islamic values upon the Muslim society. Their personal pieties are recognised by their contemporaries and by later Muslim scholars (Al-Baghdādī, 1998, 44; Ibn Kathīr, 1998: 16:480; Al-Iṣfahānī, 1979, 32; Ibn al-Athīr, 2010, 409; Al-Dhahabī, 1996, 20:532; Abū Shāma, 2002, 1:97-107). Both sultans took measures to enhance religious values of their people. Under Nūr al-Dīn, for example, the number of madrasas in some cities increased several folds. In general, the government of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, played a major role in the growth of religious fervor in the region (Azzam, 2009, 33-34).

Other emirs also competed to build madrasas and financed buildings for Sufi brotherhood and the like. In Baalbek, for example, a convent of Sufi was founded by Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, father of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, which survived long after his life (Ibn Khallikān, 1843, 1:245). After the removal of the Fatimid Kingdom in Egypt, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his nephew transformed several Fatimid buildings into madrasas for the Shāfi'īs (Ibn al-Athīr, 2010, 194). The rise of religious activities in the Nūriyya and Ṣalāḥiyya era are well-documented by contemporary and subsequent historians and writers.

The middle of the twelfth century witnessed not only the emergence of pious leaders, but also a generation that called by Kīlānī as a generation of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (*jīl* Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn) (Al-Kīlānī, 2002). Virtuous quality of this new generation makes Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, a companion and biographer of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, convinced that the tales of the first Muslim generations that sometimes sounds irrational are actually true, for he witnessed the heroic and amazing things prevailed in his day (Ibn Shaddād, 2001, 13).

Muslim scholars actually played central roles in this positive trend. The scholars, who previously emphasised *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *uṣūl al-fiqh* which concerned with the exterior (*ẓāhir*) of religion, now started to balance it with *taṣawwuf* that represents the interior (*bāṭin*) of religion. Consequently, this led to the increased tendencies for the hereafter as opposed to the worldly ambitions. This era also witnessed the advent of spirit of unity among the scholars from different *madhhab* which significantly reduced the quarrels among them.

The relations among the law schools were rather peaceful during most of the Zangid and Ayyūbid period. The occasional skirmishes and exchanges of insults between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi'īs, or Shāfi'īs and Ḥanbalīs, were a far cry from the violent *fitnas* that had disrupted life in the cities of Iran and Iraq from the tenth to the twelfth century. Moderate Ṣūfī asceticism and Ḥanbalī activism became powerful intellectual and social currents; they achieved acceptance and even respect from Sunni '*ulamā*', and earned the patronage of rulers, and were gradually incorporated into mainstream Islam (Talmon-Heller, 2007, 8).

In summary, as seen in the above explanation, the fall and recapture of Jerusalem in the Muslim world during the crusades were closely connected to the internal change of the Muslim society, especially the Ahl al-Sunnah. Some scholars believe that among the few that played a central role in this process of internal change is Imam al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).

The Role of Ghazālī

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī was born in 1058 in Tūs, Iran, in a socially and religiously divided world of Islam. Since young, blessed with high intellectual ability, he curiously studied and learned different creeds that spread in the society (Al-Ghazālī, 2000, 18-19). After finishing his basic education, he continued his study with Imam al-Juwainī (d. 1085) at the Niẓāmiyya College in Nishapur and then, after his master's death, resumed his career in Baghdad. In 1091 he was appointed as the head of Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad. His lectures had attracted many clerics to attend (Ibn Kathīr, 1998, 16:213). He led the most influential educational institution in this eastern hemisphere for approximately four years, giving birth to some of his best works, including powerful and influential critics to Philosophy and the Bāṭiniyya (Ismā'īlī) sect (Noval, 2000). However, this short period also witnessed the killing of Niẓām al-Mulk, the founder of Niẓāmiyyah, and the subsequent split of the Seljuq Dynasty. During the same

period, while thinking deeply about the truth and evaluating himself based on *taṣawwuf* teaching, Ghazālī found himself falling into a spiritual crisis that would change his course of life. Ghazālī recounts this in his intellectual autobiography several years later:

I examined my motive in my work of teaching, and realised that it was not a pure desire for the things of God, but that the impulse moving me was the desire for an influential position and public recognition. I saw for certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank of sand and in imminent danger of hell-fire unless I set about to mend my ways (Al-Ghazālī, 2000, 59).

This happened in 1095, the same year - without any direct connection between the two - when Pope Urban II (d. 1099) declared the First Crusade in Western Europe. Ghazālī then made a tough decision. He left his prestigious position at Nizāmiyya and chose to undergo ascetic life by traveling to Damascus and Jerusalem (Ibn al-Athīr, 2002, 284). Most probably the Crusaders had passed Asia Minor when Ghazālī completed his western journey and returned to the East. He might also fully aware about the fall of Jerusalem to the crusaders few years later, but rather than keeping himself busy with this tragedy, he devoted his energy to address another tragedy within the *umma* which was even bigger: the tragedy of the soul. In other words, he focused on self criticism to improve the situation. Since his withdrawal from Nizāmiyya, Ghazālī had chosen the Sufī path, colored his ensuing works with spiritual paints, and advocated this path as a cure for the problems of the Islamic world. It does not seem exaggerating to say, as expressed by a Western writer, that "His conversion was real and its effects lasting" (Scherer, 1933, 7).

Ghazālī did not only include *taṣawwuf* into Islamic orthodoxy, but - this perhaps much more important - through his earnest effort to realise it first on himself. According to Walter C. Klein in the introduction of al-Ash‘arī’s *Ibanah*, Ghazālī is the person responsible for integrating traditionalism, rationalism and mysticism – each represented by the four *fiqh madhhab*, Ash‘arī and Māturīdī theology, and *taṣawwuf* – which divided the Muslims for a long time. "... Ghazālī’s work stands ... in his own interior growth, the developments of the centuries before him and, when he had attained to a symbolic peace in his own soul, handed on to posterity an Islām at last mellow and mature" (Al-Ash‘arī, 1967, 1).

Among the most important roles of Ghazālī is pulling in the long-marginalised spirituality to the center of Islamic tradition. The restoration of spiritual aspect, or sometimes referred to by Ghazālī as the science of the heart (*‘ilm al-qulūb*), relaxed the hostility that had been taking place in addressing religious differences and it became a driving force towards unity and a resurgence from deterioration. Ghazālī poured his thoughts in his succeeding works which now promoted strong spiritual values. His masterpiece, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* or the revival of the religious sciences which since then became an influential reference, even to this day, brought the seeds of revivalism throughout the pages. It contains theology, philosophy, law, rational views and a vibrant picture of the world. "The *Ihya’* stands as a testimony to Ghazali’s own inner transformation. More importantly, it would transform not only Sufism, but Islam itself" (Ormsby, 2007, 110-111); means the understanding and the implementation of Islam.

It is interesting to pay attention to the narration of Ghazālī in the *Iḥyā’* when describing the characteristics of *madhhab*’s founders and how they are different from the scholars living in his days. The early *fuqahā’* (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), according to Ghazālī, did not seek any purpose other than the pleasure of the Lord. "They lived not only for the science of Fiqh, but also for the science of the heart" (al-Ghazālī, 1993, 1:38; Al-

Ghazālī, 2011, 1:90). He then mentions five imams of *madhhab*: Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/776), Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796), Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778). Insinuating the living clerics of his time, Ghazālī stated that he wrote the life story of the *madhhab*’s founders not to attack them, instead to criticise those who claimed to be their followers but whose behaviors and characters violated the examples of the early *fuqahā’*. According to Ghazālī, each one of the imams has five qualities: devout (*‘ābidan*), ascetic (*zāhidan*), learned in the science of the hereafter (*‘āliman bi ‘ulūm al-ākhirah*), understand the interest of the creation in this world (*faqīhan fī maṣāliḥ al-khalq fī al-dunyā*), seeker of God’s pleasure through the help of *fiqh* (*murīdan bi-fiqhihi wajh-Allāh Ta’āla*). “Everyone of them possessed five qualities, but the modern Faqīhs accepted only one of these qualities,” writes Ghazālī, “that is research in to the minutest details of Fiqh. The four other qualities relate to the good of the hereafter and only one relates to the good of this world” (al-Ghazālī, 1993, 1:38; Al-Ghazālī, 2011, 1:91).

By these few sentences Ghazālī addresses some important issues relevant to his fellow scholars: 1) the similar characteristics owned by the founders of the schools of jurisprudence that puts them in the same camp, far from hostility among each other, which was dramatically different from that of their later followers; 2) the weight of the hereafter in their personal qualities was far exceeds the worldly weight; 3) contrast to the founders of *madhhab*, many contemporary scholars in the Ghazālī’s era only possessed world-related quality and tended to ignore the qualities that related to the afterlife. Through the examples of the personal piety of the early *fuqahā’*, Ghazālī encourages the scholars to return to the spiritual values, godly orientation, and the drive to embrace unity and avoid disputes. In fact, Ghazālī did not imply anything foreign in his ideas. He simply brought back what was forgotten for a long time: spirituality. At the same time, Ghazālī restores a key Islamic terminology, in this case *fiqh*, from its semantic alteration, that had created corruption in knowledge in his era, to its original and proper meaning as understood and practiced by the early generation (Al-Attas, 2001, 5-6; Al-Attas, 2018, 11).

The re-introduction of spirituality into the mainstream of Islamic scholarly tradition inspired the subsequent generation of Muslim scholars to combine *fiqh* and *taṣawwuf* in their religious life. It seems that everywhere in the Sunni regions such unification of *zāhir* and *bāṭin* in the tradition of knowledge and practice could be easily found (Mason, 1972). This made some scholars regarded Ghazālī as the reformer of the fifth century of Hijra, whose reform later had a great share in the victory of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn over Jerusalem. Azzam, for example, points to Ghazālī, along with Nizām al-Mulk, as the architect of Sunni revival of that era (Azzam, 2009, 14-15). While Kīlānī makes a good study about how Ghazālī’s reform had improved Islamic society and how in the succeeding generation the *islāḥ* (reform) movement continued by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 1166) and the scholars of his era, whose madrasa alumni participated actively in the government and *jihād* of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Al-Kīlānī, 2002).

In Light of Malik Bennabi’s Theory

Malik Bennabi (d. 1973) is a Muslim intellectual from Algeria who produced some original thoughts on history and civilisation. Bennabi’s theory of civilization is actually convenient to provide more understanding to the above discussion. In his books, Bennabi does not mention the Crusades or Imam al-Ghazālī except briefly. Despite his harsh criticism toward the Sufis of his time, he respects Ghazālī as a great mystic (Bennabi, 1991, 24), as a moralist with special interest to, among several things, the study of beauty and its effect to the society, or as a prominent representative of spirituality in Islamic history (Bennabi, 2003a, 54-57), but he does not elucidate more about his role in history. Accordingly, this paper will take the task to

discuss in deep about the challenge of the crusade and the role of Ghazālī in light of Bennabi's theory.

According to Bennabi, civilisation has a life span consisting of three stages: the first is the birth (*al-mīlād*) or the revival (*al-nahḍah*); the second is the peak (*al-awj*); and the third is the decline (*al-ufūl*) (Bin Nabi, 1987, 73). Each stage is guided by a dominant force. In the first stage, civilisation and the society are guided by spirituality (*al-rūh*). This spirituality controls and regulates instinct (*al-gharīza*) to be submissive to religious values. As quoted by Fawzia Bariun, Bennabi argues that "only the spirit gives humanity the opportunity to rise and progress, to form civilisation. When the spirit loses, the civilisation falls ..." (Bariun, 1993, 117).

In the next stage, the main guide is no longer spiritual, but ratio (*'aql*), thus it is also called the rational stage. This is the peak of civilisation where science and culture is growing rapidly. However, in this stage some instincts start to get out of control, because reason is not able to control the instinct with the same effectiveness as the spirit. Therefore, although the culture is reaching its peak, this stage also marks the beginning of a state when the society begins to experience sickness (Bin Nabi, 1987, 77). In the next and the last stage, instinct is completely released and becomes the main force controlling civilisation. This is a stage of weakness and corruption, as civilisation degenerates and enters night of history. At this time, religious thought has lost its social function to the society (Bin Nabi, 1987, 77).

In the history of Islam, the boundary between Bennabi's first and second stages is the year 38 of Hijra or during the Battle of Şifīn in which the history of Islam underwent a shift from the era of Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn to the Umayyad Dynasty. As for the boundary between the rational and instinctive stages, Bennabi sometimes points to the era of Ibn Khaldun (d 1406) (Bin Nabi, 1987, 74). But on the other occasions, Bennabi tends to emphasise the Almohads era, which existed from the beginning of the twelfth century to the middle of the thirteenth century, as the last frontier of the rational stage (Bennabi, 1991, 12-15; Bennabi, 2003b, 24).

In this scheme of civilisation, the crusades and Ghazali are in a relatively clear position in Islamic history, namely in the second stage of Bennabian life span of civilisation. In fact, both existed at the end part of the rational stage. The capture of Jerusalem by the crusaders and the final phase of Ghazālī's life took place at the end tip of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth century, just few years before the Almohads, the last frontier of the rational stage, started its government in Maghrib. Thus, Ghazālī lived in the period when the rational stage of Muslim history was at its completion and prepared for the new stage. According to Bennabi, Ghazālī, along with Ibn Rushd, is a Muslim prodigy such particular period of twilight was still capable to produce (Bennabi, 2003b, 71).

This explains the phenomenon that existed at that time, where science was still thriving in the Islamic world and reason was still a major force that holds the reins of Islamic civilisation, although it seemed to become increasingly eroded and pushed by the swelling of instinctive tendency. This is also in line with the development of religious sciences where the details of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* were highly emphasised. It was an important contribution in sciences, but at the same time, as mentioned before, the period released some diseases that led to the disunity and schism. Interestingly, such condition was addressed by Ghazālī when describing the qualities of '*ulamā*' in his day, who dived deeply to the "minutest details of Fiqh", but ignored the qualities related to the afterlife and spirituality. There was even a tendency of some scholars to denounce imams of different *madhhab* and their followers.

What prevailed among the scholars at that time was more or less as described by Bennabi: "... any collective action becomes difficult, indeed impossible because disputes and controversies amongst individuals would then be conducted not to find solutions for the real

problems of life, but only to produce proofs and arguments ...” (Bennabi, 1998, 48-49). Diseases penetrated into the society and were manifested noticeably in negative character of pride, selfishness and pleasure-seeking, which ultimately led to social disintegration. Problems that took place were ultimately unresolved because social relationship had lost its function. If in a healthy society the problems should be addressed to find a way out, for those affected by the disease “it is only an occasion for conceit and self-gratification of the ego” (Bennabi, 1998, 49).

What Bennabi said above had happened during and after the First Crusade. Not only the *‘ulamā’* fell into the diseases, same situation could also be observed among the political leaders. Each emir were busy upholding their own position and did not really care about the fate of their people or their colleagues. It can be seen for example during the siege of Antioch that occurred about a year and a half before the fall of Jerusalem. The city was under siege for nine months by the crusaders without any serious relief efforts from the other emirs in the region. A few days after the city fell, a large Muslim army led by the emir of Mosul and assisted by the emirs of Shām arrived behind the wall of Antioch. However, the emir of Mosul did not want to hear the opinions of the other emirs, while the other emirs secretly agreed to leave him at the event of open battle (Ibn al-Athīr, 2006, 15-17). So it finally happened, as Ibn al-Qalānisī writes: “... the Franks, though they were in the extremity of weakness, advanced in battle order against the armies of Islām, which were at the height of strength and numbers, and they broke the ranks of the Muslims and scattered their multitudes” (Ibn al-Qalānisī, 1932, 46). The Franks who had previously been forced to eat carcasses to survive in the siege were then able to easily defeat the stronger Muslim forces and made them run away (Ibn al-Qalānisī, 1932, 46). Following Bennabi’s argument, those emirs did not actually come to solve the problems, rather they came for conceit and self-gratification. Similar cases were prevalent in the decades prior and after the First Crusade.

In seeking solutions to the problems, Bennabi believes that the problem of any people is the problem of its civilisation, and the search for its solution will not be effective unless we understand the problem at civilisational level (Bin Nabi, 1987, 21). This view of Bennabi can be observed in the Islamic world in the crusading era. What happened in Jerusalem at that time was not a solitary problem, but only an example of the problems that also occurred in other parts of the Islamic world. Ibn al-Athīr, for example, when starting his explanation about the Frankish invasion during the First Crusade, mentions two other similar events, which were the fall of Toledo in Spain and the fall of Sicily, each in 1085 and 1091, also by the Franks (Ibn al-Athīr, 2006, 13). The seizures of these territories by the Christians were only examples portraying the universal problem experienced by the Islamic civilisation.

Ghazālī, as appears in his writings, can be said to have in no way responded to the crusade that caused a tragedy for the Muslims in Shām, while it is unlikely that he did not know at all about the calamity. The absence of this theme in the writings of Ghazālī raises question, even criticism, from some individuals. However, this question seems to emerge much later, among the scholars or writers of the twentieth century, such as Yusuf al-Qaradāwī and Mustafa Abu-Sway (Al-Musleh, 2007, 219), who lived in the era when Jerusalem had fallen into the hands of the Zionists, in which the phenomenon of the fall of Jerusalem several centuries ago started to be seen as ideological by the Muslims, while the situation was very different in the medieval times. Unlike the Franks, during the crusades the Muslims did not see the event as ideological, but only as a conflict in the periphery (Watt, 1972, 56-57; Hillenbrand, 2000, 4-5).

In spite of that, Ghazālī’s attitude was in fact in line with Bennabi’s view that is to ascend along with his thoughts and to understand the problem at the core of civilisation. From the very beginning, Ghazālī was aware how people were divided into various sects and

groups, each of them claimed to be the sole proprietor of the truth. The situation is described by Ghazālī as “the ocean depths in which the majority drowns” (Al-Ghazālī, 2000, 18). In his search for the truth Ghazālī finally came to the conclusion that the highest and most satisfying path in reaching the truth was the Sufi path. He also came to the realisation of how Muslims living in his day had fallen into a serious and widespread illness, in which the doctors – means the scholars - had also become sick “and mankind has reached the verge of destruction” (Al-Ghazālī, 2000, 80). As if he stood at the edge of Bennabian peak of civilisation, looking anxiously at the approaching slope of decline.

The source of the disease was the weak of faith that permeated to the whole classes of the society. Ghazālī himself had doubted he could do anything to change the situation, and he felt that the task could only be done by a powerful and solemn ruler, although he later moved to improve the situation after he had improved his own condition (Al-Ghazālī, 2000, 79-80). “I ask Him first of all to reform me and to reform through me, to guide me and then to guide through me ...,” writes Ghazālī (Al-Ghazālī, 2000, 83).

In other words, Ghazālī found that people were drowning into a spiritual crisis, which was actually a consequence of the existence of those who were living at the end of the rational stage and were going to fall to the instinctive stage. The fall of Jerusalem, then, was only a symptom, among many other symptoms arised in Muslim Civilisation, the source of which was the real problem to be addressed and healed. The identification of the problem, which was directed to the level of civilisation, opened up a considerable space for the real improvement of Muslim society, with the result that some pious Muslim rulers emerged in the following decades. The liberation of Jerusalem was only one of the fruits resulting from this series of remedial efforts. But in the meantime, Muslims needed to bear the consequences of their setbacks and weaknesses.

The weakness of Muslim state and society, as described above, had invited the coming of the Franks to take control some of their territories, including Jerusalem. This control, though perhaps did not exactly the same as that of Western colonialism that took place in the Islamic world from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, basically moved with the same thrust and both possessed colonial attributes. For Bennabi, later colonialism was no less Christian than the crusades (Bennabi, 1991, 16-17). Nevertheless, the real problem lies not in the coming of the colonial power from abroad, but in the weakness within the Muslim society that had invited the incursion of foreign power (Bin Nabi, 1987, 33). Bennabi calls this state of affairs as *colonisability* or a colonisable condition, which El-Mesawi concluded as “the state of internal weakness and susceptibility to colonization in the Muslim society” which make it the cause and the invitor of colonialism (Bennabi, 1998, 32).

Bennabi puts *colonisability* on the instinctive stage, when Islamic civilisation had deteriorated (Bennabi, 1998, 91). However, this can also be clearly observed during the First Crusade. At that time, Muslims, especially the Ahl al-Sunnah, were experiencing a decline that, among others, was seen in the break up of the Seljuq at the end of the eleventh century. This encouraged the Byzantine Emperor, whose territory was directly adjacent to the Islamic world, to take steps to recapture Asia Minor from the hands of the Seljuq, and soon asked for help from the Franks through Pope Urban II. This became the direct cause of the First Crusade (France, 2006, 1:439; Paine, 2005, 32).

Colonialism cannot be erased, according to Bennabi, until the colonisable condition is eliminated from within the Muslim society. In his writing he appears to be angry at his fellow countrymen in Algeria who were eager for independence, without seriously trying to eliminate the *colonisability* inherent in their soul (Bin Nabi, 1987, 39). For Bennabi, the situation will be the same, in Algeria or elsewhere, in the modern world or in the Middle Ages, *colonisability* will always invite and lead to colonialism. The same was true for the

Muslim society during the First Crusade. The fall of Jerusalem closely related to the internal condition of the Muslims, more than to the external causes.

But then, what is actually *colonisability*, which sometimes called by Bennabi as the coefficient of colonialism, and what are the main factors that led to it? According to Bennabi, it was not the decrease of the wealth of a civilisation, whether associated with ideas, persons, or objects that marks the occurrence of *colonisability*, but the loss of social relation function. This coefficient arises in conjunction with the circumstances when “its social relations network was torn apart” (Bennabi, 1998, 30). Similarly, he attributes this situation to the disease of worldly love mentioned by Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in his hadith (narrated by Imam Aḥmad) which describes the state of Muslim society at the end of time when they are like a meal on a dining table surrounded by their enemies. Their number at that time is numerous, but they are enfeebled by the diseases of worldly love (*ḥubb al-dunyā*) and fear of death. The meaning of this hadith, according to Bennabi, “fully applies to the world of colonizers and of those in a state of *colonizability*” (Bennabi, 1998, 30).

These factors, namely the breakdown of social relationships and the disease of worldly love, for Bennabi, as well as for Ghazālī, closely related to the spiritual state of Muslim society. As mentioned earlier, Ghazālī compares scholars of his era with the founders of the schools of jurisprudence that strictly maintained values related to the afterlife, among them asceticism (*zuhd*) which is the opposite to the worldly love mentioned in the above hadith. Similarly, along with the absence of this spiritual value, there was a tendency among the scholars to attack clerics from different schools, exposing the tearing of social relations between them. The coefficient of colonialism as described by Bennabi was visible in the Ghazālī’s era and had been identified by the latter in several passages of his writings, and it could not be separated from the worsening of the spiritual state, as reflected in the Bennabian life span of civilisation, or the weakness of faith as referred to by Ghazālī in his autobiography.

The situation is also cautiously described by Ghazālī, which at the same time shows his profound understanding at the level of civilisation, when he mentions the root of problem that occurred in the Muslim society at that time:

People are corrupt (*fasād*) because the rulers are corrupt, and the rulers are corrupt because the scholars (*‘ulamā’*) are corrupt, and the scholars are corrupt because of their love for wealth and position. Those who are dominated by worldly love (*ḥubb al-dunyā*) will undoubtedly unable to carry out *ḥisba* [commanding good and prohibiting evil] to the ordinary people, then how to the rulers and great men? (Al-Ghazālī, 2011, 4:705)

According to Ghazālī, the root of the problem lies in the disease of worldly love that afflicts the Muslim society, especially the scholars. This brings us to another part of Bennabi’s explanation of civilisation. Bennabi holds that civilisation (*ḥaḍārah*) is a composite of three main elements, namely man (*insān*), land (*turāb*) and time (*waqt*) (Bennabi, 1998, 31; Bin Nabi, 1987, 50). Among these three elements, man plays the most important role. “If he moves, society and history move, but if he pauses, society and history pause” (Bariun, 1993, 167). Every society contains these three elements, but the existence of these three elements does not necessarily create a civilisation. Therefore, according to Bennabi, they required a catalyst that will compound these three elements so as to produce civilisation. This catalyst is religious thought (*al-fikra al-dīniyya*) (Bin Nabi, 1987, 50). In his writings, Bennabi also hints at the characteristics of this religious thought as being capable of touching

human soul (Bin Nabi, 1987, 32-34), generating men that guided by spiritual values (Bin Nabi, 1987, 75), strongly directing these men with afterlife orientation (Bin Nabi, 1987, 80), as well as having a social function that can mobilise society in developing culture and shaping history (Bin Nabi, 1987, 77).

Man is the bearer and receiver of religious thought, which will make him move along with the other elements and produce civilisation. This thought of Bennabi actually leads to the consequence that the most potent in bringing religious thought among men are the Prophets and, afterwards, the scholars who are the inheritors of the Prophets. Here we find a strong connection with Ghazālī's thought. Ghazālī identifies the important position of '*ulamā*' in the Muslim society and its history. In other words, within the human element put by Bennabi as the most important factor in the formation of civilisation, Ghazālī's thought suggests the most core category in it, which is the '*ulamā*'. This can be perfectly expressed through his saying in his other book that "the slip of the scholar will lead to the derailment of universe (*zallat al-ālim zallat 'ālam*)" (Al-Ghazālī, 1322H, 12).

In fact, these Muslim scholars, next after the Prophets, who have the greatest potential in bringing and spreading religious thought. Ghazālī himself as a scholar plays a role in bringing new religious thought to the society in his era. This religious thought, in which *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is the main representation, speaks of the heart and soul of man, directs man to the afterlife, drives people toward strong spiritual qualities, and runs its social function in balancing the *zāhir* and *bāṭin* and provides a path toward unity among the existing Ahl al-Sunna schools of jurisprudence.

Bennabi in one of his writings alludes to Ghazālī's attempt to improve Muslim society, but he considers "it was already too late. As the third stage of the civilization's cycle had already started, Muslim society had only to slide along the slope down to the post-Almohad era" (Bennabi, 2003b, 61). This view of Bennabi should be understood in the overall context, that the era of Ghazālī was at the transition of the rational stage to the instinctive stage, and Ghazālī's effort did not make the Muslim civilisation cycled back to the first stage. However, this does not mean that Ghazālī's effort had no any impact to history.

Some authors, as mentioned earlier, regard Ghazālī as the leading figure in the revival of Ahl al-Sunnah. History did show an important shift in the Islamic world in that era, especially in Shām, from decline to resurgence. This explained the success of the Muslims in the region in removing *colonisability* from their society, which followed by the recapture of Jerusalem by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Therefore Azzam concludes that one cannot "comprehend the intellectual and spiritual world in which Saladin lived without examining the contribution which Ghazali made to its firmament" and, quoting Newby, "had it not been for him, Saladin would have been much more of a fundamentalist" (Azzam, 2009, 15). The religious thought of Ghazālī did not only spark a transformation in Shām, but also influenced Ibn Tumart (d. 1130) who later founded Almohads (Hodgson, 1977, 2:269), the very dynasty pointed out by Bennabi as the last frontier before Islamic civilisation slipped into instingtive stage.

It does not seem exaggerating to say that Ghazālī's reform had actually been instrumental in delaying the permanent decline of the Islamic world or delaying the transition from the rational stage to the instinctive stage. It had encouraged the Muslims to return to their spiritual values that enabled them, to some extent, to cure widespread social diseases in their society. The initial decline and the *colonisability* that led to the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the crusaders did change later and enabled the city to be ruled again by the Muslims. Ghazālī, however, did not reverse the cycle of Islamic civilisation back to its starting point or to the spiritual stage. The Islamic world remained in the rational stage, but now its increasingly fragile vitality was refreshed, at least for some time, with spiritual values that had hitherto been eroded from their civilisation. The Islamic civilisation itself had finally

failed to avoid its destiny, moving to an instinctive stage in later times. However, one might suppose, if allowed, that without Ghazālī's role, perhaps the instinctive stage would commence sooner and Jerusalem would probably remain in the hands of the crusaders, as Toledo and Sicily have never returned to the Islamic world since its takeover by the Europeans in the second half of the eleventh century.

Finally, Bennabi's explanation of the life span of civilisation and its characteristics shows clearly that Ghazālī has neither caused the decline of Islamic world, nor caused the decline of Muslim sciences, as some have alleged. The Islamic world at that time had already been declining from the rational stage to the instinctive stage. The advancement of science in that era did not help in resolving social disease in the Muslim society that significantly weakened the society and opened up to the invasion of foreign powers. Based on Bennabi's theory, Ghazālī had nothing to do with the declining state of the Islamic world. On the contrary, what he did had actually helped the Islamic world to recover, or at least to delay, from deterioration and to reclaim some of its territories from the European invaders.

Conclusion

The Crusading era shows an interesting episode in Islamic history when at the end of the eleventh century there was a split in the Islamic society, followed by the fall of Jerusalem and some parts of Shām into the hands of the crusaders. Referring to Bennabi's theory, the Islamic world was in a rational stage, or more precisely at the end of that stage, and was going to turn to the last stage of its life span, which was the instinctive stage or the phase of corruption and decline. What Bennabi describes about the characteristics of the rational stage, such as the onset of social diseases, the breakup of social functions and the tendency for social disintegration, can be observed during this period. The phenomenon of the fall of Jerusalem is not isolated in the Islamic history and some of similar setbacks can also be seen in other parts of the Islamic world. This illustrates what Bennabi explains about the interconnectedness of the problems that befell the Muslim nations, because their problem is in fact the problem of civilisation.

However, about half a century later the Ahl al-Sunnah's world, especially in Shām, was able to rise again and able to recapture Jerusalem from the hands of the crusaders. Some thinkers point out the important role of Ghazālī in this process of revival. Ghazālī reintroduced the long-discounted spirituality back into Islamic civilisation, which in turn, following Bennabi's explanation, reinforced the religious control of instinct, tempered the hostility and eliminated division in the society. The religious thought introduced by Ghazālī was in accordance with the conditions for resurgence suggested by Bennabi. The reading of the history of the crusades through Bennabi's theory reinforces the view of those who see the important contribution of Ghazālī in the Sunni revival in that period. In other words, Ghazālī has brought religious thought, especially through his *Ihyā'*, capable of mobilizing human soul and reattaching social relationships in the Islamic world, starting from the '*ulamā*' as the primary holders of religious values.

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