"The past cannot be repeated. By copying it, it proves that one cannot do better. By repeating the past, by designing the same thing is not the solution. Modernity cannot be denied. How do we merge the two? That is continuity. We can't ask people to live in mud houses. We have to come up with new solutions."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2004 Times of India Interview (New Delhi, India)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7094/

"I believe that today the Islamic world's view of its own future is seriously affected by a divergent squint. It is a world split into two tendencies: on the one hand, modernisers and believers in progressive change, on the other, traditionalists who might even be described as hidebound. Both seek to determine future directions to be taken by the Ummah which will reinforce its identity, or rather its identities, while remaining rooted in a truth which is firmly Muslim. In practise, these two tendencies can be seen in the political domain in the differences between theocratic governance and the secular state; between the application of Sharia in all legal fields and the complete absence of Sharia or its application only in the domain of civil law; between economic and financial systems based on Sharia and systems that are essentially liberal and Westernised; between religious education at every level and a national system
with no reference at all to religion throughout the whole educational process, apart from the madrasa option for very young children.

"In this context, we thought it essential, whichever choice Muslim populations may indicate to their governments, to clarify certain aspects of the history of Muslim civilisations in order that today's two main tendencies, modern and traditional, can base their ideas on historical realities and not on history that has been misunderstood or even manipulated."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2007 Address at the 'Musée-Musées' Round Table Conference, Louvre Museum (Paris, France)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8283/

"If ignoring the past was a problem on one side, then the opposite danger was an exaggerated submission to the past, so that some creations and creators became prisoners of dogma or nostalgia. There is a danger, in every area of life, everywhere in the world, that people will respond to the hastening pace of change with an irrational fear of modernism, and will want to embrace uncritically that which has gone before. The Islamic world has sometimes been vulnerable to this temptation -- and the rich potential for a new 'Islamic modernism' has sometimes been under-estimated.

"The Aga Khan Award was designed, in part, to address this situation, encouraging those who saw the past as a necessary prelude to the future and who saw the future as a fulfilling extension of the past.... In my view, a healthy life, for an individual or a community, means finding a way to relate the values of the past, the realities of the present, and the opportunities of the future. The built environment can play a central role in helping us to achieve that balance."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2007 (10th) Aga Khan Award For Architecture Presentation Ceremony address (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8280/
"There the Imam is responsible for interpreting. But he will look back into history with others and see how certainly Islamic history was dealt with, how current issues were contextualised at the time. There are periods in our own history which are exemplars or case studies, where there is an enormous amount to be learned. So we’re not always trying to develop new solutions. We may be looking at methodologies which were used in the past, which were legitimised in history, which showed that they were good solutions. And which we can simply try to adapt to our times. So it’s not a process where there is a deliteralisation of the past. It’s a process, on the contrary, of learning and interpreting. That is a very, very important aspect of the work. But as I said, it’s not cast in stone. Research cannot be simply rooted in history; it needs to be future oriented, too."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1999 Pranay Gupte Interview (United States, United Kingdom) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/5676/

"Diversity, in fact, is part of the essence of Islam. The unity of the Ummah does not imply sameness. Working in an Islamic context need not confine us to constraining models. Nor does respecting the past mean copying the past. Indeed, if we hold too fast to what is past, we run the risk of crushing that inheritance. The best way to honour the past is to seize the future. In sum, an Islamic architectural agenda involves a dual obligation -- a heightened respect for both the traditions of the past and the conditions of the future."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2010 Aga Khan Award For Architecture Prize Ceremony address (Doha, Qatar) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9616/
"In the face of this changing world, which was once a universe to us and is now no more than an overcrowded island, confronted with a fundamental challenge to our understanding of time, surrounded by a foreign fleet of cultural and ideological ships which have broken loose, I ask, do we have a clear, firm and precise understanding of what Muslim Society is to be in times to come? And if as I believe, the answer is uncertain, where else can we search then in the Holy Qur’an, and in the example of Allah’s last and final Prophet? ... 

"The Holy Prophet's life gives us every fundamental guideline that we require to resolve the problem as successfully as our human minds and intellecs can visualise. His example of integrity, loyalty, honesty, generosity both of means and of time, his solicitude for the poor, the weak and the sick, his steadfastness in friendship, his humility in success, his magnanimity in victory, his simplicity, his wisdom in conceiving new solutions for problems which could not be solved by traditional methods, without affecting the fundamental concepts of Islam, surely all these are foundations which, correctly understood and sincerely interpreted, must enable us to conceive what should be a truly modern and dynamic Islamic Society in the years ahead. [Emphasis added]"

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1976 Presidential Address to the International Seerat Conference (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1804/

"Let me turn to another aspect of Islamic society: our intellectual elite. In the past, much of the dynamism of Muslim society was born from the leaders of the faith: the Imams, the Pirs and Mullahs. This identity between the leaders of the faith and the empire's intellectual elite was a continuous source of strength both to the faith and those whose duty it was to govern the empire. How many aspiring Mullahs or Imams today enter secular universities and obtain degrees in secular subjects? And vice-versa, how many university graduates, after completing their degrees, turn their lives to directing the flock of the faithful?"
"Let me not be misunderstood -- I criticise neither Pirs nor Mullahs nor Imams nor degree-holders. I simply state that in future I believe it will be in our society's interest to have a much wider platform in common between our religious and our secular leaders. Our religious leadership must be acutely aware of secular trends, including those generated by this age of science and technology. Equally, our academic or secular elite must be deeply aware of Muslim history, of the scale and depth of leadership exercised by the Islamic empire of the past in all fields.

"It is through the creation of such a new elite, inspired by, and widely read in everything related to our heritage, that there must come about a revival in Muslim thought."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1970 University of Sind Convocation Ceremony address (Hyderabad, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1602/

"Certainly no Muslim nation can endure unless its leaders, its teachers, its parents and its youth hold fast to the faith which should inspire their whole outlook. This has been said to you before -- and by men who are more experienced and better qualified to speak than I. As a young man, however, perhaps I may be permitted to add this further reflection. Without Islam, the very idea of Pakistan would have been an absurdity. But as a modern state striving to establish itself in an uncertain world, I feel sure that her Muslim inspiration must move with the times. The recent decision to make Islamic teaching compulsory in the schools will, I believe, prove a very wise one. But its benefits will not be fully experienced if that religious instruction is too hidebound by dogmas of the past. There is no need to discard the great traditions of our faith. There is every need to adapt and invigorate them in the light of the quite altered circumstances of today."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1958 Takht Nashini (Enthronement) Ceremony address (Dacca, East Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1062/
"The Muslims must now awake, and taking their example from the glorious life and the marvellous teachings of the Holy Prophet build their spiritual and religious faith on Muhammad and work for the development in science, knowledge, and political and social advance along the lines of the most progressive races of mankind.

"Formalism and verbal interpretation of the teaching of the great Arabian are in absolute contradiction with the whole history of the Prophet. We must accept his Divine Message as the channel of our union with the Absolute and the Infinite, and once our spiritual faith is firmly established, fearlessly go forward by self-sacrifice, by courage, and by application to raise the scientific, the economic, the political, and social position of the Muslims to a place of equality with Christian Europe and America.

"Our social customs, our daily work, our constant efforts must be tuned up, must be brought into line with the highest form of possible civilisation. At its greatest period Islam was at the head of science, was at the head of knowledge, was in the advanced line of political, philosophic and literary thought.

"Today we are in our middle-ages. We must get out of it, and begin our new era with strength and will power for the coming development of our people."

Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III's 1934 article 'A Call to the Islamic World. Muslims Awake!' (London, United Kingdom; Calcutta, India) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10396/

"[T]he key to intellectual progress will not lie in any single body of instruction, but in a spirit of openness to new expression and fresh insights.... The fundamental reason for the pre-eminence of Islamic civilisations lay neither in accidents of history nor in acts of war,
but rather in their ability to discover new knowledge, to make it
their own, and to build constructively upon it."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2006 Aga Khan University Convocation
Ceremony address (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7997/

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on knowledge as a key to the dream
of renewing Islam to ‘the cutting edge of world progress’
http://www.facebook.com/notes/nanowisdoms-archive-of-imamat-speeches-
interviews-and-writings/excerpts-his-highness-the-aga-khan-on-knowledge-
as-a-key-to-the-dream-of-renewing/478446868640169

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on thinking independently and the
search for new knowledge -- the spirit of adventure
http://www.facebook.com/notes/nanowisdoms-archive-of-imamat-speeches-
interviews-and-writings/excerpts-his-highness-the-aga-khan-on-thinking-
independently-and-the-search-for/500818353269687

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on knowledge societies: past,
present and future
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interviews-and-writings/excerpts-his-highness-the-aga-khan-on-knowledge-
societies-past-present-and-future/532825446735644

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on tradition and modernity -- Part
1/4: 'Islam is for all places and all time'
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interviews-and-writings/excerpts-his-highness-the-aga-khan-on-tradition-and-
modernity-part-14-islam-is-for-all-places-and-all-time/553189198032602
See also: TH, Aga Khans III and IV on tradition and modernity -- Part 2/4: Towards 'new understandings of essential principles'


See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on tradition and modernity -- Part 3/4: 'Progress does not mean occidentialisation'


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