

## *Review Essay*

# Reconstruction of Islamic Thought and Civilization: The Case of Islamization of Knowledge

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This article reviews the intellectual manifestations of Islamic revivalist movements in general and the Islamization of Knowledge movement in particular. The paper argues that the intellectual crisis of the Muslim Ummah was identified by most of the earlier thinkers and leaders but it did not receive sufficient attention. It reviews the assessment of the intellectual crisis by Muslim thinkers, such as Iqbal and Mawdudi, and identifies their understanding of the need and nature of *ijtihad*. The paper then proceeds to reflect on the foundations and achievements of the Islamization of Knowledge movement. The paper explores the relationship between sociopolitical revival and intellectual revival and concludes that the reconstruction of Islamic thought is a prerequisite to the regeneration of Islamic civilization.

The two ends of the twentieth century present two different pictures of the Muslim world. At the beginning of this century, the Muslims were in a state of disarray. Most of the Muslim countries were under the control of the colonial powers. Some of the adversaries of Islam thought that its chapter in history had been closed. . . . The inner vitality of Islam proved too strong to be annihilated by the forces of political, intellectual and economic subjugation. Resistance blossomed into resurgence and the tide began to turn. Now in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the Muslim world, despite much in it that is heartrending, presents a somewhat encouraging picture. . . . There is an increasing desire to draw upon the intrinsic resources of Islam to

build a new order. What lies, to a large measure, at the root of these political, economic, cultural and intellectual manifestations of resurgence is a rediscovery of the relevance of Islam to the problems and challenges of the time. Undoubtedly, the problems facing the Muslims are formidable and the threats that confront them are legion. It is encouraging, nevertheless, that they are exhibiting a new confidence and vitality in their striving to regain their lost position and to contribute their share in rebuilding the world.<sup>1</sup>

This lengthy but genuine statement of Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari rightly reflects the inner vitality and confidence which the revivalist movements and the movement of Islamization of Knowledge have been manifesting through their different activities in different parts of the world. The whole thrust of the Islamization of Knowledge movement, as we shall demonstrate, is to reconstruct contemporary Islamic thought for the revitalization of Islamic civilization.

It seems to us that the contemporary Muslim Ummah does not exist as a dominant civilization, despite all the efforts made by Muslims. The basic reason, it is argued, lies in the crisis of contemporary Muslim thought.<sup>2</sup> In general, contemporary Muslim thought is a conglomeration of different methodologies and, therefore, does not manifest originality. The only feasible and viable solution lies, as it is argued by the pioneering thinkers of the movement, in the reconstruction of Islamic thought on the basis of a new methodology which incorporates the *tawhid* paradigm.<sup>3</sup> The resulting thought will demonstrate creativity and a spirit of *ijtihad* and as a result will prove capable of meeting the challenges of modernity. It may stand by itself as a guide and model for a peaceful and just civilization. But this is not an easy task; rather, it requires the efforts of many intellectuals of the Muslim Ummah for several decades.<sup>4</sup> This challenging task of developing a new methodology is identified and taken over by this new intellectual school of Islamization of Knowledge within the legacy of the contemporary Islamic Revival Movements.<sup>5</sup> Toward the end of the twentieth century, it has emerged as a global movement in most parts of the world.

The aim of this article is twofold. First, explore and highlight the contributions of the Islamization of Knowledge movement toward the reconstruction of the Islamic thought. The view that conceives and confines the Islamization of Knowledge movement to the production of textbooks seems to us to be doing it an injustice. We argue here that the Islamization Knowledge as a philosophy and movement refers to the intellectual, methodological, and epistemological efforts of the Muslim Ummah, initi-

ated and engineered by the International Institute of Islamic Thought, based in Herndon, Virginia (metropolitan Washington, D.C.), U.S.A. The Institute stands for the reconstruction of Islamic thought on the basis of a sound and viable scientific methodology, for the revitalization of the Islamic civilization.<sup>6</sup> Second, we examine some of the views and strategies that are expressed and adopted by the movement.

To achieve the above objectives the paper is divided into two parts. The first part presents a brief analytical survey of Islamic thought on the issue of its reconstruction produced by the twentieth century reform and revival movements. The second part ventures into a critical appreciation of the Islamization of Knowledge movement as a new emerging school of thought, which started with the ideas of Ismail al-Faruqi and Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman and is now incorporating the ideas of Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Imaduddin Khalil, and others.

## On the Reconstruction of Islamic Thought

The predicament of the Muslim Ummah during each and every period of history was examined by Muslim thinkers and revivalists, and the twentieth century has been no exception. The views and strategies of Muslim scholars of the twentieth century for the revitalization of Islamic civilization are also studied and examined by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. The significance of analyzing twentieth century Islamic thought, and what distinguishes it from earlier periods, is the peculiar approach of the analysts of the twentieth century. It seems that most of the models of analyses have adopted a criterion which is not suitable for the analysis of Islamic thought. The recent studies of Islamic thought, for example, have considered the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence in contemporary times as reactionary or anti-Western. Some of the scholars have generally attributed the consciousness of the Muslim Ummah to the impact of modernity or as a response to Western hegemony. However, if we study contemporary Islamic resurgence in its proper epistemological background, we find that the real strength of the consciousness of the Muslim Ummah comes from within, that is, from the understanding of the divine texts in their proper context along with the proper methodology. It clearly signifies that the divine texts possess sufficient strength and dynamism to motivate the followers forward. This is what we find in every period of history: scholars asking for a return to the divine texts. They also demanded that to under-

stand the divine texts there must be genuine creative efforts instead of blind following of the earlier interpretations. Iqbal, for example, analyzed the Muslim Ummah and its conditions in the light of the divine texts. He, therefore, for the first time in the twentieth century, identified the urgent need to reconstruct Islamic thought. He warned Muslims against the adaptation of alien ideas and models and asked forcefully for the reconstruction of Islamic thought. He called on Muslims to critically watch the progress of human thought. He writes:

Our duty is carefully to watch the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude toward it.<sup>7</sup>

Iqbal and (later) other revivalist thinkers such as Mawdudi and Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi in the Indian subcontinent and Malik bin Nabi, Sayyid Qutb, and others in the Arab world deeply analyzed the factors that have contributed to the stagnation of Islamic thought and civilization. They all identified the following four factors which have contributed to the decline of the Muslim Ummah: the negligence of the universal mission of the Muslim Ummah, the disintegration of the caliphate into monarchy, the close of *ijtihād*, and the negligence of *jihad* (one's utmost struggle and efforts for the cause of Allah). Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi examined the causes of the decline of the Muslim Ummah and argued that the Muslim community lacked both *jihad* and *ijtihād*.<sup>8</sup> Sayyid Mawdudi, on the basis of a profound historical analysis of the Muslim Ummah, argued that the lack of *ijtihād* and *jihad* has been the main source of the decline of the Muslim Ummah. Iqbal expressed the same opinion during his sixth lecture in the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* series. Discussing the principle of movement in the structure of Islam, he said:

What then is the principle of movement in the structure of Islam? This is known as *ijtihād*.<sup>9</sup>

Iqbal asserted that it is the responsibility of the scholars and leaders of the Islamic world to comprehend and ponder over the progress of Islamic law in history and the necessity of fresh interpretations in every period. He writes:

I have given you some idea of the history and working of *ijtihād* in modern Islam. I now proceed to see whether the history and structure of the Law of Islam indicates the possibility of any fresh interpretation of its principles.<sup>10</sup>

Like Iqbal, Mawdudi also raised the question of a fresh interpretation of the divine texts. He observed:

The world has changed beyond recognition. The conditions prevailing in the world, its views, trends and theories have entirely changed. The social problems and issues have taken many a turn, but our religious leaders are still living in the same old conditions five or six centuries back . . . If their leadership fails to guide them in the evernew intellectual, academic and practical issues and problems, then it is quite natural that their followers will discard their leadership.<sup>11</sup>

Commenting on the need for fresh interpretation of the divine texts in their proper context, Mawdudi thus identified the need to develop a new methodology of Islamic thought. According to him, it is indispensable to revise not only the principles of fiqh but the true meaning of the term fiqh. He argued that unfortunately the concept of fiqh is confined only to the understanding of the legal principles of Islam. The truth is, he said, the word "fiqh" in Arabic signifies understanding and in Islamic terminology fiqh connotes the understanding of the divine *din al-Islam*.<sup>12</sup> It is implicit in the term "fiqh" that it includes a comprehensive understanding of Islam as an empirical reality to establish it in the form of effective structures and systems. For this purpose one has to acquire all knowledge and skills. No area of life is beyond the fold of Islam. Mawdudi, therefore, asks for proper development of the methodology of Islamic thought. In his discussion on the right course of the reconstruction of the Muslim Ummah he emphasizes the proper utilization of the basic sources of Islam. For him, Islamic society is based upon the commandments of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet, and the interpretations of the Qur'an and the Sunnah by the Islamic scholars and jurists, respectively. He says:

This order has been totally reversed and changed. Now the first and foremost importance is given to the opinions and findings of the modern scholars and jurists, then to the Sunnah of the holy Prophet, and lastly to the teachings and commandments of the holy Qur'an. This reversed order is really responsible for the stagnation, reducing Islam to something static and stale.<sup>13</sup>

Muslims were leaders as long as they derived knowledge and guidance directly from the main sources of Islam and tried to solve the problems of their time in the light of the divine guidance through proper thinking and sincere contemplation. But they declined when their leaders and scholars

stopped direct reflection of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and followed blindly the interpretations of the imams and jurists. They did not realize that the works of the earlier jurists and scholars do help and guide us in several ways but cannot be regarded as sacred and eternal sources because all human wisdom and knowledge is subject to human limits and time.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Mawdudi suggests that creative research, new inventions, and discoveries of new things, based on the spirit of *ijtihad*, guarantees the growth and development of the Ummah on the right path.

Both Iqbal and Mawdudi discuss different tools and sources of knowledge. For example, Iqbal argues that the Qur'an regards both *anfus* (plural of *nafs*, meaning "self") and *afaq* (the horizons, by extension "the world") as the sources of knowledge.<sup>15</sup> He writes:

The constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'an, and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge are all different aspects of the same idea of finality.<sup>16</sup>

Europe, Iqbal says, has been rather slow to recognize the Islamic origin of her scientific method. "Ibn Hazm, in his *Scope of Logic*, shows that induction is the only form of reliable argument. Thus arose the method of observation and experiment."<sup>17</sup> The Qur'an, in fact, has engendered in its followers the general empirical attitude toward the acquisition of knowledge of ontology and cosmology. It is, therefore, a mistake to suppose that the experimental method is a European discovery. Iqbal says that acquiring complete perception of Reality is possible if sense perception is supported by the faculty of what the Qur'an calls *fu'ad* or *qalb*.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Iqbal reminds us that it is

necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and, if necessary, reconstruction of theological thought in Islam.<sup>19</sup>

Like Iqbal, Mawdudi identifies the sources of knowledge and its tools. For Mawdudi, *sama'*, *basr*, and *fu'ad* are the tools of knowledge. In the Qur'an, these words are used with deeper meaning. *Basr* (seeing) implies gaining knowledge through personal observation; *sama'* (listening) signifies knowledge by way of reading and understanding, both ancient and modern works on different subjects; and *fu'ad* means perceiving or arriving at conclusions based on *sama'* and *basr*. Those who do not utilize fully these faculties remain behind while those who make use of them excel.<sup>20</sup>

Discussing sources of knowledge, Mawdudi identifies two kinds of things. The first category of things are those which one can perceive through the senses, and having gathered a body of knowledge by means of the senses one can proceed to classify them by deduced laws with the help of reflection, argumentation, observation, and experimentation. The second category of things is transcendental; things of this category are beyond the reach of one's perception. They cannot be comprehended; they cannot be weighed or measured by scales, nor discovered by pressing into service any of the instruments of gaining knowledge which one has at his disposal. Mawdudi, therefore, concludes that the theories of philosophers and scientists on this subject are mere conjectures which do not come within the scope of knowledge.<sup>21</sup> He makes a clear distinction between scientific facts and scientific theories. He accepts the former and rejects the latter. He also argues that scientific research is a combination of experimental work and intellectual activity. He rejects the belief that our knowledge of the physical world is the result of mere description or sensory experiences. He argues that all of our observational and experimental activities are basically influenced by our preconceived notions. According to him, our interpretation of experimental data and our view of reality are not free from our preconceived ideas. Hence, he strongly asserts that there is no such thing as pure experimental data. Muslims of today are not in a position to understand and appreciate this difference because their minds and thinking are molded in the Western frame. They do not dare to judge Western ideas with a critical mind, distinguish between right and wrong, and choose the right alone.

Mawdudi, therefore, recommends that the Muslims think independently and formulate opinion on the basis of their own deductions. He further asserts that Muslims should look into the facts of life with a Muslim eye and think in the Muslim way. To achieve this, they have to produce free and independent thinkers. Islam today needs a renaissance. The work and research of past Muslim scholars and thinkers may not adequately guide and assist in solving today's problems. If Islam is to lead the world it must produce thinkers and researchers who can distinguish between the philosophical foundations of Western materialist civilization and Islam. Contemporary Muslim scholars should produce pure Islamic thought that can revive the Muslim Ummah to lead today's world. They should develop their own Islamic philosophy and Islamic natural and social sciences based on their own worldview.<sup>22</sup>

Evidently, Muslim thinkers and revivalists have diagnosed the malaise of the Muslim Ummah in its proper context. The civilizational crisis of the Muslim Ummah was identified in the crisis of Islamic thought. It was, therefore, suggested that the solution to the crisis of the Islamic civilization lies basically at the intellectual level and that the reformation of Islamic thought can be achieved if the door of *ijtihad* is once again opened. The main argument of Muslim thinkers early in this century was that there is an integral relationship between thought and civilization. Abu Sulayman has recently said that "thought is an element that works at a more fundamental level, one that qualifies any understanding or program for producing real results." Thus we can say that the majority of Muslim thinkers realized that all the challenges of our time by nature are intellectual and these should be addressed and resolved at the intellectual level intelligently and strategically on the basis of the spirit of *ijtihad*. Initially, the importance and significance of the intellectual dimension of the Muslim Ummah was felt, emphasized, and even at some extent discussed.

However, the present situation of the Muslim Ummah in general and the conditions of the Islamic revival movements in particular demonstrate that the importance of the intellectual dimension gradually became obscure under the shadow of a sociopolitical umbrella. The reasons are obvious. Although the need for the reformation of Islamic thought and methodology was identified at an initial stage, it was neither seriously discussed and debated nor explained in terms of effective mechanisms and structures. Even the shortcomings of the methodology were not explained in detail.

Muslim intellectuals, academicians, and scholars are not in a position to apply the empirical tools to the study of the divine texts or the human phenomena despite Iqbal's reminder that the Qur'an wants an empirical attitude in its followers. There was a need to discuss and explain in detail how a Muslim student in Islamic thought, in natural sciences, and in human sciences can apply the principles of empiricism and positivism. What are the principles of an Islamic methodology that can provide sustainable premises upon which an Islamic discipline in human sciences can be developed? What should be the principles of an Islamic epistemology? If we are to develop Islamic thought in political science then we have to explain in what way the theory of modern nation-states is different from the theory of the modern Islamic state. All these answers were not given in a systematic and scientific way. Even today we do not have Islamic-oriented textbooks which can be used in modern Islamic universities in the Muslim world. As

educators we know that no educational system can be successful without proper curriculum and syllabi.

## The Islamization of Knowledge

According to Abu Sulayman, a pioneering thinker and leader of the Islamization of Knowledge movement, for the reform of the Muslim Ummah

change must come from within, on the basis of the beliefs and values of the Ummah. Reform must begin at the intellectual level, especially with the development of disciplined and systematic methodology for thought based on rational principles and approaches that incorporate Islamic objectives.<sup>23</sup>

He strongly asserts that if Muslim thought is reformed, the Muslim Ummah will be able to resolve the acute problems of civilization. Unfortunately, the process of reform, particularly intellectual reform, has been hindered due to the static nature, fears and ignorance of the Muslim leadership. Therefore, he argues that it is imperative for us to encourage a new beginning of the reform of Islamic thought and Muslim society.<sup>24</sup> It is appropriate that the movement of Islamization of Knowledge be studied from this perspective.

Taha Jabir al-Alwani, another pioneering leader of the movement, has recently clarified that the Islamization of Knowledge movement should be seen and understood as an intellectual and methodological movement for the development of Islamic thought for the revitalization of Islamic civilization. Those who conceive and consider it as an academic endeavor, or confine it only to the production of certain textbooks, do it an injustice.<sup>25</sup> In the second edition of the work plan of the Islamization of Knowledge, it is made clear that

it aims at reinvigorating Islamic thought and its methodology by giving it access to the main fountainheads of the legacy of the Ummah. Likewise, its purpose is to achieve mastery of Islamic thought in various branches of human knowledge (social, physical, and practically applied) in order to build a sound contemporary Islamic base for dynamic action in all spheres of life and civilization. . . .

It means that we should give due attention to the provision of various spiritual and material resources for reformation in the intellectual sphere. . . .

It is important to remember that, without reformation of thought and methodology and in the absence of genuine and clear vision, all efforts are bound to be ineffective and all sacrifices to be useless. This is how the civilization of Islam and those before it grew and progressed.<sup>26</sup>

The Islamization of Knowledge movement, therefore, should be taken as an epistemological or methodological movement for civilization building. In view of the above reflections of the pioneer thinkers of the movement, it is clear that it did not emerge solely from the Muslim critique of Western social sciences as it is misunderstood by some Muslim scholars.<sup>27</sup> We, therefore, genuinely feel that it should not be confined to the Islamization of social science alone nor to the production of textbooks. We fail to see any reason for this kind of narrow understanding. Contrary to this, it appears to us that it is a comprehensive concept and Islamization of Knowledge represents only one albeit basic aspect of Islamization in general. In its entirety, Islamization of Knowledge is the comprehensive, normative framework for individuals and society, for thought and action, for education and practice, for knowledge and organization, for the rulers and the ruled, for this world and for the world to come.<sup>28</sup> In its widest sense, "Islamization" means a framework for human life, civilization, and human transformation.<sup>29</sup> According to Al-Alwani,

Those who are involved in the movement of Islamization of Knowledge, have realized that the intellectual undertakings represent the most important and complex activity and that their fruits may not be seen for decades or even generations.<sup>30</sup>

The Islamization of Knowledge movement has identified the intellectual dimension as the crucial one. The contemporary Muslim Ummah is suffering from an intellectual crisis caused by a methodological crisis. To understand the divine texts, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and social and natural phenomena, our earliest scholars developed principles, but those principles were neither improved nor modified according to changing circumstances, thus causing intellectual stagnation. As a result, traditional methodology has become inadequate.<sup>31</sup> To overcome this problem, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the divine and the human. Islamization of Knowledge argues that though we all agree on the need to return to the pristine teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, few of us really understand that it is not an easy matter to determine how, in practical terms, this might be achieved. The real issue does not lie in the absence of the principles and

values; the real issue lies in their application which involves the issue of methodology.<sup>32</sup>

Here we find two main issues. First, we are asked to make a clear distinction between divine texts and the human understanding of them. Second, we have to understand that methodology is the result of human exertion, therefore, subject to scrutiny. Due to the lack of this understanding, the vigorous intellectual movements of the recent past that have emerged as a response to the intellectual anarchy that had engulfed the Muslim Ummah could not achieve their primary objective—the revitalization of the Islamic Ummah as a civilization. In fact, the new solutions put forward by the various movements have become themselves a subject of debate and argument, and as a result have led to more problems.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the need to standardize methodology in Islamic thought has become more urgent and more pressing.

Traditional Islamic methodology has been characterized by its linguistic approach in analysis and research. It had paid no attention to the analytical, experimental, and quantitative approaches in examining the issues at hand.<sup>34</sup> There is an urgent need to develop a new methodology to use analytical, critical, and comparative approaches to integrate the Islamic vision with the facts of contemporary life. In the interest of improvement and transformation, the Islamic vision should focus upon and resolve the problems and difficulties of contemporary life.<sup>35</sup> For this purpose what is needed is a comprehensive understanding of the divine texts and social realities, which, again, requires correct methodology.

Abu Sulayman examines the causes of the decline of the Muslim Ummah. For him the main cause lies in the methodology of Islamic thought.<sup>36</sup> He argues that if we develop a sound and viable methodology we can solve the crisis of the civilization. Like Iqbal, he discusses the methodology of *ijtihad* in detail. Iqbal raises the question of the mechanism and structure of *ijtihad*. For Iqbal, modern times require that the right of *ijtihad* not be confined only to the *ulama* class; rather, it should be open to all. Abu Sulayman also discusses the problem of *ijma*. For him, like for Iqbal, it is no longer the exclusive prerogative of the *ulama*.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, Abu Sulayman comments that

the contemporary narrow traditionalist examination of the *usul* on the one hand, and the modernist and orientalist overemphasis on the question of the authenticity of the hadith on the other, can only distract us

from what seems to be the basic problem of modern Muslim thought.<sup>38</sup>

He raises the question of the space-time dimension of traditional methodology. He also emphasizes the use of the empirical approach in and systemization of methodology.<sup>39</sup> Abu Sulayman suggests that it is indispensable for us to understand the social realities of our own time in their proper context. This requires us to develop distinct Islamic social sciences of *fitrah* and Muslim society, the negligence of which has already caused the social and cultural backwardness that eventually caused the Ummah's decline and fall.<sup>40</sup>

Abu Sulayman emphasizes the full application of the faculties of *sama'*, *basr*, and *fu'ad*, as well as the realization of '*ilm al-yaqeen*, '*ayn al-yaqeen*, and *haqq al-yaqeen* as described by the Qur'an. We need to conduct serious intellectual studies on the general organization of society and the issues of authority, government, caliphate, and politics. Here it would not be out of context to refer to an important observation of Mawdudi. He not only suggested the need for the critical study of the Western social sciences; he also invited Muslim experts of different aspects of society to develop the practical models and structures for the organization of the Muslim society and state. He plainly admitted that it is not his field to develop practical models and structures. He wrote toward the end of one of his celebrated books, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, that the Islamic principles of political system in general are elaborated in the book but that it is the responsibility of political science and administration experts to develop and elaborate them further and use the proper terms in time and space context.<sup>41</sup>

Abu Sulayman emphasizes the need for social sciences because of the importance of organizing social life. He makes a clear distinction between scientific investigations and those premises upon which all scientific knowledge and theories are developed. He says, "There are also premises and methodological issues that are particular to each scientific field and discipline." These general premises are the result of some assumptions. Abu Sulayman considers it the responsibility of a contemporary Muslim scholar to determine exactly what these premises are upon which a Muslim scholar can develop his scientific investigations.<sup>42</sup> (The "First Principles of Islamic Methodology," developed by Ismail al-Faruqi, are the preliminary steps toward the formulation of these general premises.<sup>43</sup>) He also feels that these general premises shall have to distinguish Islamic social sciences from Western social sciences. He makes a clear distinction between empiri-

cism and empirical tools and attitudes. Categorically rejecting empiricism which holds positivist tools, observation, and experiment as the only authentic sources of scientific knowledge, he strongly advocates the empirical approach for building Islamic social sciences. Why Western social sciences occupy primary importance in the scheme of the Islamization of Knowledge is obvious. They not only provide the general premises, they develop the worldview as well.

It is these very sciences and their hypotheses that, in the case of Western civilization, determine the definition of man, his ideals, his purposes in life, and his final goal.<sup>44</sup>

According to the authors of *Islamization of Knowledge*, series no. 1, psychology, sociology, and anthropology provide the theoretical bases upon which all of the other social and human sciences rest. But this does not mean that the movement only gives importance to these social sciences (psychology, sociology, and anthropology) and excludes the other branches of knowledge, such as the natural sciences, from the scheme of Islamization.

Another important dimension identified by the movement of Islamization of Knowledge invites our attention—critical analysis of the heritage of Islamic thought. Generally, Muslim scholars have developed an attitude of reverence toward the views of our past scholars, or they may even be considered above criticism. Such an attitude has done unimaginable damage to the growth of Islamic thought.<sup>45</sup> It is imperative for us to re-examine carefully our legacy in all branches of knowledge. The researchers of contemporary Islamic thought first have to look critically into the Islamic legacy and identify what is truly Islamic and what is not.<sup>46</sup> We need to understand and appreciate the Islamic content in our legacy which has scientific value and the ability to influence our present and future. Arguably, the Muslim legacy is open to critical study to distinguish the alien Greek, Persian, Indian, Jewish, and Christian elements from the Islamic elements. The entire heritage cannot be incorporated into contemporary Islamic thought if it lacks the Islamic elements to be operationalized in the present time. In this connection, Al-Alwani has objected to the tendency of according a sacred place to the views of our past scholars, vehemently rejecting the blind imitation of the heritage. In order to benefit from the heritage, a systematic and critical study is essential. Hence, a proper methodology is indispensable to benefit from the rich heritage.<sup>47</sup> Al-Alwani maintains that

the basis of the criticism must be the divine texts. Here, he applies a fundamental principle that the divine texts are above the historical context but that its human interpretation is subject to historical criticism. Hence, the past *ijtihad* and the interpretation of the divine texts both are open to criticism. There is a need for a critical and pragmatic attitude toward the heritage. Whatever is Islamic and applicable in present times is useful and shall be assimilated; whatever is not Islamic and inapplicable in the present context shall be discarded.<sup>48</sup> He cautions contemporary scholars not to regard the past heritage as self-sufficient for our present and future direction.<sup>49</sup> He emphasizes that *ijtihad* is an absolute necessity and that it is not possible unless the heritage is critically investigated. Furthermore, he says,

*Ijtihad* needs to be studied as a distinct Islamic methodology which will produce a comprehensive and uniquely Islamic understanding of sociological phenomena, their agents, essential elements and relationships along with their governing laws and principles. It is through *ijtihad* that Muslims will be able to construct a new specific methodological infrastructure capable of addressing the crisis of Islamic thought and so, propose alternatives for the many problems of the contemporary world.<sup>50</sup>

A thought-provoking debate is being generated among the intellectuals of the Muslim Ummah over the urgent need to reconstruct Islamic thought for the reconstruction of Islamic civilization. The national and international conferences organized by IIIT are a witness to this fact. However, the movement is aware of the fact that for the development of Islamic methodology there are still many issues that require concentrated effort on the part of the Muslim scholars. Hence, we strongly feel that to improve the existing condition of the intellectual activities of the Ummah, all its sections should realize the importance of the intellectual dimension as a fundamental and strategic step to bring sociopolitical change in the society. It is indispensable for all of us to re-examine our strategies of sociopolitical change. The sociopolitical dimension cannot be overemphasized at the cost of the intellectual dimension or vice-versa. We have been emphasizing sociopolitical or moral and spiritual activities more than intellectual and educational. In the beginning of his call to Islam, the Prophet was asked to read, reflect, and invite people to the Truth, then later he was asked to establish Islam through social and political strategies. Thus it seems that without developing vigorous Islamic thought we cannot resolve the complex problems of the Ummah. To invite the attention of the intellectuals and activists

of the Ummah, it is important for the Islamization of Knowledge movement to create an atmosphere of creative and *ijtihad*-like thought.

Unless the call to *ijtihad* becomes a widespread intellectual trend, there is little hope that the Ummah will be able to make any useful contribution to world civilization.<sup>51</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

The intellectual crisis of the Muslim Ummah was identified by most of the earlier thinkers and leaders of the Ummah, but sufficient attention was not paid to it. This study proposes that intellectual and educational activities, more specifically epistemological and methodological, are vital for the revitalization of the Islamic civilization. However, it also suggests that there should be a greater collaboration and understanding among all those who are involved in the intellectual, educational, and sociopolitical activities of the Muslim Ummah, in order to bring a positive and meaningful change.

All this implies that it is imperative for us to understand and appreciate that the reconstruction of the Islamic thought is a prerequisite for the regeneration of the Islamic civilization. Hence, it should be adopted by the Muslim Ummah as a top priority agenda in the twenty-first century, as suggested by Abu Sulayman.<sup>52</sup>

## Notes

1. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1979), 359–360.

2. For a detailed analysis of the intellectual and historical roots of the crisis of contemporary Muslim thought, see Abdul Hamid A. Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* (Herndon, Va.: IIIT, 1993).

3. Although some scholars have identified some of the aspects and issues of the Islamic methodology, Abu Sulayman generated a serious debate on the urgent need of the reformulation of a new methodology of Islamic thought. He strongly argued that the decline of the Muslim Ummah can be reasonably attributed to the inadequacy of the methodology of Islamic thought. Abdul Hamid for the first time raised this issue in his book *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations*, which was completed in 1975. Later on the same issue was discussed and elaborated further in the series no. 1 of the publications of IIIT. See Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought*, 2nd edition (Herndon, Va.: IIIT, 1993); see also "First Principles of Islamic Methodology," in *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon, Va.: IIIT, 1989), 33–51.

4. Taha Jabir al-Alwani has recently discussed this in detail. See "The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 12(2) (Spring 1995): 81–101.

5. Yasien Mohammad has rightly categorized the scholars of the Islamization of Knowledge school within the revivalist tradition. It is true that some of the pioneering scholars and leaders of it like Ismail al-Faruqi, Abu Sulayman, Taha Jabir, Imaduddin Khalil, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mohammad al-Ghazzali, Jamal Barzinji, and Ishaq Farhan are all inspired by the Islamic revival movements. Some of them are even leading the Islamic revival movements in different parts of the world. It seems necessary, therefore, to perceive the movement of Islamization of Knowledge from a broader perspective of revival for constructing Islamic civilization. See, for example, Yasien Mohammad, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Comparative Analysis of Faruqi and Rahman," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 11(1): 27-40; see also "Indispensable Clarifications," *Islamization of Knowledge* series no. 1: 83-88.

6. Here, it seems important to clarify that all the Muslim scholars who are involved in studying and presenting Islam as a complete system of life and civilization and want to establish it in an empirical reality, directly or indirectly, constitute the Islamization of Knowledge movement.

7. Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, new edition (New Delhi: Kitab Bhawan, 1994), vi.

8. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Isani Dunia per Musalmanu ke Urooj-o-zawal ka asar* (The Impact of the Rise and Fall of Muslims on Humanity) (Damascus: IIFSO, 1977), 191-200.

9. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 163.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Sayyid Mawdudi, *Tanqihaat* (New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1991). It has undergone several editions since 1934 to 1991. The quotation is taken from its newly revised English translation by S. Waqar Ahmad Gardezi and Abdul Waheed Khan, entitled *West versus Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1991), 180-181.

12. He argues that the actual words of this verse *li yatafaqqahu fi al-din* in the later period is misconceived and its effects are reflected in the system of religious education and the life of the Muslims. Further, the term "fiqh" was confined to jurisprudence as a branch of knowledge which took away all its spirit and presented Islam as a skeleton, "a soulless religious formalism." See the commentary of Surah al-Tawbah by Mawdudi in *Towards Understanding the Quran*, vol. 3., translated and edited by Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1990), 273-274.

13. Mawdudi, *Tanqihaat*, English tr., 181.

14. Mawdudi, *Tanqihaat*, English tr., 182.

15. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 127.

16. *Ibid.*, 126.

17. *Ibid.*, 129.

18. *Ibid.*, 15.

19. *Ibid.*, 8.

20. Mawdudi, *Mawdudi on Education*, tr. by S.M.A. Rauf (Karachi: Islamic Research Academy, 1988), 56-57.

21. See Mawdudi, *The Message of the Prophet's Seerat* (Delhi: Hindustan Publications, n.d.), 2-3.

22. Mawdudi, *Tanqihaat*, English tr., 14-16 and 87.

23. Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory*, xiii.

24. Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory*, xvii.

25. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, "Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today," 81.

26. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles*, 85-86.

27. The Islamic revival movements and the Islamization of Knowledge movement are generally misconceived as reactionary or anti-Western movements. Such a misconception is for us, an expression of a defeatist mentality, a mentality which is dazzled by the apparent glories of the Western civilization and fails to understand the inner vitality of Islam which can still rise to a challenge. To reconstruct the human civilization is a universal mission of Muslims for all times, not a timely reaction against any challenge.

28. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles*, 84.
29. *Ibid.*, 87.
30. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, "Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today, 82.
31. See Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory*, chapter 3; and *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*.
32. See the proceedings of a seminar on Methodologies of Change in the Contemporary World, jointly organized by IIIT and Kuwait, Dept. Awqaf, January 24–26, 1994, Kuwait City. For a brief report of the seminar see Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo, "Methodologies of Change," *AJISS*, 11(2) (Summer 1994): 269–271.
33. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Ijtihad* (Herndon, Va.: IIIT, 1993), 16.
34. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles*, 84.
35. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles*, 84.
36. See Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*.
37. Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory*, 86.
38. *Ibid.*, 65.
39. See for further details, Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory*, 63–96.
40. Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, 44.
41. Mawdudi, *Islamic Law and Constitution* (Lahore: Islamic Publications), 252.
42. Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, 123.
43. For further details, see *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles*, 33–56.
44. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles*, 73; Imaduddin Khalil, *Islamization of Knowledge: A Methodology* (Herndon, Va.: IIIT, 1994), 6; also see Taha Jabir al-Alwani, "Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today.
45. Imaduddin Khalil, *Islamization of Knowledge: A Methodology*, 10.
46. *Ibid.*, 11.
47. Yasien Mohammad, *Islamization of Knowledge: A Comparative*, 29.
48. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Fikr-e-Islami ki Islah* (Reformation of Islamic Thought), tr. into Urdu by Shafeeq ur-Rahman Nadwi (New Delhi: Kazi Publishers, 1994), 73–90.
49. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Fikr-e-Islami*, 84.
50. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Ijtihad*, 31.
51. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, "The Crisis of Thought and Ijtihad," *AJISS* 10(2): 234.
52. Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, 158–159.