

Issues in Muslim Liberal and Islamic Revivalist Thought: An Analysis of the Views of Watt and Sikand

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali

Abstract

This paper identifies and makes a comparative analysis of issues in Muslim liberalist and contemporary Islamic revivalist thought as seen and discussed by William Montgomery Watt and Yoginder Sikand. They consider Muslim liberalists thought as creative interpretations, which contribute constructively toward the development of Islamic thought; however, they maintain that Islamic revivalists demonstrate rigidity, idealism, and fundamentalism and cause the development of radical thought. In the first part of this article, a number of criticisms that have been raised by Watt and Sikand on behalf of Muslim liberalists against Islamic revivalists are critically analyzed, and the position of Islamic revivalists is clarified. The criticisms deal with the question of change, the worldview, the role of reason, and the stand of both groups with regard to secularism, nationalism, and religious pluralism, and lastly, the issue of politics and the Islamic state. The second part offers the issues that are seen as pertinent by the Islamic revivalists for the development of the Islamic Ummah for humanity. Finally, it is argued that the thought developed by Muslim liberalists is heavily influenced by liberalism and

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, Associate Professor, is currently working in the Department of Usuluddin and Comparative Religion, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science, International Islamic University, Malaysia. His recent publications include: *The Failure of Modernity and the Development of Contemporary Islamic Revivalist Discourse: Towards an Alternative Civilizational Development*, 2010; *The History and Philosophy of Islamization of Knowledge: A Preliminary Study of Pioneer's Thought*, 2011; and *Islamic Critical Thinking*, 2011.

modernity. Hence, it should be rightly termed as liberal or modern Muslim thought, while the thought developed by Islamic revivalists is based on the worldview of Islam, which seeks to revive the role of Islam as the basis of culture and civilization and take the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as the fundamental sources of guidance for civilizational development. Thus, this thought is rightly termed as Islamic revivalist thought.

Introduction

In contemporary writings on Islam and Muslims, many writers have supported and advocated the position of Muslim liberals instead of Islamic revivalists. They consider Muslim liberals as “thinkable” and capable of “creative reinterpretations of Islam” and as developing a liberal Islam, which is relevant to the changing circumstances of modern life. For them contemporary Islamic liberalism is different from both Islamic modernists and Islamic revivalists. Charles Kurzman provided a long list of Muslim liberals, which includes Muhammad Arkoun and Nurcholish Madjid. They consider Islamic revivalists, who are not able to think anew and develop new thought as idealistic, unrealistic, anti-modern, and idealistic – and as having posed the greatest threat to global security. They are often referred to as “Islamic fundamentalists” such as Sayyid Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb. The liberal Islam is viewed as a movement of a new interpretation of Islam, which advocates compatibility between Islam and modernity. They argue that Muslim liberals want to reconcile faith with reason and to create a link between Islam and modernity. They believe in a more rationalist and contextualist approach instead of a literalist one to the interpretation of Islamic scriptural and legal sources. They think it reflects Islam’s true spirit and its foundational principles. Hence, it would be more relevant to Muslim’s current needs and conditions. These liberal Muslim intellectuals are different from the traditional ulama and the Islamic revivalists. They work seriously to develop a vision of Islam that gives importance to the questions posed by modernity seriously. In contrast to this, they portray the phenomenon In contrast to this, they portray the phenomenon of the Islamic revival with terms such as “Islamic fundamentalism,” “Islamism,” “Political Islam,” “Islamists,” or “Islamist’s Islam” – all of which connote to them, a manifestation of an extreme attachment to faith and a religious revivalism at a fanatical level – that is, a rejection of modernity and its secular versions. They have included in Islamic fundamentalism the prominent ideologues of Islamic revivalism of writers such as Sayyid Qutub, Sayyid Mawdudi,

and Hasan al-Banna and their movements. William Montgomery Watt and Yoginder Sikand are among those writers who think that Muslim liberalists are more relevant to our time than the Islamic revivalists. who for them, are fundamentalists. Hence, they welcome with enthusiasm the case of Muslim liberals and offer a critique of Islamic revivalists. But, as I will demonstrate later on, a more profound and dispassionate examination of the views of Muslim liberals and Islamic revivalists reveal a different reality. To explain this, I want to make a critical analysis of some of the views of Watt and Sikand on the issues raised by Muslim liberals and Islamic revivalists.

In my opinion, Samuel P. Huntington's cry of the "clash of civilizations" is not a false cry; it is a reality. The clash of civilizations is inevitable. It is a recurrent phenomenon, earlier documented by Thomas Kuhn as paradigm shift. However, the idea of the clash of civilizations as a clash of one civilization with another is a misrepresentation. This confusion is caused because the subtle difference between *civilization* and *worldview* is not taken into account. When the case is put forward for the clash of civilizations, it does not mean the destruction of knowledge, science, and technology. It simply means refuting a particular paradigm/worldview that is based on philosophical speculation – instead of true and authentic knowledge that is in line with reality. Hence, it seems unjust to perceive the revival of Islam as an assault against modernization and civilization – as an attempt understood as refuting philosophical speculation and claiming that it has the knowledge of truth and reality. The Islamic revivalists reject, in fact, only the philosophical premises of modernization and civilization.

Revivalists argue that modernization, and development, must be based on the knowledge of metaphysical truth and reality rather than on philosophical conjecture. For them, Islamic revelation (the Qur'ān) contains authentic knowledge about truth and reality. Therefore, the clash of civilizations is seen as a clash of two different worldviews, which results in a variety of thoughts and represents plurality of thought. For revivalists, the emergence of modernity was not a war against civilization; instead, the revivalists were against a kind of worldview that supported tyranny, oppression, and authoritarian rule. They claimed that modernity differed from these, and they suggested an alternative of a new worldview, based on a truer and more authentic understanding of the physical and metaphysical world – one that would be able to replace dogmas and superstition and guarantee the development of life.

So, my contention is that the clash of civilization is a clash of worldviews because all civilizations are the products of a particular worldview. The symbols, knowledge, science, and technology of a civilization are

components of a common human heritage; they are not simply products of modernity alone. Today, high-rise buildings are not at the forefront; worldviews are. In my view, the Islamic revivalist movement maintains that it should be seen as a cry against yet another worldview, one that has failed to guarantee justice and prosperity, security and peace and instead has generated hegemony, domination, imperialism, and terrorism. Revivalists contend that modernity caused the First and the Second World Wars and entered in the Cold War and now the War against Terror. War is a psychological symptom of modernity. Modernity cannot survive without war. The survival of the fittest is a fundamental value of modernity. Hence, revivalists argue that the root cause of violence and terror is the modern worldview in which humans work only for their material interests and perpetually live under the fear of survival of the fittest. The majority of modern people perceive knowledge as power and seek power for control and domination. Revivalists present a different worldview in which spirituality occupies centrality instead of materialism. Unfortunately, this revival is perceived as a threat to the contemporary world, just as modernity was once perceived as a menace by some ignorant people. Consequently, according to Watt and Sikand, the main concerns of revivalists are sidelined, while peripheral issues occupy the highlights. While Muslim liberalists represent the worldview of modernity in which reason occupies the highest place, the revivalists honor a Islamic worldview, which assigns the highest position to Islamic revelation. However, Watt and Sikand see revivalists in a different perspective and consider them as fundamentalists.

Issues in Muslim Liberal Thought as Debated by Watt and Sikand

Watt and Sikand praise issues raised by liberals and are critical of the revivalists. They maintain that the issues raised by Muslim liberalists are relevant to our time, while revivalists seem to be quite dogmatic and rigid – and consequently, they do not value change, reason, political participation, and cultural development.

Need for Change in the Islamic Worldview

Watt thinks that Muslim liberalists accept that the Islamic worldview needs to be changed, while Islamic revivalists reject the need for change.¹ Watt argues that this dismissal of the need for change in Islamic worldview has caused stagnation in Islamic thought and caused the decline of

the Muslim world. Is Watt's perception correct? Is it based upon a thorough examination of revivalist thought and the Islamic worldview? Based on my examination of revivalist thought, I view Watt's view is lacking objectivity. Watt assumed that, like any other religious worldview, the Islamic worldview, too, is dogmatic. According to revivalists, the deplorable conditions of Muslims are not the result of adherence to an Islamic worldview but due to having strayed from it under the influence of modernity. Revivalists not only accept the need for change but also demonstrate that the Islamic worldview is capable of bringing about development through change in society, albeit change that is based on valued criteria. In the revivalist programs, for instance, there is a genuine place for discussion on the need for political parties, for popular participation in the political process, for accountability of elected leaders to the people, for the participation of women in the political activities, and other contemporary concerns.

Despite this clarity, a number of scholars still claim that liberalist thought is more suited for contemporary times than revivalist, since the former is in line with the dominant mode of modernist thought. Thus, liberalist thought is considered a foundation for the development and modernization of the Muslim world. According to Watt, revivalists did not accept the need for change in their worldview and in their concept of Islam, while the values and worldviews of many other traditions have changed. He argues further that this change has resulted in progress and development in the modern West.² Here, Watt overlooks the fact that change does not always produce positive outcomes and, therefore, should not be viewed as inherently positive. Watt reluctantly agrees that in some cases revivalists "seem to be novel" but essentially their thinking manifests the reinforcement of the same worldview which, for him, emphasizes more for success in the next world at the cost of success in this world.³

Watt believes liberalists accept the need for modification in some aspects of the Islamic worldview, while revivalists tend to oppose reforms and change, but they recommend change and reform only in the social and political domain, not in a worldview.⁴ Thus, Watt states that for revivalists "unchangingness is both an ideal for human individuals and societies, and also a perception of the actual nature of humanity and its environment."⁵ For Watt, "unchangingness" denies social, political, and intellectual development. Watt concludes: "It is thus very difficult for the Westerner to appreciate the outlook of those in whose thinking there is no place for development, progress or social advance and improvement."⁶ Watt insists that in the revivalist tradition there is no idea of the development of a worldview, while liberalists stand for changes in the worldview.⁷

We need to understand the great difference between the ideas of development and the idea of change in a worldview. Revivalists stand for change and development, but for them the meaning and scope of change and development does not necessarily include change in their worldview. Their approach to change is different from the modern Western approach. The exposition of the Islamic worldview is a continuous phenomenon in the revivalist tradition, but this elaboration does not conform to the modern Western criteria of “change.” There is serious debate among revivalists themselves on the question of worldview and its implications for thought and life. According to revivalists, some Muslim’s worldview is not in line with Islam. It must be changed: from passive to active; from a worldview of spiritual abstraction to the worldview of a synthesis of the spiritual and the material; from a worldview of the hereafter to the worldview of hereafter through this world; from a worldview of future to a worldview of the present and future; from the worldview of ‘*abd* (servant) to the worldview of ‘*abd* and *khalīfah* (vicegerent). According to revivalists, the worldview of Islam is universal, dynamic, and active, and it comprises a synthesis of the spiritual and the material. It values the present and future and speaks of success here and in the hereafter. One can observe this debate even in the writings of Muhammad Asad, Muhammad Iqbal, Ismail Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Naquib al-Attas, and Abdul Wahab al-Messiri, all of whom share the worldview of the revivalists (though they may not be classified as such) on the issue of the need for change. Watt applies his own criteria to examine the views of revivalists; thereby, he disregards practically the ideal of plurality of thought. He believes in modern Western hegemony even in thought. Seyyed Hossein Nasr observes:

It is high time that the views of authorities within a tradition be taken seriously for their understanding of that tradition, and the idea that since this or that Western scholar has been molded by the Enlightenment idea of reason and modern scholarship therefore he knows better than a Zen master what Zen means or better than Sufis about the origin of their own tradition be cast aside once and for all.⁸

Watt insists that revivalists have denied change, not only in worldview but also in theology and human beings themselves. For example, Watt observes: “since Muhammad, human beings have not changed in essentials.”⁹ He continues:

This unchangingness of human nature, as they see it, justifies Muslim scholars in asserting the finality of the rules and laws for human conduct which are expressed in the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet. Since

human nature does not change, there can in essentials be no new problems, and therefore no need for any fundamental revision of the *Shariah*.¹⁰

Watt concludes that social reform is thus virtually unthinkable for revivalists. Here, again, Watt fails to see the difference between the Shari'ah as divine universal guidance and its everyday human interpretations that form *fiqh*. For revivalists, the Shari'ah is divine universal guidance, thus permanent and transcendent. Its human interpretation, *fiqh* is subject to revision and changes. Therefore, sociopolitical reform, based on its own criteria, is at the heart of revivalist discourse.

Watt claims that even if human nature is not changed in essentials, there still have been changes in human society, which would require changes in law. The revivalist's position on the unchangingness of human nature, according to Watt, blinds them to the new problems created for society by technological advances.¹¹ Watt goes on to argue that changes in law would be meaningless without a necessary change in worldview. He basically restricted the right to propose changes in worldview to those in the liberalist camp. As much as people like to propose changes in the Islamic worldview, the contemporary world is not open to revivalists' criticism of the modern Western worldview. Why is the revivalist criticism of the modern Western worldview perceived as anti-civilization and hostile to the West?

However, revivalists see the need for changes in *fiqh* that comply with social and technological changes in society without necessarily changing a worldview that in itself offers the dynamics of how change and progress can be achieved. Revivalists are open to the issue of change, but they also argue for the need to thoroughly examine the nature of the proposed changes, and of the existing law – and its effect on how it relates to their worldview. They do not assume that every previous law and worldview is outdated and, therefore, must be changed. Revivalists suggest examination of both the Islamic worldview and the worldview of modernity. The fact is that Watt *assumes* that the worldview of modernity is beyond any examination and change, while the worldview of Islam requires change. Revivalists, on the other hand, hold that the worldview of modernity has not brought good results for people, and it needs to be replaced. They contend that since the worldview of Islam is based on revealed knowledge, it is more capable of producing good results. Unfortunately, a large number of Muslims have regressed because they have not realized the importance of the Islamic worldview and because of the negative influence of the modern worldview. If Muslims want to achieve development, there is no way for them but to embrace the Islamic worldview, which has the capacity to make them dynamic.

Reason and Islamic Revealed Knowledge

The place of reason is another issue. Watt argues also that revivalists are rigid in philosophical speculation: “They know of no philosophy since Averroes, and are completely unaware of the new challenges to religious belief produced by men like Hume and Feuerbach, not to mention our twentieth-century philosophers.”¹² Watt does not seem to have noticed that the revivalists have their own understanding of the meaning and nature of reason, intellect, and sense perception which they have learned from their philosophical heritage. The reason why they stick to their heritage is obvious: in the Islamic tradition, metaphysical issues are not dealt with on the basis of philosophical conjecture, they are treated on the basis of divine revealed knowledge. Hence, revivalists have rejected the modern Western idea of rationalism and even empiricism.

Emphasis Is on This World

Watt takes the view that revivalists are more otherworldly in their outlook and thinks more of the world to come than to attain an ideal condition of society in this world – that is, they fail to understand that people are responsible for developing a better form of society.¹³ This is not exactly the position of revivalists. They understand well that they are themselves responsible for the condition of their lives. Thus, as necessary tools, they apply seriously the concepts of *ijtihad* (the utmost intellectual exertion for creativity within the framework of the Qur’ān and Sunnah) and *jihad* (the efforts of Muslims for change from the worst to the better). Whenever, Muslims neglect the importance of *ijtihad* and *jihad*, they decline. In Islamic terminology, individuals who attempt to practice *jihad* are more inclined toward the idea of struggle than if they were involved in war alone. The revivalist movement is seen as a movement of *struggle and creativity*. The concept of *ijtihad* is totally accepted by the liberalists, but the liberalists present *jihad* as a combination of violent armed struggle, militancy, and terrorism. Revivalists argue that they want change through peaceful means; therefore, they participate in political processes. They reject all violence and militancy, but they have been still labeled as Islamic militants. The accusations of their Islamic militancy has not been proved in any court of law in the world or established based on an examination of their literature and activities.

Revivalist’s Negligence of Real Issues

Like Watt, Sikand claims that Muslim liberalists address the real issues while the Islamic revivalists overlook them.¹⁴ For Sikand, the following are important issues: the status of women in Islam, *hijāb* or women’s

Islamic dress, female testimony, polygamy, the permission to beat wives, women's right to vote for the highest offices, female circumcision, apostasy, *hudūd* punishments, stoning of adulterers, democracy, theocracy and the authoritarian nature of the Islamic state, human rights and minorities, the rights of non-Muslims, freedom of thought, religious pluralism, progress, modernization, and development.¹⁵ However, an examination of these claims reveals that in this way liberalists reduce Islam from a worldview to an assortment of a variety of peripheral issues.¹⁶ Furthermore, Sikand argues that revivalists are not concerned with the everyday issues of ordinary people – that is, of education, health, and the economy. One can see poverty, illiteracy, ill-health, uneven development, oppression, injustice, and tyranny as rampant in the Muslim world. According to Sikand, instead of fighting these common sufferings of the masses, the Islamic revivalists are directing their resources destructively to cause conflict, chaos, violence, and terror in the modern world. But the activities of the Islamic revivalist movements demonstrate that the situation is quite the opposite.¹⁷

Concerns of Liberalism

The ideological premises of liberalism reveal that Watt and Sikand fail to understand the real concerns of liberalism. They maintain that liberalism supposedly unshackles humans from tradition, authority, religion, past culture, values, customs, superstitions, and myths; that it believes in the emancipation of reason from the influences of religion; and that it approves of the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain. Thus, it means that it is wrong to assume that liberalism means the equality of human beings, the equality before the law, the freedom of expression, the belief in human rights, and democracy. This approach to liberalism reduces liberalism from the movement of liberation to a peripheral activism.

Real liberalism contributed toward the emergence of modern Western science, the decline of religion, and the general secular thrust of the modern world. Watt claims that many of the writings of Muslim liberalists are firmly rooted in Qur'ānic exegesis, in the lives of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṢAAS) and the early Muslims, and in traditional Islamic forms of debate.¹⁸ I admit my inability to understand what kind of liberalists these Muslims are. Instead of seeking to get rid of Islam, they seek to survive in the very name of Islam and to create many brands of Islam¹⁹ – such as revivalist Islam, Islamism, fundamentalism, Wahhabism, and liberal Islam!²⁰ For Watt and Sikand, liberal Islam is unique for its criticism of what liberalists sometimes term the “backwardness” of Islamic revival-

ists, which has prevented the Islamic world from enjoying the fruits of modernity: economic progress, democracy, legal rights, and so on.²¹

Watt and Sikand may argue that Muslim liberalists are real liberals because according to them, they emphasize the importance of human reasoning, and this is their recurrent emphasis – however even that is not liberalism. Liberalism does not mean reasoning alone; it means the liberation of reason from religion, God, and His guidance. In Islam, humans submit their reason to the guidance of God; while in liberalism, humans rebel against God's guidance. Unfortunately, Muslim liberalists fail to realize the true meaning of liberalism. This is why they contradict themselves. They imagine that developments in mathematics, astronomy, architecture, technology, and engineering constitute the modernity of knowledge, science, and technology. However, the modernity of knowledge does not lie in the progress of mathematics; it lies in the self-sufficiency of mathematics divorced from spirituality and ethics.

According to Sikand, liberalists are the first who began to free *ijtihād* from *taqlīd*, reason from authority.²² But whose authority did they free reason from: the authority of the '*ulamā*' or the authority of religion? If the freedom is from the '*ulamā*', then it means that they follow the authority of religion, while liberalism is supposed to stand against religion and its authority because religion does not give authority to reason. For liberalism, religion is a myth. This indicates that liberalists fail to understand the difference between reason and authority because liberalism is not concerned with the authority of the '*ulamā*' alone; it is also concerned with the authority of religion. Liberalism emancipates humans from religious authority and establishes the authority of human reason. Unfortunately, liberalists overlook this difference and practically stand against the authority of Islam. The fact is that Islam does not accept the authority of anybody besides the authority of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Liberalists claim that they distinguish between *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* and stand for *ijtihād*, but for *ijtihād*, they follow the structure of liberalism. They fail to understand both *ijtihād* as well as *taqlīd* because *ijtihād* does not mean solely a rational exercise. *Ijtihād*, as a fundamental means of development, demands the submission of human reason to the guidance of God – not liberation of reason from God and His guidance. In fact, liberalists are faithfully doing the *taqlīd* of liberalism. Charles Kurzman makes the following observation:

The expansion of the right to practice *ijtihād* directly threatened the authority of both revivalist and customary Islamic leaders, in that it urged all Muslims to study Islam for themselves and, in effect, to be their own authority.²³

In their process of expansion of the right to practice *ijtihad*, the qualifications of a *mujtahid* (the one who does *ijtihad*) set by the Islamic tradition, were replaced by the principles of liberalism. However, for liberalists, the framework of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah is not important; what is important is to fulfill the criteria of modernity and liberalism. The best example as mentioned by Charles Kurzman, is:

The distinguishing feature of these new reforms was their introduction of Western subjects into the traditional curriculum, a practice that reflected the liberals' second intellectual contribution: respect for "modernity."²⁴

Today these reforms – the introduction of modern Western secular disciplines – are considered by the Islamization of Knowledge school of thought to be against the spirit of truth and reality, as well as the Islamic worldview, and harmful to the Islamic Ummah vis-à-vis humankind. According to Kurzman, liberalists are held as the protectors of Islam by people such as Watt and Sikand: "most liberals of the modernist period were far more protective of Islamic faith and culture than they are generally given credit for. For most of them, the goal was not to displace Islam but to rejuvenate it."²⁵ Liberalists are the recipients of nationalism and secularism in the Muslim world, and both go against the universalism of Islam. No one questions the intentions of Muslim liberalists, but their results are undeniable empirical realities. Today the Ummah is divided into more than fifty nationalities. An Islamic educational system stands for goals other than those of the modern Western educational system.

It [the modern education system] should not be allowed to remain an imitation of the West; nor should it be left to find its own way; nor should it be tolerated that it serves merely the economic and pragmatic needs of the student for professional training, personal advancement, or material gain. The educational system must be endowed with a mission, and that mission must be none other than that of imparting Islamic vision and cultivating the will to realize it on the largest scale.²⁶

The educational reforms of liberalists have resulted in tragic consequences that have created a society divided against itself into traditional, liberal, moderate, religious, and secular Muslims. Nevertheless, like Watt and Sikand, Kurzman argues that "On the intellectual plane, liberal Islamic thinkers are building a more self-confident liberalism that apologizes neither for its liberalism nor for its Islamic essence."²⁷ That Islamic essence is nothing but the adaptability of Islam to any situation – particularly to modernity.

Religious Pluralism

How the Islamic “essence” is maintained by liberalists can be further demonstrated by the elaboration of Sikand who asserts that the development of a diverse range of Islamic theologies is important to liberalists. Sikand argues that Muslims are living together with people of other faiths; that is a reality that cannot be ignored. For Sikand, it is pertinent for Muslims to actively work out a new theology because the old theology and *fiqh* may not be sufficient to guide them.²⁸ Any thought that calls for changing this reality of religious pluralism is going against reality, and demonstrating an idealistic approach to the problems of life. For this reason, Sikand advocates the need for change in the thought of the revivalists. It must be changed, as a prerequisite to developing a new theology of religious pluralism. The revivalists must learn how to live with religious pluralism. Sikand’s logic is that the Islamic Shari‘ah and the Islamic worldview must be changed – but what does not require change is the “reality” of religious pluralism. If liberalists accept that there are certain realities that do not warrant change, why can they not accept a similar argument presented by revivalists that the Islamic Shari‘ah and human nature do not undergo change?

The Need for the Reinterpretation of the Shari‘ah

It is also asserted by Sikand that liberalists are developing an “unprecedented creative interpretation” of the Shari‘ah, which is different from a traditional interpretation. Liberalists maintain that it is creative to be living as a minority in a religiously plural society such as India. Liberalists are developing new understandings of how the Shari‘ah relates to other religions and to the modern secular nation-state and the polity. According to Sikand, these are some examples of the excellent articulations of liberalists. Sikand further reasons that these new perspectives reflect a process of *ijtihad* – creative reinterpretations of the faith in the light of present conditions, making a crucial distinction between the contemporary Shari‘ah and the historic Shari‘ah.²⁹ Contrary to these ideas, revivalists argue that the Shari‘ah is divine, universal, permanent law, and guidance – and its interpretations that constitute the *fiqh* are human and subject to examination. Revivalists identify the objectives of the Shari‘ah: to disseminate justice to everybody, to eliminate oppression from society, and to bring comprehensive development by developing new institutions with transparency, which involve the participation of people and the making of government fully accountable to people and to God.

According to Sikand, the liberalist’s concern is to deal with religious tradition and to develop novel responses to novel circumstances – for exam-

ple, secularism, democracy, and nationalism. Sikand argues that liberalists have debated the relationships between each of these and the broader Islamic tradition and came up with new understandings. These new understandings are distinct from the traditional *'ulamā'*, Islamists, and secular Muslims. Sikand believes that liberalists have developed new visions of Islam, which take the questions posed by modernity seriously, while still being rooted in their own traditions.³⁰ If individuals respond to modernity positively, they remain creative and innovative – and this means accepting modernity, otherwise one's thinking is likely to be considered stagnant and fundamentalist.

A New Vision of Islam

Furthermore, Sikand states that new visions of Islam must be developed in order to promote or legitimize practical action in working for social transformation inspired by the fundamental ethical impulse or foundational values of the Qur'ān.³¹ What are those fundamental values of the Qur'ān? Obviously obscenity, nudity, semi-nudity, night-life culture, wine, extramarital sex, drug abuse, violence and sex in movies, vulgar TV shows, and consumerism, which are becoming rampant in our societies, cannot be the values of the Qur'ān. What is behind all this if it is not the ideas of modernity and liberalism?

Sikand further maintains that we need to enable ourselves to produce a vision of Islam that is dynamic, open, and eternally relevant. For this, he says, we need to go directly to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Do Muslim liberalists really go to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah? If they do, then why do they need liberal principles, and what are those liberal principles? Is liberation from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah not one of them? “Liberalists bypass centuries old traditions and absorb liberal principles and interpret the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* in such a way that their interpretation becomes palatable to the modern world. They view the *'ulamā'* as representative of a fossilized religion that stresses letter more than spirit ... these *'ulamā'* lack the capacity to come to terms with the challenges of modernity.”³² This generalization of *'ulamā'* by Sikand is to undermine religious scholarship. Just as a good number of *'ulamā'* became blind followers of the past, do liberalists and modernists become blind followers of modernity. According to them, a faithful understanding of Islam in today's context must take the pluralist predicament seriously. To be religious today is, in their opinion, to be interreligious. They believe that to ignore the question of religious pluralism and the need for harmonious relations between people of different faiths is to consign oneself to complete irrelevance.³³ As a matter of

fact, not only revivalists but also all Muslims accept the plurality of religions (the existence of different religions) but deny religious pluralism (all religions are equally true and divine) as understood in the modern world.

Is Truth One?

Watt and Sikand also claim that by developing a new theology in line with the philosophy of religious pluralism, liberalists actually address the central question of the nature of truth:

- Is truth one or many?
- Is truth absolute or relative?
- Are there different degrees of truth?
- Can one religion claim to possess the whole truth?
- Are all religions other than Islam devoid of any truth?
- If Islam is really the one true religion, can non-Muslims be saved by following their own religions?

According to Watt and Sikand, in addressing these questions, liberalists assert that they have examined the Qur'ānic perspective on humankind and the universality of revelation. They state that all human beings, irrespective of religion, are creatures of God, created from a single set of parents, and, in that sense, equal in His eyes. All human beings are “of inestimable divine value” and thus must not only be equally respected, but also equally loved. Sikand further contends that liberalists hold that all religions come from the same source, the one God, and reflect the truth in different ways. He asserts that this is the position that is emphasized by the Qur'ān and that liberalists believe God has sent prophets to all nations – and all of them have taught the same religion, *al-dīn al-qayyim*. Furthermore, Sikand maintains that the Qur'ān also clearly lays down that a Muslim must believe in all the prophets of God, including those whom it does not mention by name, and hold them in equal respect. The various prophets taught the same religion, but some of them were assigned with the teaching of a new law (the Shari‘ah), which was meant to suit the particular conditions of the people to whom they were sent. It is, however, the *dīn*, and not the Shari‘ah that is the fundamental message of God as expressed through His prophets. While the *dīn* remains the same; the Shari‘ah may vary and therefore,

the latter is subordinate to the former.³⁴ According to Sikand, all historical religions, therefore, emanate from this primal *dīn* of God – they are, at root, the same and none can be dismissed as “illegitimate” or “false.” All these religions are seen to share a common set of value orientations – such as truth, nonviolence, love, justice, equality, tolerance, and compassion.

If this is the case, which is not wholly true, why has modernity rejected all these true and divine religions as having no value and relevance to our changing realities and passed-down secularism? If religions are good, then modernity, which fails to realize the goodness of these religions, should be rejected. Or, if modernity has more good than all these religions, why, then, do the Muslim liberalists waste time discussing religion? Those who support religious pluralism also recognize that religions do differ from each other in terms of doctrine as well as rituals. However, for Sikand *these are to be treated as strictly secondary and ultimately of little or no importance in God's eyes*. For God, Sikand argues, what is important is *the ethical orientation and action of a person and not the content of his belief or the ritual forms in which that belief is expressed*. Sikand takes strong position and suggests, therefore, that ultimate salvation hinges on good deeds and not on correct belief and rituals.³⁵ If the doctrines of religions are secondary and ultimately of no importance, then why would one need to adhere to them in the first place? Do Sikand and Muslim liberalists have enough courage to openly declare that they disregard religions? Muslim liberalists, Muslim modernists, Muslim moderates, Muslim progressives, Muslim secularists, Muslim nationalists, Muslim empiricists, Muslim rationalists, Muslim socialists, Muslim communists, and Muslim feminists are all sincere Muslims; they do not want to give up Islam. Instead, they want to stay with Islam, modernity, nationalism, secularism, and liberalism all at the same time. However, Ismail al Faruqi does not consider it intellectually possible for a Muslim to also be involved in any of these concerns, because according to al Faruqi, Islam and nationalism, for example, are not compatible. He says:

A Muslim nationalist or racist is, therefore, a contradiction in terms; and the Muslim who claims commitment to nationalism is either a *munafiq* [hypocrite], a *zindiq* [atheist], a non-Muslim pretending to be one, or one whose commitment is so superficial that it cannot withstand the lure of personal advantage.³⁶

This view of Ismail al Faruqi may be a manifestation of extremism or fundamentalism. He understood very well that a Muslim is one who submits to Islam wholeheartedly, intellectually, and practically; therefore, he cannot submit to any other ism or ideology because Is-

lam is a worldview and way of life that guides the human and society and teaches them how to achieve peace, development, and happiness.

It is also true that God has sent prophets to all communities with the same message, but it is difficult to understand that in the presence of a “true” worldview and way of life God sent another “true” worldview (religion), but this time with a new name and with different teachings. Contrary to this view, Islamic revivalists maintain that God made it clear in the Qur’ān that He did not send a new message with a new name, but He revived the same old message (*dīn*) with the same teachings and same name because the true message was distorted by people. It is also true that God sent *al-dīn al-qayyim*, but with what name? It is mentioned in the Qur’ān that the name of *al-dīn al-qayyim* was Islam, which was revived by the same name again and again through all the prophets. But their followers later on distorted it and gave it a new name. But it is also true that this distorted and new *dīn* with a new name was not accepted by God as mentioned in the Qur’ān because it is a false claim.

Interfaith Dialogue

Supporting the position of Muslim liberalists on religious pluralism, Sikand emphasizes that Muslim liberalists invite people of various faiths to engage in dialogue with each other on the basis of what they have in common. However, Sikand feels that participants in interreligious dialogue must abide by certain basic rules. They must not assume that their religion is superior to those of others, including Islam. In addition, they must not simply tolerate other faiths but, in fact, respect their teachings and their integrity.³⁷ Also, they must not be motivated by any desire to convert others to their faith. Rather, dialogue must be supported by a desire to move toward discovering the truth, which can be approached by being open to multiple expressions of truth. Sikand states, “thus dialogue is actually a divinely-ordained duty for Muslims. The basic framework of the dialogue project is laid down in the Qur’ān itself.” Furthermore, according to him, “the Qur’ān accepts religious pluralism as a sign of God’s Will.”³⁸ Because “different religions, in all their diversity, have been created by God Himself.”³⁹ For Sikand, an attempt to prove the truth of one religion alone, even if that religion is Islam, is supposedly “against His Will.”⁴⁰ But according to revivalists, the will of God is expressed in the Qur’ān as follows: “Say ye: We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam)” (2:136).

Advocating Muslim liberals, Sikand maintains that through dialogue, one realizes how religions can be “complimentary” to each other in many respects.⁴¹ Muslims can gain new insights to evolve new interpretations and understanding of their own religion.⁴² He states that a dialogue project helps in a joint struggle for a new, socialist society and develops a new theology of liberation and pluralism.⁴³ For Sikand, dialogue was part of an essential mission of all the prophets of God.⁴⁴ However, a few questions still need to be answered. If different religions have been created by God Himself and are true, then why do the followers of modernity reject religion and promote secularism and materialism? If different religions have been created by God Himself and are true, then why do the followers of modernity reject *these true religions* and promote secularism and materialism? *Is it rational to reject true religions? If not then, how can this contradiction be committed by the founders of modernity who rejected true religions and claim basically to be rationalists? They were certainly not wrong! They were right. Why do we confine pluralism only to religion? Why not extend it to the ideologies of traditionalism, revivalism, fundamentalism, fascism, exclusivism, extremism, liberalism, and terrorism? And consider them useful for society. Why do we condemn the other ideologies?*

For Sikand, the role of true religion is to create a new society based on the cardinal values that all religions share in common: justice, equality, benevolence, compassion, and freedom.⁴⁵ Is religion in the contemporary world playing this role of creating a just society? If yes, then why is religion condemned? Are these values not emphasized by modernity? When people in the modern world have propagated all of these values, why do we need religions? Why do the pioneer philosophers of modernity fail to see this role of religion that is now advocated by Muslim liberals?

The Islamic State

Sikand states that if Muslim liberals support secular nation-states and oppose Islamic states, it is because the existence of secular nation-states and nationalism are “realities.”⁴⁶ However, Islamic revivalists reject nationalism outright, but from a practical point of view they accept nation-states. Even scholars like Muhammad Asad, Mohammad Iqbal, Ismail al Faruqi and many others have not endorsed Muslim nationalism. They advocated an Islamic state more forcefully than a secular nation-state. Secularism, the separation of religion and state, is seen by them as an illogical and unhealthy innovation. Moreover, they believe, the idea of separation of religion and state is entirely based on the philosophical point of view of people in the modern West.⁴⁷

Sikand and liberalists have blindly accepted the secular nation-state as a supposedly unchangeable reality. That is why they are praised by believers in modernity. Sikand claims that Muslim liberal intellectuals are creative and seek to develop a creative approach to politics, religion, theology, and law – an approach that allows for new ways of looking at religious pluralism, the secular nation-state, democracy, and secularism, while still being firmly rooted in their own faith. Hence, Sikand states:

at a time when religious militancy has emerged as a major challenge in large parts of the world, including in many Muslim communities, the need for more reasoned understandings of religion that seek to creatively relate to the reality of growing religious pluralism, with the fact of the secular nation-state and the global system of secular nation-states, and with all the many questions that these pose for contemporary existence, has never been more urgent before.⁴⁸

Watt, Sikand, and Muslim liberalists oppose the idea of a Islamic state. For them, the main concern of the Qur'ān is not the state but society. Sikand, for example, says the Prophet was not commissioned by God to establish a state. To insist on an Islamic state is thus against the divine will.⁴⁹ For Sikand and liberalists, the only form of polity that comes closest to the Islamic ideal today is the secular democratic nation-state, in which all religious groups have equal rights. Contrary to this, the Islamic revivalists, such as Sayyid Mawdudi and Sayed Qutb and many other thinkers like Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Asad, have thought that Islam cannot be practiced in its totality until it is manifested in polity. Hence, they consider the establishment of an Islamic state in a time-and-space context a fundamental duty of Muslims. This Islamic state is not imposed on society; rather, it is established by the popular support of people. Moreover, it is a means to achieve the goals of civilization – peace, security, development, and happiness.

Sikand maintains that the forms of the state might and, indeed, must change over time and support justice, benevolence, and equality, which are fundamental Islamic values. But are these the only fundamental values of Islam? Has Islam anything to do with financial interests, oppression, exploitation, obscenity, the free mixing of the sexes, extramarital sex, adultery, the drinking of alcohol, drugs, and gambling? Can Muslim liberalists say that Islam does not emphasize them except as “personal” morals, which the state has nothing to do with? Why, then, is the state expected to curb sexual crimes? Sikand claims that what is important is not the outward form of an action but its foundational values.⁵⁰ Does this imply that whenever the state guarantees the values of justice, benevolence, and equality, it

is acceptable irrespective of its form? It may be a state that is feudalist, dictatorial, authoritarian, fascist, socialist, communist, capitalist, democratic, monarchist, constitutional, unconstitutional, religious, fundamentalist, or liberalist. Interestingly, Sikand believes that the values of justice, benevolence, and equality are best realized by a modern, secular democratic nation-state.⁵¹ Why, then, do the Muslim liberalists need to insist on Islam at all? Is the secular state eternal and sacred so it may not be replaced by any other form of state? May one not question it? Nevertheless, Sikand and liberalists continue to argue that according to their own reading of Islam, secularism, the nation-state and democracy are true representations of the divine will.⁵²

For Sikand and liberalists, democracy and the Islamic notion of *shūrā* (rule through consultation) are the same⁵³ because the most appropriate form of *shūrā* is representative democracy, which preserves and promotes the fundamental values and the spirit of Islam.⁵⁴ The implication of this is that there is no difference between the consultation that took place among the Prophet's companions and the consultation that takes place today among members of national parliaments, legislative assemblies, congresses, or senates – irrespective of the character and knowledge of the individuals involved. The only prerequisite is that they must be voted in by the masses: it hardly matters if they are drunkards, adulterers, porn stars, criminals, or addicted to power and money.

Issues in Contemporary Islamic Revivalist Thought

Contrary to this, Islamic revivalists seek to generate a debate for the replacement of modernity and liberalism. Issues emphasized by liberalists are thus not of primary importance to revivalists. “Western-educated liberal modernists were primarily a Eurocentered elite seeking to emulate the West and assimilate its ways.... Europe was a model for progress, and the way to become like Europe was to liberate society from religion. Tradition was derided as a medieval holdover and modernity was seen as inevitable.”⁵⁵ This has become an article of faith with the liberalists. Unlike them, revivalists have witnessed the ugly face of modernity and liberalism in theory and practice. The establishment of a just world order is a vision that revivalists share with rest of the world. Their main concern is human: his or her welfare, security, prosperity, happiness, progress, development, and salvation here and in the hereafter. Their interest is, thus, human interest not only national interests. Their vision turns into an ideology for action to remedy the malaise of the world, and this is addressed to all of humanity. This humanistic vision (different from humanism) of revivalists engenders activism and dy-

namism, the involvement of people, and it revolutionizes their societies and helps establish an order that corresponds to their aims in life and in reality.

The Need to Know the Purpose of Life

Islamic revivalists are concerned with the making of an effort to guarantee justice, security, peace, prosperity, happiness, and civilizational development in societies that cannot be achieved without identifying the true purpose of life. Human beings as vicegerents of God on earth are supposed to fight against injustice, inequality, poverty, illiteracy, and slavery. This struggle is a prerequisite for the establishment of justice. This has been the élan vital of the philosophy of Islamic movement from its initial stage to its maturity.⁵⁶

Whatever system of life will be planned for man in this world, it must originate from certain metaphysical or theological concepts. No scheme of life is possible without a clear conception of man and the world in which he lives. The question, how should man behave or how should he act in this world, is closely related to the questions: What is man? What is his position in this world? And what kind of system is this universe with which he should try to bring the way of his life in full conformity?⁵⁷

After raising these questions, Sayyid Abul A‘la Mawdudi analyzes four possible metaphysical and theological positions – namely, atheism, polytheism, asceticism, and Islam. For him, the fourth metaphysical doctrine is the one presented by all prophets of God from the earliest times. It proposes that this world is created by God, and He alone is its real master and sole ruler.⁵⁸ The decisive factor that determines success or failure in this world and in the hereafter is “whether or not man, by the right use of his faculty of reasoning and intuition, recognizes God.”⁵⁹ Having recognized God, it is also imperative to submit to Him willingly by following His revealed guidance. Thus, one of the main objectives of the Islamic movement is to invite humans to be obedient to God, for that is the very reason of their existence: “I have only created *jinn*s and men that they may serve [obey] Me” (Qur’ān, 51:56).

According to Mawdudi, the focus of Islamic movements is on the *social project*: justice is not possible without serving God, and this implies working hard to establish *al-Dīn al-Islam* in all aspects of life – familial, social, economic, and political – from the individual to global levels. “He has ordained for you the same religion as He enjoined on Noah that which We have sent by inspiration to you and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: to establish the religion and not be divided therein” (Qur’ān 42:13). The formation of the Islamic movements needs to be appreciated in terms of

the universal mission of Islam for humankind. But the author of *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* observes unjustly:

The neo-Islamic totalitarian movements are essentially fascist movements. They concentrate on mobilizing passion and violence to enlarge the power of their charismatic leader and the solidarity of the movement. They view material progress primarily as a means for accumulating strength for political expansion, and entirely deny individual and social freedom. They champion the values and emotions of a heroic past, but repress all free critical analysis of their past roots or present problems.⁶⁰

The Need for Divine Guidance in Collective Life

The ideology of Islamic revival seeks to realign spirituality with the material world. According to revivalists, “Concepts relating to God, the universe and man which have emanated from man’s own limited knowledge run counter to reality. The same applies to concepts which have been either woven by man’s intellectual fancies or which have evolved through man’s obsession with animal desires. The ways of life which rest on these false foundations are both contrary to reality and ruinous for man. The essence of true knowledge is that which God revealed to man when He appointed him His vicegerent.”⁶¹ According to that knowledge, God, the lord of creation, the creator and sovereign of the entire universe, created the human on earth. He also endowed the human with the capacity for cognition, reflection, and understanding; with the ability to distinguish between good and evil; and with the power to exercise his latent potentialities. The right way for the human is to regard God as his or her only master, guide, and sustainer. Any human can follow any other way that he or she is free to take, but the individual would experience the evil effects of corruption and disorder that are rampant in the life of this world, and may be consigned to eternal grief and torment when he or she crosses the borders of the present world and arrives in the hereafter.⁶²

Revivalists’ discourse is directed at the essence of true knowledge – the recognition and acknowledgement of God, the Ultimate Truth. All other themes occurring in the revivalist discourse are related to this central theme. The mission of the movement is to call people to the right way of life, to communicate God’s true guidance afresh, and to organize into one community people who respond to this mission and accept God’s guidance. For them, Islam is that right way of life that God chose to reveal to humankind

for their guidance and welfare. This is why revivalists seek to transform their message into an ideology. The ideology of Islamic revivalism does not discriminate among people; it addresses them altogether. To them, all people are creatures of God, no one is superior or inferior; all are equally in need of God's guidance for their own well-being. God-fearing people can only fill the world with justice and prosperity. Preparing God-fearing people is the top agenda of the revivalists. Education and persuasion are considered part of a practical methodology of change. Politics is integral, but not a priority. Democratic lawful means are basic tools of Islamic ideology.

The Need for God-Fearing Leadership

The establishment of a just and balanced world order is a prerequisite for the actualization of civilizational goals. This entails following at the personal and communal levels God's guidance and implementing His injunctions. It cannot be achieved except under the leadership of God-fearing individuals. The creation of such God-fearing leadership is another important theme of the revivalist program. The emergence of people-oriented and God-fearing leadership in place of the individual or nation-oriented leadership is an urgent need of humanity. The leadership that developed in the wake of modernity has only created corruption, injustice, oppression, and violence; these leaders have been obsessed with "national interest" and "survival for fittest"; they have caused international conflict, and every nation now is obliged to spend a good deal on defense. Their people may lack education, good health, and employment, but the national defense budget must not be compromised. Revivalists believe that modernity created a kind of leadership that has rebelled against people's interest in worship and turned people into selfish, material-oriented beings – and the world into a world of wars, weapons, violence, terror, conflict, and chaos. Mawdudi, cautioned:

The objective of the Islamic movement, in this world, is revolution in leadership. A leadership that ... is responsible for the suffering of mankind has to be replaced by a leadership that is God-conscious, righteous and committed to following Divine Guidance.⁶³

The civilizational goals of justice, rule of law, equality, and prosperity cannot be realized so long as power and leadership lie in the hands of those who do not have the fear of God and the interests of the people on their mind. It is, therefore, the primary duty of those who aspire to achieve the goals of civilization to launch an organized struggle for righteous and God-fearing leadership. This approach of the revivalists is very well understood even by Western scholars:

To Mawdudi, leadership is a central issue in a Muslim community. It supersedes almost all other political issues because a society is a reflection of its leadership. Leaders provide general direction to, and set the value system of, the body politic.... Mawdudi is inclined to believe that, once a comprehensive program of re-Islamization is put forth, the populace will willingly rally to the cause. His preferred emphasis seems to be more on propagation and persuasion than on militant confrontation.... Likewise, Qutb believes that the leadership should have the support of the people.⁶⁴

Revivalist discourse has identified the need for a people-oriented and God-fearing leadership as part of its strategy of development. Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi argues that this new leadership

[would be committed] to attain[ing] economic growth and to [improving] the spiritual and moral quality of life.... At present, such leadership is not in sight. We do not think traditional religious scholars and institutions can provide such leadership. Secular rulers and business leaders, at least now, do not have the credibility nor the will to do so. We look forward to a new generation of [leaders]. This new leadership should have a clearer vision [that includes the realization of the need of spiritual and material development].⁶⁵

The Need for Popular Participation in the Administration of a Political System

Another revivalists' preoccupation is the waging of a relentless struggle against political orders, which suppress individual freedom and destroy an individual's sense of responsibility. They are spread throughout the world. In the revivalist's program, the different groups do not have a uniform structure. For example, *Al Ikhwan Al-Muslimun* in Egypt differs from the *Dakwah* Movement in Indonesia, in their strategies and program, but finally they both focus on people as developmental and social creatures. Higher rates of popular participation in the political process are indispensable, and increase participation that would increase the emergence of a people-oriented and God-fearing leadership and accelerate the process of development. Revivalists understand that the lack of constitutional, elected, and representative governments are the greatest obstacle toward the development of the Muslim world. Representative governments devoid of spirituality have failed to bring the actual fruits of development to the masses. Millions of people who cast their vote continue to

live below the poverty line, seriously lacking access to educational and healthcare facilities. According to the revivalists, the idea of representative governments along secular lines, however appropriate it may have been at a particular time, is no longer capable of dealing with the problems of contemporary life. The noble conception of a truly human interest has been overshadowed by the imposition of individual and national interests.

The need for a reevaluation of the idea of a representative secular government is at the heart of revivalists. Revivalists seek democratization based on the spiritualization of the political process. They want to first create an environment in which participation, interrelationships, and cooperative enterprise on the basis of spirituality are encouraged.⁶⁶ For the welfare of everyone, the entire social environment – the intellectual, the political system, communications, education, economy, and socialization processes – must all be transformed to support a spiritually-oriented community of actively participating members. The ultimate ideal is the development of a participatory spiritual community, in which all must benefit from the fruits of development and there is no room for uneven development. Hence, education, ethical and moral development, and character building are emphasized in the revivalist programs.

The Need for Islamization of Knowledge

Revivalists see underdevelopment as a challenge; they are concerned about how to liberate the masses from poverty, illiteracy, and oppression. For revivalists, this challenge is linked to the challenge of knowledge. Secular knowledge is not sufficient for contemporary societies. It cannot resolve the problem of undevelopment. Secular knowledge, which is based on speculative philosophies, need to be reformed based on knowledge revealed by God. Revivalists state that human knowledge about the universe and humans must be revised to enable humanity to create a new world. It must not arise out of the desire to control, command, subdue, and dominate nature, humans, and society. True knowledge should create a sense that the spirit of competition must be guided with the spirit of cooperation and well-being. It should prepare people to abandon prejudice and infuse spirituality and ethics; humanity should turn away from speculation, conjecture, and superstitious cosmology and return to the spiritual state of nature. Human rationality should not be conceived in narrow, instrumental, means-ends terms. Humans are neither animal beings nor economic or sexual beings. They are vicegerents of God, endowed with the power of reason and sense perception. Thus, attempts are now being made to develop Islamized knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I assert that the claim made by modern Western and Eastern scholars about the rich contributions of liberalists to Islamic thought is unfounded. Their rich contributions are not in the domain of Islamic thought; instead, they are in the domain of Muslim liberalist thought. The use of the term *Islamic thought* for a Muslim liberalist thought is not in line with truth or reality. Thus, we cannot use the term *Islamic thought* comfortably without realizing that every thought that emerges from Muslims is not Islamic thought. Islamic thought is that which is developed within the framework of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, and maintains a fundamental character of spirituality, ethics, and morality. Islamic thought prepares human beings to submit willingly and wholeheartedly to God and His guidance, not to liberate them from God. Moreover, if we remove spirituality and morality from Islamic thought and infuse in it with modernity, secularity, and liberalism, then that thought does not remain as “Islamic thought” at all.

Therefore, the claim that “there is a pressing need to develop new interpretations of the faith” need to be understood within the framework of the worldview of Islam.⁶⁷ The interpretations outside the worldview of Islam are considered unrealistic and irrelevant because the truth of this world is what is revealed by God. If people do not understand and believe in God, they follow conjecture and philosophical speculation. The fact is that ever since God had been sending His messengers, they have expressed a single message: that He is the Creator and humans must follow His guidance if they aspire for development – otherwise they shall cause chaos in society. This universal guidance for development of the human and society cannot be ignored. Humanity needs to understand this basic message and work collectively on the basis of this structure. In this context, Islamic revivalists accept the reality of the plurality of Islamic thought but reject Muslim liberal thought and take God’s guidance as the fundamental source for peace, security, development, and happiness.

Endnotes

1. William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity* (London: Rutledge, 1988), 1.
2. Ibid., 2.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 3.
5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Seyyed Hossein Nasr , “Reply to Ibrahim Kalin,” in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), 463.
9. Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*, 4.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 5.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 6.
14. See for a detailed study on Muslim liberals, Yoginder Sikand, *Muslims in India Since 1947: Islamic Perspectives on Inter-Faith Relations* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).
15. Ibid.
16. M. A. Faksh, “Islamic fundamentalist thought: an analysis of major theoretical formulations,” in *Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, ed. Bryan S. Turner, vol. 4, (London: Routledge, 2003), 167.
17. Charles Kurzman, ed, *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998),4
18. Ibid., 5.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 6.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 8.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 9.
25. Ibid., 11.
26. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herdon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 13.
27. Kurzman, *Liberal Islam*, 12.
28. Yoginder Sikand, *Muslims in India Since 1947: Islamic Perspectives on Inter-Faith Relations* (New York and Oxon, Canada: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 2.
29. Ibid., 8.
30. Ibid., 12.
31. Ibid., 17.
32. Ibid., 18.
33. Ibid., 19.

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 20.
36. *Islamization of Knowledge*, 49.
37. Sikand, *Muslims in India Since 1947*, 20.
38. Ibid., 21.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 25.
41. Ibid., 22.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 3.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 25.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 25.
53. Ibid., 26
54. Ibid.
55. Faksh, "Islamic fundamentalist thought," 164
56. See, for instance, Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, trans. al-Ash'ardi, 2nd (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications, 1972); Maulana Sadruddin Islahi, *Islamic Civilization: Real Perspective*, trans. Israr Ahmad Khan (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Golden Books Centre, 1997).
57. Mawdudi, Sayyid Abul A'la *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, trans. al-Ash'ardi, 2nd, 15.
58. Ibid., 25.
59. Ibid., 26.
60. Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 135–36.
61. Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Quran*, vol. 1, trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1988), 12
62. Ibid., 9–10.

63. Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values, Power, and Change*, ed. Khurram Murad (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1984), 71.
64. Faksh, "Islamic fundamentalist thought," 170.
65. Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, "Towards Regeneration: Shifting Priorities in Islamic Movements," *Encounters, Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives* 1: no. 2 (1995): 26.
66. John L Esposito. and John O Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.
67. Sikand, *Muslims in India Since 1947*, 7.