

## *Reports on Workshops, Conferences and Seminars*

# WORKSHOP REPORT ON THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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The workshop on the Islamization of knowledge, organized by the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, was held at Regency Hotel, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, from June 7–11, 1996. Workshops and seminars of this sort usually revolve around the nature, characteristics, and rationale for the Islamization of knowledge. This workshop, however, was different in that it dealt with the question of methodology. Given that Islamization is an intellectual and methodological outlook, the workshop's emphasis on methodology is justified and well placed.

Clearly, the workshop was not for the uninitiated or for new recruits. It was meant for those who have been associated with the movement for the Islamization of knowledge and especially for those who have the potential to make some contribution toward its realization. Clearly, the list of participants indicates that the organizers selected those who are imbued with a spirit of selflessness and zeal to work for the sake of Islam to uplift the Ummah's image intellectually and otherwise. The workshop, as briefed by Louay Safi, was an occasion to scrutinize in minute detail the parameters of the Islamization of knowledge, to critically appreciate the contributions made by the leading luminaries, and to grapple seriously with questions of methodology.

### The Sessions

The opening session was used to brief the participants on the rationale for this workshop and the organizers' expectations. The closing session summarized the findings and was addressed by Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Sri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also the president of the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). For its actual operation, however,

the workshop was divided into three interrelated segments: lecture sessions, group discussions, and plenary sessions.

There were 11 lecture sessions, which included the opening and closing sessions. Taha Jabir al-'Alwani presented in four of them. The topics of his lectures were the following: "Islamization of Knowledge: A General Framework," "The Qur'an as a Source of Knowledge," "Dealing with Sunnah: A Methodological Approach," and "Dealing with the Muslim Scholarly Heritage." AbdulHamid AbuSulayman contributed two presentations: "Islamic Revealed Knowledge: From Performance to Method" and "Sunnah as a Source of Knowledge: A Social Scientist's Perspective." As the subtitle indicates, AbuSulayman drew extensively from his vast experiences in conducting research on Islamization of the social sciences. Nizar S. Alani presented a paper titled "A Critical Review of the Islamization of Knowledge," and Abdullahi Hasan Zaroug and Ibrahim Ragab presented two separate papers on "Dealing with Western Knowledge." Professors Nizar Alani, Ragab, and Zaroug had their papers written and distributed before the workshop began and hence received ample discussion.

The workshop was planned to have only nine sessions. During the last two days, however, four intellectuals from overseas joined the workshop; hence, it was thought desirable to benefit from their scholarship. Two panel discussion sessions were added to allow the guests to present their views "Western Methodology and Islam" and "Islam and the Intellectual Climate in the West". The panel discussion was lively and elicited enthusiastic response from the participants.

The last lecture session was devoted to assessment and future prospects of Islamization of knowledge at the IUM. The presentation was made by Mohammad Kamal Hasan, the university's deputy rector (Academic Affairs). His presentation was very comprehensive, laced with up-to-date statistics, and touched upon the vision and mission of the university, the curriculum design, and the research output.

## Group Discussions

It was thought that because participants were engaged in research on various facets of Islamization of knowledge, they would benefit most if they were given extensive opportunities to interact with each other in small group settings. Consequently, they were divided into four groups to deliberate upon issues resulting from the presentations. The groups were allowed to select their own agenda and to devise their own format of discussion. Five group discussion sessions were held. The groups discussed all the issues presented during the lecture sessions.

## Plenary Sessions

The four plenary sessions were intended for the exchange of views among the groups. The facilitators were requested to present the outcome of their deliberation, after which the floor would be open for discussion. Given the time constraints, only two plenary sessions were held. The first session was very lively where the participants discussed the objective, the rationale, the parameters, and the challenges and prospects of the Islamization of knowledge. The last plenary session was the most rewarding in that each facilitator presented the outcome of his group's deliberation on one methodological aspect of the Islamization of knowledge. The four areas included the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the Muslim scholarly heritage, and Western knowledge.

## The Closing Session

The closing session was graced by the deputy prime minister, Dato' Sri Anwar Ibrahim, who was accompanied by the chief minister of Negeri Sembilan, Tan Sri Mohd Isa. The closing session was addressed by Taha Jabir al-'Alwani, who desired, among other things, to see Malaysia holding the banner of the Ummah, and AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman, who enjoined the participants to face the challenge of Islamizing knowledge with resolute will, solid determination, and adequate preparation. In his closing address, Dato' Sri Anwar Ibrahim expressed his appreciation for the University's efforts in upholding the cause of the Ummah. However, he expected the University to increase its commitment and to equip the students with the skills and scholarship that will help them to face the challenges that lie ahead and to live in peace with the world in conformity with the dictates of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

## Evaluation

The participants appreciated the workshop. They enjoyed the eloquence and scholarship of Taha Jabir al-'Alwani and benefitted most from his presence for five days. This is evident from the facilitator's reports and the copious notes taken by the participants. The two presentations made by AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman were very provocative and inspiring. His emphasis upon not paying much attention to the procedure, taking life seriously, and developing new methodology were well received. The overall response was encouraging, and the participants expressed their desire for more such workshops.

However, the participants lamented that they could not participate as seriously as they had wished because the papers were not distributed beforehand. As a matter of fact, neither Taha nor AbdulHamid had their papers written, which prompted some of the participants to suggest that their lectures be transcribed, printed, and distributed to the academic community as a whole.

The second suggestion was to schedule a sorely needed follow-up workshop. This follow-up workshop, according to one of the participants, should have practical examples of Islamization carried out in various disciplines in the kulliyah.

The third suggestion relates to the time span of the workshop. While the participants appreciated the accommodation facilities, they felt the five-day duration was too long. Given the intensity required by the enterprise and the hectic schedule of the participants, it was suggested that the workshop be limited to three full days. Five participants complained of fever and severe fatigue the day after they returned from the workshop.

The participants expressed their appreciation to the kulliyah management for this successful workshop and congratulated the acting dean, Jamal Barzinji, his deputies, Abdul Khaliq Kazi and Nizar S. Alani, the chairman of the Steering Committee, Louay M. Safi, and the entire organizing committee for a job well done.