

Review Article

Islamic Liberalism and Beyond

Parvez Manzoor

The logic of faith is truth: it proclaims a paradigmatic order of reality. The logic of the world is power: it promotes a pragmatic view of things. The logic of Islam is to conjoin the paradigmatic truth of faith with the pragmatic order of the Community. Holding fast to the transcendence of Truth, Islam does not, as it were, allow the world to slip out of its hands. For the existence of its faith transcendence and immanence are as essential as exhaling and inhaling. Of course, by renouncing the "either/or" option, Islamic tradition gets entangled in a number of moral and metaphysical paradoxes: its secular public order gets confounded with the transcendent realm of faith and the historical community emerges as the supreme value of Islam.

And yet, despite the identity of 'Islamic reason' and *raison d'état* in the sacrosanct discourse of the *fuqaha*, the dominant ethos of Islamic civilization has been apolitical, nay downright antipolitical. Even the most ardent champions of the 'inerrancy' of the Community have upheld the sovereignty of the paradigmatic and renounced all pretence of the pragmatic. The absolute verity of a transcendent Revelation, they have argued with unyielding logic, requisitions no authentication from the contingent praxis of an immanent Community. The truth of Islam, sublime, transcendent and unassailable, cannot suffer any humiliation on account of the existential infirmity of sinful Muslims. Islam stands in need of no validation save its own self-validation. Doubtless, this reckless and imperious transcendentalism of tradition has had catastrophic consequences for the Muslim polity. The paradigmatic logic of faith has successfully prevented Muslim consciousness from perceiving any pragmatic order of reality as 'Islamic'. Indeed, perverting the argument for transcendence into a pretext for abdicating history, Muslims have been guilty of practising the kind of pernicious dichotomy of faith and community that they have vehemently described in theory. The doctrinal quest for Islamic legitimacy has been instrumental in devalourizing the historic Community and its existential testimony. Theory and practice, in other words, have come to dwell in separate spheres in the civilization of Islam. Indeed, every assertion to the contrary, the Muslim Ummah of history is not a power-polity, not a body-

politic but a body-mystic; it pursues no pragmatic goals but proclaims a paradigmatic truth.

With the dislocation of Muslim societies and the emergence of an alien, Western, civilization, the duality of life and thought, theory and practice, expression and experience has grown even more vicious. Today, the categories of authenticity and inauthenticity come with 'traditional' and 'modern' labels. What is necessary for everyday affairs is foreign. What is part of the inner life of the mind is indigenous. The language of culture, in other words, is not the language of everyday life; the thinking and feeling self of contemporary Islam is not its working and doing self and the traditional, eternal, cause knows of no modern, contingent, program. Little wonder that what has been handed over by the tradition, the Islamic turath, appears to a modern critic as the nonrational side of human nature, not the rational necessity of political society.

The most spectacular form of Muslim reaction against this gruesome dualism of theory and practice, against the ever-widening gap between Islamic ideals and the un-Islamic state of the world, has been the phenomenon of political activism that goes under the name of Islamic resurgence. Generally, it has been construed as a violent rejection of inauthentic Western modernity and an equally forceful assertion of the Islamic identity. In reality, however, Islamic culture has, once again, reaffirmed its predilection for theory; for the West, which is the source of technology, industrialization, consumerism and power, has not been banished from Muslim practice, nor have any other, Islamic models of pre/post-industrial society and culture risen in its stead. Theoretically too, the reclamation of the Islamic paradigm has not led to an outright rejection of western modernity, it has implied an appropriation of its ethos as well.

The frenetic search for a solution to the schismatic state of Muslim culture has come to mean, among others, that Islamic commitment today is scanning fresh pastures of socio-political morality and searching for new springs of intellectual rejuvenation. More than that, underneath the turbulent stream of Islamic resurgence, other intellectual cross-currents have been making their own silent headways. Deep within the rejectionist discourse of Islamic fundamentalism, it appears, there has been going on a less assertive and narcissistic reflection which aims at the absorption of modernity within Islam. In fact, by indicting transcendent theory and by granting Muslim praxis some degree of legitimation, the counter-currents of Islamic authenticity are striving to cope with the Secular Ethic of modernity with the resources of the Sacred Law. Or, better still, their goal is to produce from within the resources of Islam a counterpart of the 'Protestant Ethic', an authentic model of consciousness that allows Muslim societies to make their own pact with the power-brokers of postindustrial rationality.

Of course, the dialectical tension between theory and practice is part of the western scene as well. Currently, it reveals itself in the crisis of western theory, in its inability to arbitrate between the claims of relativist *history* and a historical *reason*. Thus, whilst the Muslim has been rebelling against the historical transcendentalism of his legacy, the Western thinker has shown an equal disenchantment with the reductive positivism and normless empiricism of his tradition. In other words, the disgruntled Western positivist, trying to rescue theory from the suffocative embrace of praxis, finds himself in the same quandary as the disillusioned Muslim transcendentalist who has to yield before the cognitive onslaught of antinomian practice. Little wonder that the two are searching for a common epistemological shelter, a single academic precinct on which they both could cohabit and cross-fertilize. Equally understandable is the fact that the earstwhile abusive dialogue between Muslim transcendentalists and Western historicists (orientalists) is slowly turning into a disciplined exercise in self-analysis that not only aims at reciprocal critique but earnestly seeks mutual self-enlightenment as well. At any rate, each protagonist now recognizes the validity of the other's position and even discovers, in the plight of one's own tradition, the authentication of the other. The result, then, is a challenging cross-cultural discourse that allows the indigenous and the alien, the empirical and the normative, the historical and the technological, all to criss-cross the entire epistemological landscape and sow any kind of ideational seeds. The age of barren polemics between 'Islam' and 'Orientalism' is coming to an end after all.

Along with the late Fazlur Rahman, perhaps no one deserves more credit for bridging the gap between the indigenous, normative, and the foreign, historical, perceptions of Islam than Leonard Binder, Professor of Political Science at the University of California. Binder, a polymath of imposing stature and a veteran observer of the Middle East, has earlier given us numerous studies on Egypt, Pakistan, Iran etc. that are all characterised by the originality and perspicacity of his approach. His latest work, *Islamic Liberalism*, too, is a worthy representative of sympathetic and redeeming scholarship: it recaptures the recent Muslim debate on the nature of a Just Order in Islam, (ie. the interface of faith in a Transcendent Being, a historical community submitting to the sovereignty of the Revelation and a world committed to its own logic of pragmatic order) with exemplary clarity and insight.

Without prejudice, Binder's monumental opus may be apprehended in terms of a proselytizing project, the self-confessed aim of which is to bring 'Islam' into the orbit of 'liberal capitalism.' The resurgent Islam of today, notwithstanding its strident rhetoric of political activism, he is fully aware, is ideologically still a blank sheet. For the liberal project, then, it represents both a threat and a promise. It could foster or hinder the emergence of a bourgeois state in the Middle East. Indeed, the Islamic movement may seize

the state, strengthen its hold on the masses even more, and decisively block the effort of the bourgeoisie to capture hegemonic power. Or, it might be instrumental in the development of liberal democracies in the region. Hence, Binder minces no words, *'the task of the moment is to appropriate religion as part of the new bourgeois ideology before it is appropriated by some rival social force.'* Little wonder that Binder calls his book 'a highly personal work, . . . tied together by my personal quest for an understanding of great events and by my own role as a professional scholar who is called upon to explain these events.'

Not inconsistently, then, the book opens with a personal CREDO, the intellectual and moral presuppositions of which are solemnly enunciated as follows:

1. Liberal government is the product of a continuous process of rational discourse.
2. Rational discourse is possible even among those who do not share the same culture nor the same consciousness.
3. Rational discourse can produce mutual understanding and cultural consensus, as well as agreement on particulars.
4. Consensus permits stable political arrangements, and is the rational basis of the choice of coherent political strategies.
5. Rational strategic choice is the basis of improving the human condition through collective action.
6. Political liberalism, in this sense, is indivisible. It will either prevail worldwide, or it will have to be defended by nondiscursive action.
7. The rejection of liberalism in the Middle East or elsewhere is not a matter of moral indifference.
8. Political liberalism can exist only where and when its social and intellectual prerequisites exist.
9. These preconditions already exist in some parts of the Islamic Middle East.
10. By engaging in a rational discourse with those whose consciousness has been shaped by Islamic culture, it is possible to enhance the prospects for political liberalism in that region and others where it is not indigenous.

Obviously, these politico-moral dispositions, backed up by the philosophical resources of phenomenological theory, are contingent upon a particular metaphysics of the ultimate scheme of things which cannot be rationally proven or disproven. Were the reviewer—or the reader—merely to aim at disputation, he may justifiably ignore the rest of the book and confine

his criticism to the metaphysical prejudices, or logical inconsistencies, of the liberalist position. He may deny the dogmatic distinction between 'knowledge' and 'opinion', question the authority of 'rational discourse' (indeed that of 'rationality' itself), reject the metaphysical premises of 'permanent change'; or indeed, he may dismiss the political framework of the author's world-outlook altogether (Indeed, for an average reader, it is advisable to skip the involved and opinionated discussion on Developmental Theory and begin directly with the third chapter!). However, Binder's work is far too rich and rewarding to be dismissed on the grounds of an unabashed display of its metaphysical and ideological parameters.

The main focus of the book is on 'the relationship of Islamic liberalism to political liberalism,' for which purpose Binder constructs a framework for the study of Islamic resurgence. However, he does not treat the current resurgence as a single phenomenon but analyses it in terms of 'the differences between movements led by the clergy [read: Iran], those led by petit-bourgeois intellectuals (or members of the educated middle class) [ie. the Ikhwan and the Jama'at-i-Islami] and those strategies employed by governments or even by leftist opposition movements [Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia etc.], to affirm or deny the legitimacy of existing regimes.' Binder's tone, moreover, is revisionist, questioning the intellectual ground of the current dominant paradigm employed in the interpretation of Middle East politics. Philosophically, his approach does not entail a blind application of some Western paradigm but 'the dialectical application of a hermeneutic to the cultural expression of the experience for both Islam and the West.' Not unexpectedly, then, Binder's main conclusion is that 'without a vigorous Islamic liberalism, political liberalism will not succeed in the Middle East, despite the emergence of bourgeois states.'

Starting from a rather slanted and selective interpretation of the history of 'development theory,' the author turns his attention to the nasty problem of Orientalism. In a vigorous and highly incisive 'critique of the critique of orientalism' Binder presents the ideational parentage (ie. Foucault and Derrida) of Edward Said's celebrated thesis that presents orientalist knowledge and colonial power as the two sides of a single equation. However, the significant point is that Said's critique of orientalism says almost nothing about Islam; indeed it is possible only under these premises. Against the claims of Foucault's epistemology of power, which Said has employed in the construction of his own thesis, Binder invokes the metaphysical insight of Derrida. In his essay, 'Violence and Metaphysics,' Derrida refutes Emanuel Levinas' contention that the only moral approach to the problem of constituting, or rather knowing, the other is to postulate absolute otherness of the other by arguing that the moral way to know the other is rather by means of a philosophically unanticipated encounter. However, since a pure thought of pure difference

is an impossibility, the alternative to a discourse about the other is silence, and that is an act of greater metaphysical violence, as it represents a failure to recognize the being of the Other. In other words, to respect the alterity of the Other to the extent that Self itself is paralyzed into silence is not a morally defensible position. For, 'between the extremes of the complete idealization of self and complete identification with the other, there are some intermediate possibilities which are based on the assumption that ego will undergo some change while gaining some understanding of the alter.' Discourse, even of the orientalist and fundamentalist kind, thus, is preferable to the greater violence of silence.

The next chapter, revisiting the scandalous work of 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq, which called for a separation of religion and state in Islam, is an effort to delineate the scriptural limits beyond which, Binder feels, no liberal doctrine can go. 'Abd al-Raziq's failure, then, expresses the need for an Islamic liberalism, which accommodates the traditional scripturalist conception of Islamic government but which also supplies an interpretative framework capable of linking liberal political practices 'to an acceptably authentic hermeneutic of the Islamic tradition.' Besides presenting 'Abd al-Raziq's argument in a gratifying manner, a task already accomplished by E.I.J. Rosenthal, Binder provides a very original account of its controversial sequel that culminates in a highly perceptive account of Mohammad Arkoun's 'Islamic Structuralism.' Arkoun's epistemological critique of *logocentrisme* and his assertion that *raison islamique* is *raison d'état* is presented in conjunction with his more recent political statements.

Recognizing that the goal of Arkoun's epistemology is the removal of distinction between 'Islamic reason' and 'philosophic reason,' Binder still finds the former's criticism of Khomeini's doctrine of the *walāyat-i-faqīh* misplaced. In his opinion, by identifying Khomeini 'with his bete-noire, the scripturalist sunni clerics and by accusing him of demystifying the rich concept of *walāyat-i-faqīh*, Arkoun misjudges the meaning of that concept. Khomeini's argument, Binder reminds us, is that during the occultation, it is the 'Ulama who hold the *walāya* and hence the political authority that would be the Imam's. Far from diminishing the *walāya*, Khomeini has in fact revised it. However, Binder is also cognizant that 'it is uncertain whether, in the foreseeable future, it will be bestowed upon another individual rather than the collectivity of the *fuqahā*.' By proposing an intellectualist solution to the problem of pragmatic order, even if his epistemology is much sounder, Arkoun shares in the rational and liberal tradition of 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq and Taha Husain.'

The subsequent chapter dealing with 'The Religious Aesthetic of Sayyid Qutb' is also highly original in its approach. Unlike other intellectual founders of modern 'fundamentalism,' Binder points out, Sayyid Qutb was deeply influenced by an emotional, rather than legalistic, conception of the Islamic

faith. In his *Ma'ālim fi'l-Tariq*, notes Binder, 'Qutb abandons the meliorative faith in the asymptomatic convergence of theory and practice within the context of a historical frame of reference.' Instead, he calls for activism, jihad and martyrdom, expecting no reward in this life and being pessimistic about the prospects of 'Islamic renewal.' 'This affirmation of militance and martyrdom,' asserts Binder, 'is built upon a metaphysical structure which attempts to be both worldly and subjective.' The most important symbol used by him to denote that structure is *tasawwur*, a conception, an idea, an intuition, a vision, or something depicted or imagined, that he employs in the construction of his aesthetic theory of the Qur'an. For Sayyid Qutb, the aesthetic perspective, then, dispenses with the need for a philosophical and theoretical approach and results in a rejection of idealism for the sake of a commitment to existential praxis.

The dramatic consequences of Qutb's flight from the discursive to the artistic is summed up by Binder as follows:

In the *'Adala*, Qutb, following Mawdudi, and in the Islamic tradition, chooses theory over practice, and expresses this choice as a preference for idealism over pragmatism. In the *Ma'ālim*, Qutb chooses practice over theory. Reading the Qur'an and practising the faith produce an Islamic consciousness. But there is no guarantee that such practice can transform the world of lived experience into the ideal of Islamic *tasawwur*. Qutb, isolated, imprisoned, in ill health, and dispirited, chose martyrdom over accommodative compromise. But his choice is not the only possible conclusion, nor even the most usual conclusion, drawn from the pragmatic, existentialist, ontological or historical preference for practice over theory. Qutb's *schwannegesang* opens at least a philosophical path for the cooperation of fundamentalists and contemporary political movements of both the right and the left.

Other topics dealt with in this imaginative work include Rodinson's theory about the compatibility of 'Islam and Capitalism,' 'The political thought of (the Egyptian) Taiq al-Bishri' that represents an amalgamation of nationalism, liberalism and the Islamic heritage and the turath literature's search for a 'hermeneutics of authenticity.' The climactic note of Binder's attempt to reopen a dialogue between 'Western modernity and Islamic authenticity,' paradoxically, is supplied not by any liberal Westerner but by a leftist Muslim, described by the author as 'vaguely *marxisant*', namely, the Moroccan historian Abdullah Laroui. For Laroui, a left-Hegelian committed to an early humanist Marx, there is no possibility of realizing a 'pure Arab authenticity,' as there can be no understanding of the Arabic Self unless it is also an insight about the

Western Other. And, since he defines the future 'Ideologically,' ie. in terms of moral and intellectual parameters, he is not disturbed by the prospect that 'Arab authenticity can and will be realized in a transcendent-universalism.' 'To recognize the universal,' says Laroui, 'is to become reconciled with oneself.' (Obviously for Binder, the ideational content of that 'transcendent universalism' has been/will be supplied by the liberal worldview, whereas for a Muslim, or any other believer, there can be no true universalism unless it is based on a para-rational and integrative faith in a transcendent God.)

Given Laroui's preference for the realization of 'Arab authenticity-within-universalism,' it is not surprising that he finds the parochial nation-state inauthentic. It is, after all, 'a setting in which the alien *techné* of the West, the *non-moi*, stands in contradiction with the Arab self. Similarly, a highly original critique of Arab culture, by way of a penetrating analysis of its literary forms, leads Laroui to claim that the lack of authenticity and universality of these literary forms stems from the petit-bourgeois nature of the contemporary Arab state. From this Binder concludes that the truly universal—and hence authentic—Arab culture will spring only from the soil of a liberal state that is under a hegemony of bourgeoisie proper and which is not a handmaiden of petit-bourgeoisie. 'There is little doubt,' he says, 'that Laroui's message, when disencumbered from its dialectic trappings, is a strong plea for bourgeois liberalism in the classic form of academic and artistic freedom.' Indeed, it would also follow that the fundamentalist variant of 'Islamic state,' which is 'authoritarian, chauvinist and culturally reactionary,' which embraces 'the orientalist caricature of Islamic scripturalism,' is a Bonapartist polity, dominated by the class interests of petit-bourgeoisie. According to Laroui, 'it is the culture of this class rather than anything inherently Islamic or Arab, which leads to the rejection of a dialogue with the West.' If so, then, unless some kind of liberal Islam, representing the bourgeois segments of civil society, challenges the power of petit-bourgeoisie, Binder ends with the warning, the clergy may become the state elite par excellence in Muslim societies and the Islamic legitimacy may solve the problem of the capacity of the authoritarian state to reproduce itself!

Without doubt, Binder's political testimony is a *tour de force* of committed, albeit partisan, scholarship. Vigorous in its argument and overwhelming in its erudition, panoramic in vision and fecund in ideas, perspicacious and cogent, 'Islamic liberalism' is a veritable intellectual adventure. And yet, the irony is that Binder's ultimate commitment is to the value of non-committal. The giant of liberalism stands on feet of clay. It is a philosophy and rationality of means that knows nothing of any ultimate goal. (Cf: 'It postulates a constantly changing and evolving world. . . . There are no starting points in the pragmatic system, only apparent temporary configurations that are intelligible within the context of prevailing forms of discourse.') Its virtues are those of cognitive

uncertainty and moral relativism! Little wonder that not even all the men and horses of liberalism can pull the Humpty-Dumpty of our humanity, submerged in modernity's sea of nihilism, back to the shores of meaning again.

For the Muslim, torn by the strife of theory and practice but insensitive to the divisions of class and economy, the perfect state is the one that obeys the will of God. Could such an entity be a political state representing the collective will of the Ummah, or must the transcendental order of faith, in submitting to the sovereignty of the True Lawgiver, forever abjure the world of realms and empires, commonwealths and confederacies, nations and states? Whatever the answer, one thing is certain: given the resolve of the Ummah to restore the unity of theory and praxis, no state, of Imams and faqihs, of emirs and sultans, under the hegemony of petit-bourgeoisie or of libertarian bourgeoisie, governed by the forces of market economy or those of state-capitalism, may claim Islamic legitimacy if it either violates the truth of the believer or infringes upon the right of the citizen. However, inasmuch as the paradigmatic truth of faith needs to be cast in the pragmatic mold of politics, Binder's suggestive and incisive study shows that the bowl of the liberal state may hold the soup of 'Islam'. Will we ever find out?

Binder's Response

I read your review of my book with great interest. I am gratified by many of its judgments. I am especially gratified that you have taken up the invitation to engage in a frank, serious, and intellectual dialogue. Moreover, you are clearly well qualified to do so, and straight forward enough to state what you like and what you do not like. Your critique encourages me to clarify some points and offer a counter critique which I hope you may use.

It is noeworthy that you do not delimit the scope of your discourse either to the Islamic alone or to the Western universe of discourse alone. You hold nothing in defensive reserve as beyond discussion nor do you dismiss anything as beneath discussion. You thus open the possibility of a meaningful dialogue. You praise my criticism of those with whom you do not agree, such as those who persist in the Abduh-Ali Abd al-Raziq notion of Islamic liberalism and exponents of the critique of Orientalism. You also praise my sympathetic reading of Qutb's *Ma'ālim*. You note the paradox that it is a leftist Muslim intellectual that best exemplifies the intellectual synthesis that I think can produce an Islamic liberalism. At the same time, I note the paradox that you are least pleased by my treatment of Western development theory and most pleased with my analysis of Muslim thinkers.

These two paradoxes are related. It is important that I am able to demonstrate that a dialogue among intellectual equals who are at home in

several culturally diverse discursive formations is possible or even already underway. Otherwise, my arguments may be reduced to another form of *al-ghazu al-fikri*, as you briefly consider. But beyond this rather easily established point, I argue that the theoretical trajectory of development theory parallels the conclusions Laroui comes to in his comparison of the experiences of Egypt and Morocco through the 1960s. Moreover, taken together Laroui's arguments and the new development paradigm help us to understand the experiences of those two countries over the last 25 years. Laroui and I are both ambivalent regarding the role of the bourgeoisie. Both of us regard it as indispensable for both economic and cultural development, but we recognize that it is not inherently liberal and that the bourgeoisie is incapable of ruling alone. The question is, then, how to benefit from the contribution that can be made by a vigorous and influential bourgeoisie without suffering from the self-interested exploitation that can be the consequence of an unstable and defensive bourgeois domination. The question is, under what circumstances can a bourgeois state be, also, a liberal state. The argument of neo-liberal development theory is that the most stable form of bourgeois state is the affluent, capitalist, liberal democracy. Neo-Marxian arguments for the possibility of stable social democracy under state capitalism are logically intriguing but largely hypothetical. There is little doubt that prudent persons, including prudent Marxists, will hesitate to overthrow liberal *but* bourgeois regimes in order to establish the sort of regimes which are now falling like dominoes in East Europe. I would not be as indifferent toward state capitalism and private capitalism as you are, nor is it wise for advocates of an Islamic state to be indifferent to economic development and freedom while insisting on economic justice and equality. You admire the views of the late Qutb, but you seem to me to be committed to the views of the early Qutb on Islamic social justice. Laroui's contribution here is to argue that the question of the contemporary bourgeois state is as much a problem for Muslims as it is for the West and that it is central to the issue of Islamic liberalism.

But Laroui expects a large part of the solution to emerge out of a cultural and philosophical dialogue between Muslims and Europeans. In particular, he envisions Muslims as criticizing the parochial character of European thinking and thus forcing themselves and Europeans to think in universal terms. The resultant universalist perspective should transcend, without obliterating, nationalist and regional authenticities; a consequence which should appeal to all those Muslims who are cognizant of Islam's universal imperative. But some question arises regarding which is logically prior, Islam or a universalism which both affirms Islamic beliefs and other equally universalist alternatives to Islam. This, it seems to me, is at the heart of Parvez Manzoor's critique of liberalism. Parvez Manzoor is inclined to see liberalism as a rival, a competitor with Islam for the minds and hearts of the people.

Instead of seeing it as open structure, guaranteeing freedom of belief, he sees it as a justification of amorality and unbelief. Yet, Parvez Manzoor himself argues that my liberal belief is no more grounded on apodictic truth than is someone else's religious belief. But this argument is itself a liberal argument, based on Kantian dualism, and derived from the logical assertion that no amount of empirical evidence can ever establish the untruth of religious faith. Starting from the same sort of logical distinction made by Kant in the first critique, we might say that the basis of a liberal regime is the distinction between political assertions that can be validated empirically and those that cannot.

Despite the excesses of some positivists, most liberals would not argue that those assertions that cannot be validated empirically are meaningless and that all moral statements are similarly meaningless. Instead, the liberal position is that other kinds of validating arguments or experiences can be offered to justify belief, even pragmatic ones, without risking empirical disproof or exaggerated claims. What liberalism cannot do, however, is to justify the dominance of such beliefs. That can be done only by a persuasive process which we hope will be as free of coercion and as full of mutual respect as possible.



Parvez Manzoor is quite right in arguing that liberalism by itself is inadequate to the tasks of government and the amelioration of the human condition, but it is an inadequate justification of Islam, or any other normative system, simply to state that something is better than nothing. Liberalism sets limits to the arbitrary choice of normative systems, and in this sense it is not morally neutral. Liberalism also sets limits or defines the method by which competitive normative systems may be advocated and defended. Muslims agree that coercion has no place in religious persuasion. It follows, then that unless Muslim belief is based on the empirical fact of revelation and the scripturalist consequences of such literalism, it must be based on the logical status which liberal thought accords all assertions that cannot be empirically invalidated. Religious truth may be attained by means of Gadamer's event of faith or Heidegger's appropriative event, or by Qutb's imaging experience, and even though this process often involves the reaffirmation of a faith one already has, it has little to do with the logical structure of the world of objective things.

It seems to me that between the cognitive faith in Islam and the belief which is based on the consciousness of the religious experience, there can only be the alternative of discovering within Islam and the Qur'an a particularistic reason by which Islam itself informs us of the modalities according to which we should believe in Islam and the extent to which the Islamic state can be a liberal state while still encouraging Islamic faith and practice.

At the end of his review, it seems to me that Parvez Manzoor abruptly breaks off the dialogue, dismissing the central issue of Islamic liberalism while avoiding indicating whether he prefers the cognitive or the consciousness alternative. Though his conclusion is elliptical, he suggests that it is not the role of Islam to provide a constitution, but rather to judge the constitutions and the political practices of governments. If I have guessed right, then it seems he has chosen the third alternative, and I look forward to learning how he would further elaborate it, especially since he suggests that Islamic political criteria would not be inimical to a liberal political order.

In sum, I am pleased with Parvez Manzoor's effort and with the serious attention he has given my book.

مجلة

"The Contemporary Muslim"

فصلية تعالج قضايا الاجتهاد المعاصر
في ضوء الأصالة الإسلامية

صاحب الامتياز
ورئيس التحرير المسؤول: الدكتور جمال الدين عطية

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