

## Editorial

With this issue of *AJISS*, we bring this volume to a close. This year has brought many changes to *AJISS*, not only in the scope of Islamic issues highlighted within the articles, but also in the range of opinions articulated by their authors. As a forum for intellectual debates on issues relating to Islam, *AJISS* strives to “push the intellectual envelope” of Islamic thought. No subject matter better reflects this attempt than the issue of women, which many articles in this issue analyze.

In her article “*Oikos/Polis* Conflict: Perspectives of Gender Feminists and Islamic Revivalists,” Zeenath Kausar examines the continuing debate on women’s political participation in order to demonstrate “how gender feminists prefer women’s political participation at the cost of deconstructing gender and family, whereas contemporary Islamic revivalists “support and encourage women’s political participation—but not at the expense of family and the distinct identity of women.” After a brief survey of feminist philosophy and Muslim revivalist discourse, Kausar concludes that gender feminists create an atmosphere of conflict between men and women, while Muslim revivalists look at men and women as copartners in constructing civilization.

In questioning exactly this notion of copartnership between men and women, Hibba Abugideiri undertakes, in her “Allegorical Gender: The Figure of Eve Revisited,” a discourse analysis of classical Islamic texts in order to uncover how gender categories were constructed by classical exegetes. By focusing on the figure of Eve, which “has not only defined the identity of Muslim woman; it has also set the parameters for how that identity has been forged,” she questions the authoritative value and relevance of the classical view of Eve for contemporary social demands. Underlying her Qur’anic rereading of Eve’s role in the parable of creation lies the goal of forging a new methodological approach to Islamic issues that need to be redressed, particularly in light of the current wave of Islamic revivalism.

Finally, in her review essay “Muslim Women’s Studies: Two Contributions,” Mohja Kahf engages in a critical analysis of two gender histories that interface nicely with Abugideiri’s study. Here, Kahf reviews two forays into the field of Muslim women’s studies that uncover the place of

Muslim women in the textual heritage of the community by comparing and contrasting their points of convergence and divergence.

For a change of pace, in "Administrative Responsibility: An Islamic Perspective," Abdel Rahman A. Abdel Rahman provides an Islamic solution to the issue of how to make public bureaucracy behave responsibly or in the public interest. "The principal contention of this paper is that success in making bureaucrats responsible or responsive depends on whether or not they have sufficiently strong motivation to serve the public . . . This paper contends that Islamic values and institutions can be used to provide this motivation."

In a similar vein, Ṭāhā J. al-'Alwānī, in his "Authority: Divine or Qur'anic," undertakes a critical analysis of the origin of authority in Islam in order to clarify and correct the mistaken notions, misunderstandings, ambiguities, and confusion that have grown up around this notion. After a brief discussion of the lexical aspects of divine authority, he locates previous legal and political systems that have influenced our present-day (mis)understanding of this critical concept, particularly in light of its centrality for contemporary Islamic reform movements.

As a reflection, we bring you "Islam and the West: Yesterday and Today" by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In casting greater light on the issue of relations between Islam and "the West," he shows, quite rightly, how these two neat categories are not always so neat or homogeneous: "Which Islam and which West are we considering?" In delineating the elements contributing to this relationship, "we address mostly the Western rather than Islamic components of this confrontation, which one hopes will become more and more a dialogue." The reason for this conflict, says Nasr, "is the very reality of another civilization that wishes to follow its own principles and develop according to its own inner life and dynamic rather than on the basis of externally imposed norms that, according to many voices, now threaten the West itself." The author concludes on a hopeful note, but highlights a few obstacles that need hurdling before "genuine dialogue" can occur.

All of the feature articles, for all intents and purposes, approach their subject matter in a similar fashion: deconstruct one thought in order to derive a more Islamic alternative thought that is more in tune with contemporary demands. None propose definitive solutions to any one issue, though all "open the door" to further critical examination, inquiry, and dialogue. We leave it to you to decide their effectiveness.

*Hibba Abugideiri*