

Editorial

In this issue of *AJISS* we present a diverse number of articles that deal with a wide range of issues. The thorny and continuously debated relation between Islam and the West is the subject of four contributions: Ralph Coury's "A Neoimperial Discourse on the Middle East," Charles Butterworth's "On Others as Evil: Toward a Truly Comparative Politics," Ali A. Mazrui's "Islam in a More Conservative Western World," and M. Hazim Shah ibn Abdul Murad's review essay on "Islam and Contemporary Western Thought."

Commonly, it is the reports of missionaries, travel literature, colonialist memoirs, or orientalist texts that have been the main field of research for studying western attitudes toward Islam. In contrast, Ralph Coury's contribution takes an uncommon approach to exploring these attitudes by using the works of Paul Bowles, the American expatriate novelist, as a principle research tool. Bowles has spent most of his productive life in Morocco, where the Arab and Islamic constitutional elements of the people and their life make up the fabric and background of his novels and his other writings. In this penetrating analysis of Bowles's views of Islam and of Arabs, Coury links the inner psychodramatic self of the novelist to his political and cultural unconscious in order to provide an alternative insight to his works.

Looking at the issue from a different perspective, Charles E. Butterworth brings to the fore a variant reading of the western cultural heritage. Butterworth begins his study by emphasizing that, as far as the relation between Islam and the West is concerned, "for exchange to be fruitful, each party needs to look at the best in his or her own tradition, rather than at the worst, or even the ordinary, and ask that the interlocutor do the same for his or her tradition." By this, Butterworth endeavors to recover the other, the lost and forgotten dimension of the western mind: the mind of Homer, of Socrates, and of Albert Camus. It is the tentative mind that is seen as relevant to Islamic-western dialogue, the self-doubtful mind, where the human traits of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice lend themselves very prominently to a particular part of the western discursive tradition.

Instilled with the wisdom and insight of a keen observer of the human condition, Ali A. Mazrui treats the subtle ideo-political transformation of the West as well as that of the Muslims living in the West, not as students or travelers, but as members of this society. His findings rest on three main

paradoxes: 1) western secularism might be good news for Muslims in the West, though western materialism might be bad news; 2) recent Republican, rather than Democratic, foreign policy has been more friendly to Muslims, whereas Democratic, rather than Republican, domestic policies are probably more friendly toward Muslims; and 3) the contrasting attitudes and affinities of the two Islams in the United States, that is, indigenous Islam and immigrant Islam, in terms of their ethnic and linguistic background, their sensitivity to domestic American policies, their political and economic weight, and their attachment to the "American dream."

The review of M. Hazim Shah ibn Abdul Murad deals with the works of Akbar S. Ahmed and the late Ernest Gellner on Islam and postmodernism. Registering the difference in scope and intellectual depth between the two volumes under review, Murad nonetheless presents a vigorous and comprehensive analysis of both. He observes rightly that while Ahmed "views postmodernism favorably as inaugurating a mood that would allow for a more tolerant accommodation of Islam in contemporary western society, Gellner states bluntly that postmodernism and religious fundamentalism are incompatible and basically opposed to one another."

The other three studies in this issue focus on some important aspects of modern Islamic intellectual preoccupations. Tāhā J. al 'Alwānī's "The Testimony of Women in Islamic Law" is an extensive rereading of Islamic sources and a challenging analysis of classical Islamic *fiqhī* opinions concerning the weight of a woman's testimony vis-à-vis that of a man. Mohammed Hashim Kamali's "Islamic Commercial Law: An Analysis of Futures" is a synthetic and innovative study of the Islamic law of transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), which covers a large part of daily life in a typical Muslim society. His approach of accounting for the increasing complexity of life and of giving the Islamic primary sources, the Qur'an and hadith, precedence over the Islamic traditional *fiqhī* heritage, is also apparent in S. Shawkat Ali's "Foundation for Communication in the Qur'an and Sunnah."

Finally, we would like to bring to our readers' attention two important corrections of the last issue of *AJISS*. Abdul Majid al Najjar's "Classification of Sciences in Islamic Thought: Between Imitation and Originality" (vol. 13, Spring 1996, pp. 59-87) was, in fact, written originally in Arabic. The English translation that we published was produced through the collective efforts of the Translation Department of the International Institute of Islamic Thought. Also worthy of mention is that, on page 111 of the same issue, the fourth line from the bottom of Yushau Sodiq's book review of *Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad: The Precolonial State of Bundu*, we wrote: "Third is the claim that many of the Almaamis did not adhering to the Islamic teaching, and drank alcohol and had more than four wives." This should be read as follows: "Third is the claim that many of these Almaamis were not adhering to their Islamic teachings, and thus they engaged in alcohol consumption and marrying more than four wives." We deeply apologize for these oversights.

Basheer Nafi