

Ulasan Buku/Book Review

Islam in the Era of Globalization. By Mahmud Hamdi Zaquq. 2002. Cairo: Maktabah al-Shurūq, 120pp. ISBN: 2000/18954. Reviewed by Othman Talib.

Dr. Mahmud Hamdi Zaquq, the Egyptian Minister of Endowments and specialized in Islamic Philosophy, pays attention to Muslim grievances and weaknesses in the era of globalization. He is of the opinion that Islam is able to withstand all the alien currents, including the phenomenon of globalization. He also promotes the peace-backing attitude advocated by Islam, calls for dialogue of civilizations and proves that terrorism has nothing to do with Islam.

His book comprises four chapters. In the first chapter, he talks on dimensions and attitudes, aims and means and the grievances of Muslim world. In the second chapter, he talks about Islam and the West. In the third chapter, he deals with the dialogues of religions, the new century and the option of civilizational dialogue and human cloning. Finally, in the fourth chapter, the book discusses Islam and the human issues.

Talking about the dimensions and attitudes, he says it has been customary for some people in our Islamic World to show clearly their fear and panic when new currents blowing on Muslims from the West and the East have emerged, such as any new ideological current, new economical theory or political concept. They tend to take such an attitude for fear of Islamic values being eroded and in protection of Muslims against their hazards, which may pose a threat to the values of Muslim society. They may be inclined to believe that this invasion represents an episode of carefully planned scenario to eradicate Islam and Islamic identity. On the other hand, another team in the Islamic World is very responsive and enthusiastic over everything originating from the West and the East indiscriminately. They also accuse the anti-western current team as ignorant, backward and reactionary. Everything coming from developed countries, in the eye of this team, must imply the components of development and progress. Both anti and pro-alien current teams often fight each other and waste a lot of energy and time in infertile discussions, such as discussions concerning attitude toward western civilization in general, attitude toward oriental studies or lately attitude toward the issue of globalization and many more issues.

Though they are far separated in term of their theoretical thoughts, both teams constitute one-sided view that refuses to comprehend objectively the questions tabled for discussion. This is why Islamic viewpoint is not - from the beginning - in favor or against globalization but Islam is in favor of the conscious and critical reevaluation of globalization as well as the other alien currents. Zaquq is of the view that it is imperative for Muslims to have their critical studies that delve into all the dimensions of questions then analyze them from all aspects. Only then can the critical Muslims underline a way that doesn't ignore the reality. Hence they aren't driven unconsciously toward any new trend. From here, Zaquq refers to some basic notes: First, as a religion, Islam is not just a theoretical current. It is deeply rooted in the depths of Islamic entity and firmly established where it is able to withstand any alien current from within or outside. Second, it is useless to be negative toward globalization after it has become a reality. Third, Muslims cannot ignore that they don't live alone in this world and they are in the era of communication and information technology. Muslims are experiencing the age of open skies. This means that there's no more room for Muslims to be secluded. (p. 12)

If globalization is aimed at removing all the barriers and trying by all means to impose definite values and certain cultures, it shouldn't make Muslims panic and imbalanced because that will be useless and not allow them to think properly. Muslims have a reality to be dealt with. This reality is neither all bad nor all good. This is why we should deal with it on this basis.

Economic globalization (p. 14) is considered the most prominent field of globalization. It refers to free market and the removal of all the barriers at the influx of trade, goods, services, money and programs. In this free market, doors of exchange are open without bureaucracy and giant economic groupings that involve developed countries are set up. They refer to multi-national companies, which control the management of world economy. Their benefits accumulate at the expense of poor countries. They also control international financial institutions, such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Muslims should instead strive without delay to set up their own economic groupings and join other regional and international economic groupings. They must be at par with world class in the field of production. The issue raised by Dr. Zaquq is how to deal and interact properly with this new reality. But if Muslims ignore the reality and only say "no" to protectionism, they will keep on rotating

around themselves by just using their throats to defend themselves. Muslims don't need to reaffirm that Muslim world is rich with its natural resources and enjoys a unique geographical position. What they need is a strong and effective willingness to be at the forefront.

Political globalization (pp.14-16) is one of the most prominent features in the globalized world. The most prominent aspects of political globalization are democracy, human rights and political multiplicity. If Muslims truly understood Islam they would find that Islam had pioneered this field earlier than globalization by adopting the values of *shura* (consultation), human rights and multiplicity. Despite of this fact, some Muslims are found to oppose democracy as a western imported system or an alien concept. Accepting *Shura*, Islam, in fact has laid down a binding basis, but at the same time left Muslims free to choose the form of implementing *Shura* in a manner that is suited to all the times. It may take the form of fairly and directly elected parliaments or another form according to the circumstances of a time. Supporting strongly human rights Islam has assured that the principle is instilled in hearts and put in practice. Islam has honored human and equalized between all people irrespective of their different races, colors and beliefs. It also instructs that the scale of justice be upheld even among non-Muslims. Islamic legal system is also aimed at protecting souls, doctrines, minds, properties and dignities. This is why we should welcome without fear any call for democracy and human rights advocated by globalization.

Cultural globalization (pp.16-20) has two main aspects namely consumerism covering food, drink, cloth and transportation exported into Muslim countries by the western countries and the cultures of pornography, adultery and homosexuality. Muslims can fight against the cultural globalization if they seriously and honestly adhere to their beliefs, values, ethics, laws and heritages. Otherwise Muslims would be an easy prey to the western consumerism and hedonism. If Islamic cultural identity is to be maintained and Muslims are to be protected against the risk of being dissolved in any other culture they should be immunized with Islamic values. Islamic globalization is aimed at instilling noble values and moral principles and safeguarding human dignity of all the people.

Self-criticism (pp.27-32) is the first step toward an awareness of Muslim weakness and backwardness that befall on all Muslim countries; the awareness includes that Muslims speak much and act less as well as they must do something to change their backward reality. Muslims need to rectify their attitudes, upgrade the way they

think, change their behavior and identify the facts objectively without emotions. The gap between the developed world and Muslim world becomes increasingly widened day by day. This means that Muslim World that is standing at the cross roads is facing the biggest challenge and must act quickly to change this backward situation. Muslims today cannot just be consumers to the products and theories of the time. Their glorious religion makes it compulsory for them to be actively involved in all the scientific developments and technological accomplishments that benefit humanity. The world doesn't respect weak people and only respects strong ones. Muslims aren't the advocates of superiority, they are instead the advocates of justice and peace, but unless they are strong the world will take no heed of what they say. Justice and peace in the world are therefore in need for the strength and power. The strength of our contemporary world rests upon knowledge. Only people with knowledge are respected and able to redress the course for the sake of global peace. Muslims are in need for cooperation, coordination and integration at all the levels to face contemporary challenges.

In their bilateral trades, Muslims only have less than 10% out of their trade deals with non-Islamic countries. Hence, Muslims need to have their own economic groupings because weak economic entities will have no place and cannot afford to survive under the existing economic competition of today. Despite of all these dense clouds that are covering the sky of Muslim countries, Muslims should not be pessimist. They cannot lose their hope of a better future for themselves at any circumstance. Muslims can't be desperate and frustrated since those who are desperate and have no hope in Allah's assistance are the infidels as expressed in the Qur'an (12:87). But these desired goals cannot come true through a mere wish. They, instead require a strong and effective willingness, a conscious mentality and a continued effort in order to translate the wishes into facts on the ground of reality. Muslims greatly need to exert mind and stick to an objective thought without superstitions and illusions. They must be aware that they are religiously responsible for the making of humanity as Allah's vicegerents or caliphs in this world. In its turn, this naturally includes the responsibility of Muslims to be effectively involved in the creation of peace, security and stability in this world that belongs to Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

The book second chapter presents Islam and the West covering three subjects: composed of three subjects, the East and the West, the future of Islam in the West, and the Arabic heritage in Europe. Kipling

(1865-1936), the English novelist and poet, advocated that "East is east and west is west they will never come together". The statement separating the west from the east is very similar to the statement made by Samuel Huntington about the clash of civilizations. It refers to the clash between western civilizations on the one hand and the eastern civilization on the other, especially Islamic civilization. In fact, there are so many western people who understand well the relation of the east with the west. In his speech at the Ismaili Centre in London, the British Foreign Minister, Robert Cook was reported to have said "the roots of our civilization aren't only from Rome but also from Islam". These common factors or focal points between both civilizations prove obviously that Kipling's statement that east and west can't come together is false and untrue. (pp. 73-79).

Regarding the Arabic heritage in Europe, Zaquq stresses on the following five points. First, if Europe has been concerned about the Arabic heritage since many centuries ago and is still interested in it until now, the holders of this heritage in turn should double their attention and discover the positive elements of the Arabic heritage and facilitate their researchers. Second, Muslims need to revive the Arabic heritage in order to safeguard their identity. However, the process of revival should use a well-planned scale of priorities where it differentiates between what is important and what is less important and between what is useful and what is harmful. Third, the Arabic heritage is a legacy that cannot be neglected by Muslim communities. Any Muslim who neglects this cultural legacy should not belong to any Muslim community. Muslims need to exploit wisely this heritage for the sake of continued interaction between the old and the new to generate original views, ideas and theories without any new idea being isolated. Fourth, modernity means that positive elements in the heritage are continually renewed and upgraded. Any Muslim who disconnects his heritage on the plea of keeping pace with time is considered a criminal because he loses his identity and because such an attitude causes the features of Arabic identity to fade away. Fifth, if Muslims reevaluate deliberately and wisely their heritages, they will steadily and confidently regain their self-confidence where they consciously realize that they don't start from zero in their civilizational progress. They instead rely upon a huge cultural asset.

The section in this book on Islam and the culture of peace (pp. 73-89) discusses the religious common goals, Islamic goals and the culture of peace. The religious goals should be aimed, for example, at making a global society where peace is prevalent and its members co-

operate for the well-being of humanity. The contemporary world has undoubtedly been more aware of the necessity of peace. This awareness has crystallized lately into a new concept “the culture of peace” in various parts of the world to promote and inculcate peace in the world. It is clear that Islam has taken a peace-backing and pro-human right attitude in freedom, dignity and justice.

In the present time in which various religious and cultural groups come close to each other in a global village the question of peace and justice among people has been a pressing issue that requires Muslims to find pioneering solutions to the complex problems that block human procession toward peace. If people of the whole world understand properly the religious goals including Islamic goals, they can effectively contribute toward appropriate solutions to the world existent problems. There are a lot of common questions that can only be answered if the parties concerned cooperate and work together to solve them. Some of these questions are: How can religions cooperate to protect family institution that represents the original cell for any human civilization? How can religions cooperate to put an end to useless wars? How can they cooperate to stop unnecessary wars that are destroying natural resources? How can they co-operate to halt operations where people are wrongly hunted and oppressed every where, be it individuals or groups?

It is necessary for the representatives of religions to have non-fanatical attitudes that are based upon true information on all the religions. Terrorism and extremism, for example are a common phenomenon in the whole world not only in the Islamic world. If Islam was truly understood, it is an anti-extremism and terrorism. Islam is the religion that considers mercy as a main concept in Islamic teachings. This is the reason why every chapter in the Holy Qur’an starts with “In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful”. Allah’s mercy, according to the Qur’an is expanded to embrace everything, humans and non-humans.

Every human being tries hard to attain justice and peace but unfortunately a lot of negative phenomena of the world, such as atheism, drug addiction, anarchy and fanaticism jeopardize human efforts for justice and peace. Some of these evil phenomena can be fought through the dialogues of religions to find their solutions. If Muslims are to hold a fruitful dialogue of religions and reach a mutual cooperation, they can’t always recall in their memory and dialogues the factors of old hatred and the complexes inherited from ancient ages to be revived. Instead, they should adopt a positive concept striving to

build a bright future under which the whole world enjoys peace and tranquility. The culture of peace is based upon the willingness of people to live and work together in peace. If they exerted efforts to understand others, they would undoubtedly be brought closer to the goal of peace. Muslims should not just know others, but they should also understand the way how non-Muslims think and how they believe in any viewpoint that their practical behavior is based on that viewpoint. Hence Muslims could understand their common human existence. This in its turn paves the way toward a mutual understanding, fruitful dialogue and constructive cooperation for the peace of this world.

Urging Muslims to understand others and to coexist with them peacefully and treat them on a basis of justice and benevolence Islam is aimed at achieving the required peace with all the people who belong to the same origin. Islam always extends its hand for the peace of all people. Islam is responsive to every sincere call for peace but it affirms at the same time that peace can only come true if it is based upon a ground of justice and the respect of other people's rights, irrespective of their races and colors. Otherwise, it would be a disabled fragile peace. If Islam was objectively looked upon without prejudgment many misconceptions on Islam and its teachings would be removed. On another hand if Muslims shouldered their responsibility in introducing the true image of Islam to others they would help them understand Islam in order to reach a mutual understanding, mutual respect and fruitful cooperation toward the creation of peace culture.

Generally speaking this book attempts to explain to its readers some misconceptions regarding Islam in the contemporary global world in the political, economic and cultural globalizations. The book stresses that Islam and other religions can find common religious goals for peace and the culture of peace since Islamic civilization, heritage and legacy had contributed to humanity in the east and the west for many centuries during the Muslim golden ages.

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