Moreover, while discussing the Near Eastern society, important issues of gender and slavery have not been adequately taken up, though one comes across sporadic references to them. The distinction between *Islamic* and *Muslim* in the study seems to blur at some places as well. The chronological scope of the work is quite vast covering a period of more than twelve centuries. The epilogue covering an era from 1500 to 1800 CE, nonetheless, treats the three centuries in less than ten pages while the reader expects some more.

Tanvir Anjum


“Fundamentalism” is defined in connection with those Muslim leaders who insist on direct access to the fundamentals of Qur’ān and Sunnah to consist of rejecting the authority of the “medieval” jurists, Sufis, theologians and commentators as intermediaries in order to reinterpret Islam on their own as relevant to modern life. In other words, they reject exclusive adherence to any one of the four orthodox schools of Islamic jurisprudence, i.e. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu‘mān ibn Thābit (80–150/699–767), Imām Mālik ibn Anas (97–179/716–796), Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs Shāfī‘ī (150–204/767–820) or Imām Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855). This, they believe, facilitates their right to reinterpret the Qur’ān and Sunnah as relevant to modernity. For this reason they also reject the authority of the traditional ‘ulamā’ or religious scholars, convinced of their ability to perform *ijtihād* by themselves. Thus they all reject traditional orthodoxy. They all reject the classical Islamic civilization of the historic past as the suitable model for the present and future.
Rather, they paint twelve centuries of Islamic history under the monarchy as black, illegitimate, decadent. Even the most sublime classics of traditional Islamic art and literature leave them cold and unmoved. Instead, they want to begin all over again from scratch and create something new! Correct observance of rituals is often combined with modern western thought. Most of the so-called fundamentalists are urbanized people who have attained western university degrees and speak English or French. Many are technocrats, engineers or economists and lived part of their lives in western countries. In short, while rejecting taqlid, they uphold modernity and distain Tradition.

It is the “fundamentalists” – not the traditional orthodox Islam which makes the news, the headlines and is rocketed to the forefront of the media. No matter how liberal and modern they may be on other topics, the fundamentalists discussed here are shown as unanimously conservative and puritanical when it comes to the subject of women. Why? The authoress asks why they are so afraid of giving women their full rights? What do they fear to lose?

The answer not given in this book is, however ignorant and distainful of orthodoxy they may appear to be, instinctively every one of them knows that the future of Islam depends on the preservation of marriage, home and family, upon the preservation of the Shari’ah in the sphere of personal law, upon the modesty and chastity of their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. If this is lost, Islam is utterly lost!! Hence the gut-reaction of every practicing Muslim against the permissive society propagated by the West.

Thus it is not because these leaders are unscrupulous politicians greedy for power and male dominance that they reject feminism but because they are all aware that the Islamic view on women is the very last bastion of Tradition without which Islam cannot possibly survive.

Feminists do not restrict their view of gender equality to the West but propagate it as a universal holy mission much as Christian missionaries to the East did a century ago. Feminism is an outgrowth of the western concept of individualism exaggerated to extremes. That is to say, every individual is self-contained, entitled to the unquestioned right to seek his/her happiness and self-fulfilment at any and all costs – even at the expense of social and moral collapse. No wonder, not only Islam, but every religion and traditional society rejects it.

The authoress is evidently some Middle-Eastern expatriate with a Muslim name but a thoroughly western secular mind. Nevertheless, she reserves for
herself the right to drastic *ijtihād*, to reinterpret Qurʾān in the light of feminism, to sit in judgment over Islamic society, culture and civilization. The result is a most unfair and distorted appraisal.

Maryam Jameelah

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Iqbal Hussain’s book is a collection of essays written on the subject of Islam and terrorism. Since the 9/11 terror attacks were perceived to be in the name of Islam, a number of Muslim scholars have tried to deal with the political nature of the Islamic faith. This book is one such attempt. The author appropriately points out that Islam has been on the defensive since 9/11. He laments that: “Presenting the Islamic perspective today in increasingly hostile conditions becomes exceedingly difficult and at the same time increasingly imperative” (p. 14). The author thinks that “a war on Islam” is being waged by the west in general, and the US in particular (p. 30). He points out the crimes of the US which “under the pretext of fighting terrorism” is attacking Muslim countries. Muslims all over the world are convinced, according to the author, that it is not war on terrorism but a war against Islam (p. 30).

The author correctly explains that *jihād* is much more than killing, which is only permitted in certain special circumstances, such as defence of Islam when it is under attack by an enemy. *Jihād* is to be understood as a continuous and life-long struggle for self-improvement as well as for improving the world in which one lives. The true message of *jihād* has been distorted by the western powers. The west wants to undermine the Muslim identity. The US is targeting Muslims as never before in history. The author claims that the Bush administration desires to strengthen pro-American regimes in the Middle East and Asia and at the same time change any regime which does not follow it (p. 31). The Muslim world is not only subjected to aggression by the US but also “endangered by internal state of inertia and lack of purpose and determination” (p. 32). The author, while castigating US arrogance says: “The most outstanding feature of the current US policies is the lack of compassion.