Freemasonic state yet it is waging a war in the so called “axis of evil”? The author is all praises for Islam, and justifiably so, when he writes about the rise of Muslim power and their tolerance for Jews especially about Muslims. His mention of Muslim scholars is few and far between, but never the less, the instances of Muslim tolerance mentioned are numerous. All in all, the book is an appreciable attempt to bridge the gaps between the Muslim world and the West but it leaves several arguments open ended and an unsatisfactory feeling as one cannot help but think at the back of the mind that the Muslim contribution to this world was more than just to provide a cultural safe haven for the Jews. Then, again, this book prompts the Jewish population to reconsider their past and recognise the debt that they owe the Muslims.

Uzma Abid Ansari


Dr Muhammad Arif Zakaullah has for some time been studying the western political economy. Out of this exercise, stems his work, *The Cross and the Crescent*. The book consists of a preface followed by fifteen chapters. It definitely has something new to offer in terms of a Muslim's perspective of the West. Indeed, true to the authors' statement in the preface, the book neither indulges in “America-bashing” nor does it represent a blind adulation of the West. It is merely a study of the mechanics of the American society. The author in his “Preface” clearly states the purpose behind his study, explaining the importance of such works for the Muslim world and their significance as far as West-Islam understanding is concerned.

The first chapter, “The Results of the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election: A Puzzle” (pp. 1–18), starts with a question: why did Al Gore lose despite the booming economy from his vice-presidential years? What would convince the voters to break the Golden Rule i.e. the economy decides the elections? The author then answers this question by explaining the importance of *metaeconomics*, a term used to describe the consciousness of the bigger reality which surpasses the economic reality in importance. The author goes on to explain the effects of *metaeconomics* on the different U.S. elections over the
years including the defeat of Al Gore despite his successful economic management. The close election result from 2000 shows that despite the fact that both candidates had taken a more or less centrist stand, Gore could not establish any real lead. The author systematically dissects the campaign issues and the voting results showing how and where Gore lost votes.

The second chapter titled “The Southern Rebellion Against Gore” (pp. 19–39), marks the start of a journey to analyse the real issues behind Gore’s defeat by giving a historical background of the issue. One of the most striking facts was that Gore lost eleven of the states which Clinton had won from the South. All these states are known for their emphasis on moral values coupled with a conservative stand in general. Despite the fact that Gore chose Leiberman, a well-known conservative, as his running mate, the silence he had maintained throughout the Monica Lewinsky affair, proved too damaging. Gore’s repeated attempts to sell himself as the only candidate capable of furthering the economic prosperity of the United States were also not bought by the voters. While Gore remained naively unaware of the mood of the voters, Bush used the Integrity card well. The scandals starting from the Vietnam War to the Monica Lewinsky affair, had put serious doubts about the integrity of the leadership in the public mind, and it was eventually this metaeconomic factor, which led to Gore’s defeat.

The third chapter, “Christianity in America: A Brief Historical Background” (pp. 40–54), looks at the rise of Protestantism, its coming to America with the pilgrim fathers, its development and consequently its split into Christian fundamentalism and Liberalism, and the different issues between the two groups.

The fourth chapter, “The Post-Second World War Rise of Christian Fundamentalism” (pp. 55–70), discusses the political journey of the fundamentalists. After a period of withdrawal from the public scene and political non-involvement, the fundamentalists were forced by certain developments on the political front to return to the public arena once more. Fundamentalism was presented in a new manner. Equated with patriotism, it was able to garner a huge amount of support in the turbulent post-Second World War era. The new face of fundamentalism mixed entertainment with the fundamentalist message, making young fundamentalist preachers like Billy Graham an instant hit. The success of these moves can be gauged from the fact that by 1952, the fundamentalists had backed Dwight D. Eisenhower to power, thus establishing their spot in the political arena.

The fifth chapter, “The Intellectual Challenge and Response” (pp. 71–79), looks briefly at the fundamentalist response to the modernists. At the onset of the twentieth century the fundamentalists had lost ground to the modernist
criticism of their religious ideology. They soon realized that this was due mainly to their inability to respond intellectually rather than emotionally. Consequently, emphasis was laid on Bible education and a number of Bible institutes coupling modern knowledge with Bible education sprang up. Another response included the labelling of Social Humanism as a religion, which could be attacked through its roots in Greco-Roman thought. In the last part of the chapter the author introduces evangelicalism as a Protestant phenomenon.

Chapter six, “Networking with God, Caesar and the Faithful” (pp. 80–92), discusses the rise of the televangelists, and their emergence from political non-involvement to political partisanship. In the 1976 elections it was the televangelist support which helped Democrat Jimmy Carter, a declared “born again” Christian, to the White House. However, an internal struggle continued within the Republican Party. The radical and the liberal elements came face to face on a majority of issues, and the end result was that by the late 1970s the radical elements had virtually taken over the party. This was possible in part due to the fact that even though the fundamentalists had led Carter to power, he had taken up policies that clashed with their agenda, thus driving them away to the Republican Party and its radical fold.

“The Moral Majority in a Liberal Democracy: God’s Army to Subjugate Caesar” (pp. 93–111), the seventh chapter, starts off with the fundamentalist republicans deciding to use abortion as an issue to attract fundamentalist votes. To further this agenda they convinced Jerry Falwell, a well-known televangelist, to form a group called “The Moral Majority.” This was neither a religious nor a political group; it was in fact merely a moral group, and it aimed at combating issues like Social Humanism and abortion. A policy of “co-belligerency” was introduced to enable, Catholics and Jews to join hands with the Protestants on issues of mutual interest. To mobilize the religious vote bank Jerry Falwell travelled all over the country; his task, however, was made easy by the fact that many pastors had already started including political content in their sermons. By the time of the Republican Convention of 1980, the fundamentalist agenda was on top and the liberals had been chased out of the party. This was only the beginning and the fundamentalists soon realized that getting a president elected was not enough; they had to have influence over the Congressmen as well. Hence a process of identifying liberal Congressmen and lobbying against them at the grass roots level was also started. The victory of Bush over Gore shows how well the Christian fundamentalists succeeded in their plan.

Chapter eight “The Socioeconomics of Christian Fundamentalism” (pp. 112–138), looks at the reasons behind the strength of the fundamentalists
in the Southern states. Since the Civil War the South has harboured feelings of loss and humiliation. As a result Southern society on the whole, has preserved its love for the past and has actively resisted new ideas. The analysis of all the states which voted for Bush, shows a higher level of dropouts and a lower level of education as a whole. The economic conditions and quality of life in these states was also worse than in the pro-Gore states. This mix of bad conditions created an environment conducive to religious dogma, thus enabling the fundamentalists to affect people’s viewpoints and even their voting patterns. This, according to the author shows that there are two different Americas. The Christian fundamentalists keep on raising conflict issues, which not only help maintain loyalty of supporters, but also lead to the winning over of many sympathizers. Consequently the fundamentalists gain more clout and come closer to their vision of a United States run according to the Bible.

The main theme of the next two chapters, “Christian Fundamentalism and the Muslim World” (pp. 139–164), and “The Interpretations” (pp. 165–174), is the Christian fundamentalist belief regarding the end of the world and their various interpretations of the Biblical prophecies. According to them, this process shall take a thousand years. Central to this belief of “Millenialism” is the concept of the Armageddon, the ultimate war between good and evil. Over the years different world events have been interpreted to fit into this belief of the Armageddon, the latest being the Clash of Civilizations ideology, where Islam replaces U.S.S.R. as the personification of evil. In this envisioned scheme of events, Israel maintains a central position throughout. In preparation for this Armageddon the fundamentalists have been focusing on missionary work to convert people in order to pave the way for the Kingdom of God. To further this theory the author looks at other Biblical interpretations including interpretations in support of slavery and the Apartheid. The author concludes by pointing out the two basic characteristics of these Biblical interpretations, belief in conspiracy theories or enemies, and the hunt for secret codes within a certain event or phenomenon.

In the eleventh chapter “What’s Right about the Christian Right?” (p. 175–188), the author tackles a very important question: Why has Christian fundamentalism succeeded in the twentieth century when it was unable to do so before? This, he says, is because the Christian fundamentalists have learnt lessons from the previous two religious awakenings, and have been able to formulate better long and short-term plans of action. The United States being a liberal democracy, the Christian fundamentalists have the right to freedom of speech, and to utilize this they have formed their own media networks. Also important is that now they have become wary of straightjacket views and have left the interpretation of the Bible to each individual. Their Christian
Study Groups have aimed at induction of bright young people with leadership capacities, a prime example being George W. Bush himself. In fact Bush openly identified with the Christian Right, signalling a trend of religious openness amongst the politicians, thus showing the growing success of the Christian fundamentalists.

The twelfth chapter, “The View of the ‘Other’” (pp. 189–205), deals with the manner in which Islam and Christianity have viewed other religions. The United States is the sole superpower today and has immense influence over world affairs. To determine its policies various groups are vying to influence the American public and sell to them their visions. Of these one is a vision of pure hatred towards Islam and is espoused by the Christian fundamentalists. As this vision is based more on ignorance, the Muslims must study Christian fundamentalism and then constitute a dialogue to remove misunderstandings. In addition to this there is the need to reach out to the silent majority who want peace with Islam. Another vision is that of the clash of the Islamic and the Western civilizations. The author explains the historic and intellectual factors which have led to this view, like the fall of Communism and the failure of the Islamic countries to form a unified post-communism agenda with the United States, or the American dislike of their position as “oil hostages.”

Chapter thirteen, “The Only thing We have to Fear is Fear Itself” (pp. 206–214), begins with recounting the Christian interpretations of the Bible reflecting the negative views taken of the Jews and the Muslims. Then the author concludes that the Muslims', Christians', and Jews' fear of each other is founded on their unpleasant experiences. The prophecies of doom like that presented by Huntington merely prey on this fear, and all we need to do is to overcome this fear in order to gain mutual understanding.

In “Clash’ versus Creative Evolution,” (pp. 215–235), the fourteenth chapter, the author states that according to this study it is evident that the Muslim World lacks an understanding of the mechanics of American Government, and the manner in which to influence the views of the average American in order to affect its policies. He also focuses attention on the success of the Christian fundamentalists in twentieth century America despite the many technological and intellectual advancements as well as a strict declaration of the separation of the Church and the State. This scenario presents a very interesting prospect: America has two distinct identities, and to play one against the other should not be an impossible task, however, American society has stayed together due to creative evolution, a process that makes room for multiple views. This has been possible due to the strength of the democratic institutions in the country, and in fact it is an example for Muslims who need to adopt democracy before others attempt to enforce it
upon them. Another lesson for the Muslims lies in the fact that the Christian
fundamentalists never formed a separate religious political party, only
presenting Biblical laws as moral values. By keeping unity within their ranks,
they were able to forward their agenda.

The last chapter, “The Future of Muslims: Defining the Problem”
(pp. 236–263), concludes the study by portraying the current scenario; the
Christian Fundamentalists continue to gain ground in the United States, their
view of Islam as the ultimate enemy in the expected Armageddon is very
dangerous. Muslims need to study the workings of the American political
system and society in order to be able to present the Islamic viewpoint in a
manner understandable by the West. This requires a profound understanding
of the ideological scene dominating the West. In addition to this, Muslims
need to gain insights into the manner in which the Western media functions.
This has to be a systematic study carried out through journals, seminars, and
think tanks. In addition to this, Muslims need to reform themselves at the
individual and collective levels, and especially resolve problem areas like the
economic and political structures. The Muslims in the United States have
become politically active since September 2001, but they still need to have
themselves recognized as an important vote bank in order to be able to affect
United States policies. The author sums up by identifying the overall weakness
of the Muslim world as the real problem as this makes it as an easy prey,
concluding that to change this status quo the Muslim world will have to
change itself.

In comparison with most of the books, which have been written about
the West-Islam relationship, this book represents a welcome change. Instead of
harping on the usual issues, the author has offered a new point of view.
Presenting an active example from American politics, the writer has given a
good model for transformation and adaptation in an ever-changing world. In
his concluding remarks, the author’s observations about the role of the
American Muslims are very interesting, and the political atmosphere of the
United States today has shown their relevance. Though at times there is a
degree of repetition, it does not detract from the overall appeal. The book
shows his depth of understanding of the American political scene, and is a
good read for anyone looking for things beyond the obvious.

Madiha Younas

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