Muhammad and Abraham, an idea which in my opinion is more appropriate in an Islamic context.

These small shortcomings, which I have referred to above, together with various mis-spellings of Arabic words, makes the chapter on Islam inferior to the rest of the chapters. One should bear in mind, however, that the text is an English translation from German, and one cannot exclude the possibility of errors in the translation.

In the last part of the book where Kuschel analyses the possibility of "an Abrahamic ecumenic", Kuschel returns to his former standard of the work. In this part he shows Abraham's solution of conflicts, either share of land or tractates of peace (p. 237).

The book is well worth reading, and although Kuschel's own sympathies and affiliations are very visible, I found that he describes the different religions, particularly Judaism and Christianity, in an adequate way. He has also managed to find common denominators in the three religions which might pave the ground for better understanding and cooperation between them in the future. The book, although a scholarly work, is written in a popular style and is therefore easy to read. As for Kuschel's vision for the future of dialogue and peace in "the Abrahamic family", we can only hope and pray for that it might materialize.

Anne Sofie Roald


A predominant theme among students of the contemporary Muslim world is the challenge Islam has faced in its confrontation with modernity and secularism, a confrontation which frequently is couched in terms of "Islam versus the West." Orientalists and many Western scholars hold a traditional opinion, which has some support among the extreme left in the Muslim world, that Islam is a religion incapable of being modern, incapable of presenting a viable way of life in the modern world. A not unfair generalization is that these Orientalists and leftist thinkers consider Islam to be in bondage to an unyielding tradition and to
be a religion of an illiterate, superstitious tribal people. In short, they argue that Islam is a religion which cannot take a responsible role in the modern world.

This position finds strength in the widely acknowledged belief that Islam considers itself incompatible with secularism and Westernization — a belief expressed by Orientalists and outsiders as well as those firmly within the political and religious systems of the Islamic world. Secularism has no place in the thought of the Qur'an or Islamic tradition. Yusuf al-Qardawi speaks of secularism as "a western commodity that did not grow up on our soil, and it consequently does not measure up to our doctrines and conceptual premises" (p. 264). This encounter with modernism and secularism is the great, unavoidable contemporary challenge of Islam, not just within the Arab world.

The 19th century nahdah, or renaissance, marks the dramatic beginning of Islam's encounter with the West. It is an encounter which marked the beginning of colonialism, considerable political experimentation, and a period of self-doubt, questioning and insecurity which has continued through the 1967 War. Since the beginning of the nahdah, the Arab world has seen a general failure of Western political models, most notably the failure of Western-modeled nationalism.

Ibrahim Abu-Rabi draws the reader's attention to the nahdah as an important and fundamental starting point to any understanding of the political and religious life of the contemporary Arab world. He notes three concepts — nahdah (renaissance), thawra (revolution) and 'awdah (return to foundations) — as summing up the progression of Arab thought in the past two centuries. And, he draws from this general historical observation three different discourses: the doctrinal, philosophical and historical/political. Underlying this analysis there are to be found three important principles: Muslim thought can be revived from within by affirming continuity with its past and from without by borrowing from Western sources; the birth [and failure] of the nation state as a way to resist the hegemony of the West; and, most fascinating, the translation of Islam "as an ideology of combat" which works against the status quo and secular power to bring about the return of "true religion" (pp. 9 and 10).

It is against this background that Abu-Rabi studies the rise of "political Islam," an Islamic which is viable and adaptable to the modern world and yet faithful to the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition as such. This "new face" of Islam does rise faithfully out of the past and yet presents considerable challenges to the traditional religious power structure. Its fundamental premise is that Islam can only be practiced in the twentieth century within the context of an Islamic political system (p. 55).

The rise of the Ikhwan is one of the more significant and enduring new facet of Islam. The Ikhwan, coming into being in Egypt in 1928, presented a
radical system of thought which was both faithful to Islam's basic precepts and a significant challenge to the state's authority. The bulk of Abu-Rabi's work deals with two men central to the development of the Ikhwan, Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Quṭb. Abu-Rabi's style, leaning heavily on original sources, works to bring these two men's thought and labour to life for the reader. For a beginning student of the modern Muslim world, these few chapters are especially illuminating for the picture they give of both the Ikhwan and the twentieth century Arab thought.

Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Ikhwan, was concerned with the static nature of Egyptian and Muslim religious life and the need for an effective way to deal with problems of the social order, most especially the needs of the poor. Two factors are cited as pivotal in spurring al-Banna to create the Ikhwan: dissonance with the Egyptian educational system, which had become more and more secular in orientation; and, the abolishing of the Ottoman caliphate, a symbolic end to the universality of Islamic society (p. 71). Al-Banna's correspondence with Shaykh Dajawi (p. 72) appears to have also been a crucial turning point in his life. He condemned the shaykh and the 'ulama', of which he was a member, of abrogating their duty not just to the poor but to Allah. He thus pointed out a crucial weakness in the Islamic religious establishment of his day: The 'ulama' who were incapable and unwilling to perform their duty as the intellectual class, producing theological insights with the strength necessary to preserve Islam as a dynamic force in society. The 'ulama' had in fact become little more than content pensioners, spending their time in coffee houses (p. 72).

Moving to Ismāʿiliyah in 1927, al-Banna resolved to work for a movement that would instil the truth, propagate Islam, establish a just Islamic society and disseminate Islamic knowledge throughout the society (p. 76). Drawing upon Sufi spirituality, which remained extremely important to him throughout his life (p. 68), and working at first out of a state of almost absolute withdrawal from the religious life in Ismāʿiliyah, al-Banna moved to place the mosque at the centre of the life and thought of the Ikhwan. The mosque became not only a centre of worship, but a source of strength for addressing social problems. Placing the mosque at the centre of Ikhwan life also made al-Banna and the Ikhwan attractive and accessible to the poor. This key step led to the creation of a new kind of 'ulama', one that was not defined by class or strictly tied to al-Azhar.

Al-Banna's new movement was distinguished from other Islamic movements by its ability to attract not just the poor, but all seekers who wished to see a society built upon, and existing within, the belief that Islam alone is applicable to all conditions man may know. Successful and formidable as al-Banna was, the Ikhwan (at least during his lifetime) failed to create an enduring political system and he died for his work with the Ikhwan. Al-Banna's disregard for the status quo found him continually at odds with the institutionalized
'ulamā' and state; and he was also unable to hold the attention of secularized indigenous classes (p. 87). His work, however, was to be continued by others, most notably Sayyid Quṭb.

Quṭb is considered "the most significant thinker of Islamic resurgence in the modern Arab world" (p. 93). His work in its variety and richness remains unparalleled by any other thinker and he is considered the inspiration behind the work of much contemporary Islamist thinking. Quṭb's genius was to develop

"a sophisticated and comprehensive system of thought that presented the Islamic view on a number of substantive issues and problems besetting Arab and Muslim societies" (p. 93).

This genius was the result of a life of intense scholarship and thought, which Quṭb himself spoke of as forty years "reading books and researching almost all aspects of human knowledge" (p. 166).

Quṭb's work and life is neatly divided into four periods. The first period (the 1930's) is known as the literary period. During this time Quṭb was a student of poetry. In reading the Qur'ān he was deeply impressed with its poetic power and the ability of the Qur'ān to translate words into concrete images of considerable power. Quṭb's poetic understanding of the Qur'ān and his facility with literary criticism were to remain with him throughout his life as powerful forces and assist later in a radical hermeneutic of the Qur'ān.

Quṭb's second period (1948-1952) is one characterized by social concern. Even though he was a well-educated urbanite (p. 126), Quṭb found himself drawn to the concerns and needs of the poor. His major work of this time, Social Justice in Islam, advocates absolute freedom of conscience, equality for all, and the permanent mutual responsibility of society (p. 114). These ideals were to be worked out with concepts such as communal property and equality of wealth, concepts he found to be grounded securely in Islamic thought.

In his third phase, a phase known as the philosophical one, Quṭb made official his commitment to the Ikhwān. This time was also one of Quṭb's most prolific times as a writer. In his writings he upheld the earlier thought of al-Bannā in noting the corruption of Islam as coming primarily from within through the 'ulama', who had failed in their duty to resist "the West" and be the religious conscience of the ummah. Quṭb believed the modern Muslim world to be in a jahiliyyah state. In order to free itself from jahiliyyah, Islam had to revolt and overthrow the status quo. Missing in the status quo, and essential to any sort of meaningful life, was 'aqidah, "a doctrine capable of explaining the universal character of man and the universe" (p. 148). That 'aqidah was found in the Qur'ān, which needed no new interpretation or updating. Its message was comprehensive and absolute and had remained continually valid since the time
of the Prophet, when it had served as a revolutionary work to free a people from ignorance and oppression. This source of ‘aqidah had also been progressively ignored since the narahd, a victim of "the West," which Quṭb came to dislike more and more. Quṭb’s insistence upon ‘aqidah remained at the heart of his work and contributed to enlarging the scope of the Ikhwān from a political and social movement to a well-grounded philosophical movement.

The last decade of Quṭb’s life was spent largely in prison, working on his monumental tafsir — fi Zilāl al-Qur’ān — which exalted the preeminence of the Qur’ān as the source of all knowledge and guide for Islamic life, and triumphed Quṭb’s earlier thought in social revolution. Renewed emphasis upon ‘aqidah was believed to have the power to move the ummah to work itself out of jāhiliyyah. "Thus action, vitality, commitment, initiative, sacrifice, relatedness, and universalism [all characteristics of jihād undertaken in the appropriate spirit of spreading the Islamic message] are the qualities of an authentic Muslim" (p. 189).

In spite of Quṭb’s enormous work and the development of a strong lay intelligentsia, creating an alternative to the traditional ‘ulama’, the Ikhwān was unable to achieve its goals of transforming the society and creating an Islamic political system. In part, the task was simply too large and Quṭb perhaps knew this well. Quṭb’s central concern was the question: Will a new cultural expression of Islam based upon a new interpretation of the Qur’ān evolve a new expression which would preclude the existence of a stagnant class of ‘ulama’ at its heart? (p. 218).

Abu-Rabi also notes some failings — or perhaps, shortcomings — of the Ikhwān movement and Quṭb’s work which have inhibited the evolution of a new cultural expression of Islam. These are: a new interpretation of the place and role of the individual; a more responsible way to deal with the secular world; abandonment of violent methods in order to become better integrated into contemporary civil society; new ways to promote Islamic principles without dependence upon coercion; and, a modernist outlook which deals with law in a way that benefits both the individual and the society (pp. 211-212).

Muhammad Husayn Faḍl Allāh is cited by Abu-Rabi as one who is a philosophical heir to the tradition of Sayyid Quṭb. He is described as "the foremost liberation theologian in contemporary Arab Islam" (p. 221). Faḍl Allāh, a leader of Ḥizbollah, is a Shi‘i ‘ālim, living in Lebanon. As such, he has experienced first hand civil war and the breakdown of society as well as the needs of the poor. He identifies some of the same general causes of oppression in the Arab world, notably poor education, a rigid status quo, and a cultural tendency to live in tribal groups (p. 226). He, however, makes some notable departures from Quṭb and al-Banna. His view of the ‘ulama’ is not as grim as theirs, although he does accept the fact that the existence of a class of
unenlightened ‘ulamā’ is a hindrance to the development of Muslim society. He seems to view many of the ‘ulamā’ as products of oppression themselves, unable to "comprehend their own predicament" in any sort of critical fashion (p. 226).

Where Faḍl Allāh differs most dramatically from Qutb and al-Bannā is in his insistence that an essential element in the development of a strong Muslim ummah is to be uncovered by studying other cultures and learning from them. At first this might seem like a return to the nahdah, which is seen as the source of so many contemporary problems. Faḍl Allāh argues that the Muslim world cannot isolate itself from the West. If it is to survive it must understand the ways of Western civilization; and understand Western civilization from within. He cites the example of Christian missionaries as one from which the Islamic world could profit, because they were able to accomplish their mission through all disciplines. The challenge for the Muslim world is not to pattern itself after the West, imitating the West as was the case during the nahdah, but to use that which is good in the West for strengthening Islam. Faḍl Allāh, while his love of the West is not great, does not turn his back on the West as the source of problems as did al-Bannā and Qutb. Instead he sees hope for Islam in the ways of the West, appropriately adapted. This adaptation and strengthening of society can only be advanced through an on-going process of education, being in constant touch with the needs of the oppressed.

In significant ways, Faḍl Allāh’s system of thought addresses some of the principles noted earlier by Abu-Rabi (pp. 9-10): most especially, a method for Muslim thought to be renewed from within and without by appropriate contact with other cultures, including migration if necessary; Islam as an ideology of combat, perhaps violently so in Hizbollah, but non-violent means are also possible; and, less apparent, the creation of a new type of nation-state. The Palestinian movement and the Lebanese conflict have the potential to affect the entire Muslim world, working to create the essence of a new ummah.

The initial chapters of Abu-Rabi’s work examine different methodologies used in interpreting Islam and the Arab world, from the traditional western Orientalist thought to Marxism and deconstructionism. What Hasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Qutb and Faḍl Allāh stress and uphold as central in their own work is a return to the fundamentals of Islam: religion cannot be escaped — in fact it is the important tool in building a strong society. They each stress a careful study of Islamic tradition and especially the Qur’ān. In some ways — such as Qutb’s literary criticism applied to the Qur’ān — this fresh look at Islam is truly radical, refreshing and perhaps intimidating. It results, however, in a different type of scholarship and philosophy than western models, one that might be argued to be authentically Arab.

The scholarship evident in this book and the enormous attention given to primary sources are to be commended. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi has presented,
through an analysis of the work of Ḥasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Qūb and Muhammad Ḥusayn Fadl Allah, a fresh look at the development of Arab thought and given fascinating insights into the history of the Ḥikwān. A book of this importance, however, deserves more careful attention from its editor and press. Notwithstanding its merits, the last third of the book is marred by a number of typographical errors and misspellings, which does not befit a book of this scholarship.

Joseph L. Pace


The book is the combined work of Professor Dr Sukumar Ray (1905–1987) and M. H. A. Beg. Professor Ray who authored *Humayun in Persia* (1948) took up the work on Bairam Khan, but died before its completion. It was completed by M. H. A. Beg who is a surgeon by profession.

The book consists of a foreword by Dr M. H. Siddiqui, short biographical sketch of Dr Ray, prefatory note by Professor Riazul Islam and introductory note by Dr Beg. It is followed by ten chapters, additional notes, *hukms* (decrees) of Bairam Khan, a letter of Dr Riazul Islam, bibliography, index, a map of Central Asia, besides some photographs of typical Mughul paintings and various historical buildings.

The authors have devoted chapters to explain Bairam's early life, his association with Emperor Humayun, Humayun's exile in India and Persia and stay in Qandahar, restoration of Mughul role and Emperor Akbar's era from the height of Bairam's power to his rebellion. Each chapter is divided into a number of sub-chapters to discuss particular themes.

The authors have used primary source materials in Persian available in the British Museum, the India Office, other libraries in Europe and in the Subcontinent. Besides original works, some translations of the primary sources in English have also been used.