equates the "good society" with that of Prophet Muhammad's time in Medina because for a Muslim that would be the ideal political state in which all human longings and aspirations would have been satisfied. In America, the economic aspect of the ideal state has been achieved through a free market economy, so what American Muslims can do is to contribute to the spiritual needs of the American society to make it a complete whole, a kingdom of heaven on earth. At this point, one has to pause to absorb the fact that the author is actually drawing upon capitalism for inspiration, the highest form of imperialism.

Imam Feisal outlines the steps that the American government can take to help Muslim nations achieve their own good society. This can only come to pass with economic freedom, the rule of law for all Muslims through an independent judiciary, broader public participation in governance in Muslim countries and finally an Islamically articulated separation of powers doctrine which would mean an economy, military, press and religious expression free from state interference. And most importantly, interfaith dialogue can not only help build bridges but also enable Muslims, Jews and Christians alike to broaden their horizons and perceive the image of God in all faiths in a humane way. Imam Feisal praises the American dream and its sanctifying of the pursuit of happiness which allows all, irrespective of race or religion, to achieve happiness which is after all the ultimate universal goal. But in an effort to merge together the Democratic Capitalism of the USA with Islamic spirituality, with a view to naturalize the Islamic faith, Imam Feisal's progressive vision seems to be slightly askew as nothing could be further away from the *din al-fitrah* than the capitalistic corporation that the author himself says the United States is, and consequently that does not do anything to combat American Imperialism.

**Uzma Abid Ansari**

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In this work, Paul Walker has compiled the texts of sermons or *khutbahs* delivered by the Fatimid caliphs who ruled parts of North Africa and Egypt as
Ismaili [Ismāʿīlī] Imams from 909–1171 CE. His purpose in doing so is two-fold: one to collect the texts of these khutbahs from disparate sources and two, to underscore the unique character of these khutbahs. As he argues, although khutbahs are a universal feature of Friday prayer in Islam, they are rarely delivered by a ruler or caliph except perhaps on occasions like the two Eids. Even more rarely are sermons recorded. That these rare recorded khutbahs contain “the very words of the imams” (p. xi), enable us to understand how the Fatimids represented their political and religious authority to their subjects, and what topics they addressed in doing so.

As he notes, in this and other works, the Fatimid Imam/caliphs presided over a significant empire which at its height extended from North Africa to Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean coast and the Hijaz or west Arabian coast, including Mecca and Medina. Their territories rivaled that of the Abbasids at the height of their rule during the 800s. They also presided over an empire that was rich in resources, connected major land and sea trade routes and the commerce that traversed these, and patronized an intellectual, cultural and architectural renaissance in Islam. Some scholars have attributed this to their leadership as living imams of the Ismaili Shiʿah sect. Although today the Ismaili Shiʿah are a small minority in the Muslim community, and are divided into three very different branches: the Druze, the Nizārī (or Āgha Khānī, or Khojah) Ismailis, and the Tayyibi (Daudi and Sulaymani or Bohra) Ismailis, they were in the 900s widely followed in the Muslim world, including in parts of South Asia (Sindh and Gujrat).

Ismaili Shiʿism had emerged out of the succession crisis that resulted from the death of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in 765, the sixth descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) through ‘Alī and Fāṭimah, who was considered the Imam (or sole legitimate heir to the Prophet in leadership of the Muslim ummah) by a majority of the Shiʿah at the time (excepting those who came to be considered Zaydi Shiʿah). After his death, some of these Shiʿah supported the succession of a son who predeceased him, Ismail, and some the succession of a surviving son Mūsā (known as al-Kāẓim). The followers of Ismāʿīl soon distinguished themselves from the followers of Mūsā al-Kāẓim (who ultimately became known as the Imāmiyyah or IthnāʿAshariyyah) not only in terms of who succeeded Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, but also in terms of their adoption of much of the philosophical traditions in Islam at the time. Their use of philosophy (especially that of Plato and his followers) helped them to articulate a vision of the world in which pursuit of knowledge not only enabled mortal men to achieve the most perfect awareness of God, but was in fact the gift and challenge that God gave mankind through His Prophet and his descendants. For the Ismaili Shiʿah knowledge was paramount, and difficult to acquire, as it
required contemplation of the world and God’s creation and a search beyond
the obvious or apparent to human faculties. In this conviction they were no
different from some of the great Muslim philosophers of the day, like Ibn
Sina, who not coincidentally came from a family many of whose members
were themselves Ismaili Shi‘ah.

The Ismaili quest for knowledge was based on the assumption that it was
needed for an imperfect world. This also led them to question the political and
other authorities of the day, and to agitate for change and justice. After
organizing themselves into a da‘wah, the Ismailis succeeded in gaining converts
to their cause, and in establishing the large empire in 909, eclipsing in the
process the achievements of the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad. From their new
capital in Egypt, the city of Cairo which they built in 969, and through their
institutions of learning like the Azhar madrasa or university (also built in 969),
they were able to sponsor the development of learning, both religious and
secular. In addition they professed tolerance of all sects within Islam, and of
the other monotheistic traditions of Judaism and Christianity. Not only did
they confirm the appointment of Sunnī officials and judges in their realm, but
many of their court officials belonged to rival Shi‘i branches or were Jewish
and Christian. Their justification of this policy derived from the notion that
bāṭin and zāhīr coexist in a necessary harmony; just as the zāhīr of Islam was
necessary to the bāṭin of imān, so the zāhīr of diversity in faith was necessary
to the bāṭin of tawḥīd or unity of belief in one God.

This is reflected in their kḥutbahs, when they addressed the religiously
diverse audience they ruled. Walker divides the English portion of his work
into two parts: in the first part, and its two chapters on “The History of the
Fatimid Kḥutbah” (pp. 3–54), and on “The Rhetoric and Themes of the
Surviving Kḥutbahs” (pp. 55–83), Walker surveys the development of the
tradition in the Fatimid period of the Imams delivering the festival sermon or
kḥutbah, and describes their content and themes. In the second part of his
work (pp. 87–150), he provides the English translations of the thirteen
surviving texts of kḥutbahs from the Fatimid period. (These two parts are
followed by 58 pages containing the Arabic texts of the kḥutbahs.)

Regarding the development of the Fatimid kḥutbah, Walker explains their
significance in Part One, Chapter One (“A History of the Fatimid Kḥutba”).
Since the Fatimids were considered living Imams, their religious knowledge
and moral excellence was critical to their legitimacy, and thus it was
incumbent on them to pronounce truth, as it were, in contrast to other caliphs
and rulers, whose legitimacy was purely political or military in nature. It is
clear from the historical sources surveyed by Walker, many of which were
authored by Sunnī officials of the Fatimid and later periods, that they took
their role seriously (for example, regarding al-Musabbihi, pp. 30–35, and Ibn al-Ṭūwayr, pp. 48–53). These sources note the pomp and solemnity of these occasions through rich description of the processions from palace to mosque, and note the eloquence of the sermons themselves. The text of the sermon was moreover apparently copied and delivered to the range of Friday preachers or khatōbs addressing congregations outside the capital. Significantly, these individuals were employed by the judiciary or by the chief judge or qāḍī al-qudāh, who himself was not necessarily Ismaiʿili, much less his employees (p. 6). Nevertheless the texts they recited contained blessings on the Prophet’s family and the Imams from amongst his descendants, as well as affirming their just cause. In addition they also addressed specific issues the congregation was facing at the time, and so in addition to the formulaic prologue, they addressed particular events. Thus these sermons are useful as historical sources.

So for example, in the sermon delivered at the beginning of the Fatimid period by the second Fatimid Imam/caliph al-Qāʿim in 945, begins with blessing on the Prophet and the “pure ones” among his descendants, and proceeds to curse a rebel who had laid siege to the Fatimid capital in North Africa, and praise his own Kutama Berber army for their stalwart support, comparing them to the Muhājirūn and Anṣār of the Prophet’s lifetime (pp. 93–94). Subsequently, from the time of the fourth Fatimid Imam/caliph, al-Muʿizz, we have lengthy khutbah in two parts delivered on the occasion of the Eid-al-Adha in 953, when the death of his father and predecessor al-Mansur was also made known (pp. 126–134). The first part of the khutbah begins with a lengthy invocation of God’s nature and power in which is embedded something of Ismaiʿili philosophy (“And He assigned for each living thing its sustenance, and then, next, the guidance of intellect, which established the proof of Him and the necessity of obeying Him, and the scriptures and the messenger through which His word reached fruition,” p. 127), as well as a reminder and instructions regarding the sacrifice to be made on that day. The second part of the khutbah is a much longer discourse that reviews the nature of God, testifies to the role of the Prophet and the Imams from among his progeny, and eulogizes his father al-Manṣūr, ending on a contemplation of the nature of death, its inevitability and the need therefore to hasten to do good while living. From the end of the Fatimid period is a khutbah of the Fatimid Imam/caliph al-ʿĀmir sometime in the 1120s, which was transcribed onto the ceremonial robe of Arwa, the ʿṢulayḥid queen of Yemen and vassal of the Fatimids (this exceptional women ruled in her own right for some 60 years, and was also officially given the high rank of hujja in the religious hierarchy of Ismaiʿili Shiʿism). This khutbah was delivered in Ramāḍān, and reminds the believers to “go to the utmost length to honour it, increase its prayers and
fasting, strive to pass its days in sacrifice and piety, and its nights prostrate and bent in prayer, and to fast in it for offences and sins, your fast without drink and food” (p. 143).

We have thus in such sermons a combination of blessings, theological and philosophical discussions, moral reminders, and references to specific historic events during the Fatimid period. These themes are more specifically listed and explored in Walker’s second chapter (“Rhetoric and Themes in the Surviving Khutbas”). As he notes here, the audience for the khutbas was varied; in terms of religious affiliation, in terms of class, in terms of ethnicity, etc. Given that khutbas were copied and then distributed for delivery throughout the empire, all the more reason to believe that their wording was carefully constructed. So for example, with regard to the phrase “‘Ali wali al-Allāh,” for the Shi‘ah in the audience it referred to ‘Ali’s status as successor to the Prophet and first Imam, whereas for the Sunnis it was understood simply as “Ali is a friend of God’s” (p. 58). Among the themes that reappear are: Praise of God, testifying that the Prophet Mu‘ammad was the Messenger and the “grandfather” of the Imams, testifying that ‘Alī was “father” of the Imams, referring to the “Companions of the Cloak” (or “ahl al-kisā’,” understood by the Shi‘ah to mean the Prophet, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn), referring to Fāṭimah as the “mother,” citing Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, but rarely referring to Imams after them, referring to the dynasty as “mahdist” or rightly-guided (but occasionally also as “Fatimid” or descended from Fatima), referring to enemies as apostates and rebels (among them the Umayyads in Spain, the Abbasids in Baghdad), and reminding the believers of duties like pilgrimage, obligations of Ramāḍān and the Eid al-Adhā, taxes, and various tithes, as well as occasionally, jihad. To be sure, the themes of the khutbas indicated that their authors were Ismā‘ili Imams, but also Shi‘i, and Muslim, and as such reflected their awareness of the fact that “the audience for these khutbas likely consisted not only of their most loyal subjects but also, at the same time, others less attached, and possibly some who harboured grave doubts about them, even hostility” (p. 56). Challenging then as it might have been, the fact that the Fatimids ruled for some 270 years, that among their supporters were Sunnis, and other monotheists, indicates that on some level their attempt at multivalent meanings in their sermons succeeded.

Paul Walker has distinguished himself as a historian of the Fatimid period, and a historian of the intellectual milieu of the time, through his many other publications on Fatimid history and Ismaili philosophy. Here, like in his previous works, his meticulous research, attention to issues of translation, meaning and context, and his erudition, enable him to provide a thorough and fascinating guide to not only the topic of the khutbah in Islam, but in
particular, that of some of its most significant authors, the Fatimid Imam/caliphs. A further point needs to be made regarding this work: the rare sermon texts that have survived provide an opportunity to address the similarities, as well as differences between Sunnī and Shiʿī rule, and to observe that aside from debates concerning who was entitled to authority (as reflected in the blessings invoked on the Imams from among the Prophet’s descendants), there is in them little qualitative difference in terms of morals, ethics, or policy/politics regarding enemies and friends of the state and the Muslim ummah. For all these reasons, Walker’s *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Fatimid period, the nature of the Islamic politics, and an important contribution to our understanding of the Islamic past, that will prove an important resource for advanced students and scholars of classical Islamic history.

Sumaiya Hamdani

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