and practical, to engage in a systematic *tajdid* and *islah* within the parameters of mainstream Islam.

Having said this, it needs to be pointed out that the book is certainly useful for *convinced* European and American Muslims. However, as far as *waver*ing young Muslims and non-Muslim Europeans and Americans are concerned, the book’s usefulness is rather limited for the following reasons: In dealing with *tawhid* and the Qur’an, Ramadan does not take into consideration the agnostic climate of contemporary Europe. Its extreme anti-metaphysical stance, epistemological critique, and dismissal of the so-called “proofs of God” preclude an approach, like the author’s, which takes the existence of God and the revelatory nature of the Qur’an as given. Rather, he should have shown how to make the existence of God and Revelation *plausible* in terms of overwhelming *probability*.

A few other, minor suggestions may be permitted:

(i) That the ’Abbasid Caliphs made a great show of respect for Islamic law and its scholars’ (p. 34) seems to be an overstatement in view of the inquisition (*mihnah*), i.e. the persecution of scholars like Ibn Ḥanbal who refused to accept the Mu‘tazīlī doctrine. (On p. 54, n. 66, the author seems to admit that much).

(ii) Ramadan makes the sweeping statement that the Islamic world was “in stagnation and decline” from 1258–1870 CE. This bleak view is no more held even by the Orientalists. In fact, the author himself continues the work begun not only by Ibn Taymiyyah (whom he acknowledges), but also by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, Shāh Wāfī Allāh and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

(iii) References to *ahādīth* in *Hadīth* collections should mention their specific locations rather than simply mention the work in which they occur.

(iv) At several places the author tends to express doubts about the reliability of certain *ahādīth* and talks about some of them being fabricated (p. 33) and to insinuates a degree of dissatisfaction with the means of authentification employed by the scholars of *Hadīth* (pp. 83, 95). While these remarks might at times be justified, it would be preferable to deal with the issue in a manner likely to chase Goldziher’s and Schacht’s ghosts away.

(v) On p. 37, 9th line from the bottom, the word “esoteric” should be read as “exoteric”, and Jīlānī’s death date needs to be corrected.

Murad Wilfried Hofmann


In the eleven chapters of this book one of the most influential and powerful Muslim intellectual politicians, now the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, outlines his
vision of Islamic society and discusses the ways in which Islamic civilization and other civilizations can engage in fruitful dialogue. The eleven chapters were written over several years ostensibly to address different audiences. Chapters one to four were written as addresses to international audiences and the remaining chapters primarily address the Iranian audience.

Chapters one to four highlight the significance of culture in international relations. The core of Khatami's argument is that a genuine dialogue with the West must involve authentic Muslims and not what he calls Westoxicated types “who are no more than inferior and deformed images of the West” (pp. 12–13). The genuine dialogue must involve mutual respect for ideological independence and cultural integrity. The civilizational dialogue should aim at finding fair and practical solutions to some of the grave problems such as the crisis of the family, degradation of the environment, ethical crisis arising from scientific research, that beset the world today (p. 13).

Khatami regards Iran as a particularly suitable country to initiate dialogue between the West and the Islamic civilization because just as “man is the meeting point of the soul's East and reason's West”, Iran's geographical location has made it a meeting point of Eastern and Western cultures. The commitment of Iranian heart and mind to a balanced, tolerant, just and peaceful world is seen as the reason for the Iranians to advocate a dialogue between the East and the West. The rationale and arguments for initiating inter-civilizational dialogue are developed in chapter four which was the text of Khatami's address to the 1999 session of UNESCO.

Chapters five to eleven address issues confronting the Iranian society. They cover subjects ranging from questions pertaining to the relationship between reason and religion, religious beliefs and modernity, tradition, modernity and development, freedom and development. The future of Iranian Revolution is also discussed. These chapters provide an intimate insights into the Mohammad Khatami's political ideology which, in fact, is an outline of the reform programme of his administration since he came to power about two years ago.

Some of the discussion in these chapters is an apology for the state of the Muslim world but at the same time one is struck by the boldness of Khatami's other arguments and assertions. Khatami argues that the main cause of the backwardness of the Muslim world is that it has neglected to apply reason in the management of human affairs. He goes on to suggest that for centuries Islamic thought has been relegated to the sidelines and not allowed to regulate social relations. Consequently, Muslim society's reins have either been in the hands of anti-Islamic forces or controlled by groups who have merely used Islam for self-aggrandizement and to legitimize their hold on power.

The “real Islam” in this long hiatus has been turned into opposition against corrupt and obsolete system which ruled in its name. The Islamic Revolution of Iran has finally ended this woeful period. Khatami offers a typology of Islam consisting of “a regressive, a diluted and a real Islam”. The Iranian Revolution, according to Khatami, is based on the real Islam. The regressive Islam is the Islam of the hard core tradition bound and diluted Islam is Islam of the Westoxicated and both are incapable of leading Muslims from their centuries of passivity in the face of economic, political and technological domination of Western civilization in the world affairs.

This typology probably is an indirect attack on the two main opponents of Khatami's reform agenda, the orthodox clergy which opposes his reforms and any challenge to its authority and the radical secularists who oppose any role of religion in
public affairs. Khatami invokes the authority of the “real Islam” which he sees as the route to achieve the spiritual and technological advancement. He argues that Islamic theology must evolve to meet the demands of the revolution and also the practical needs of the Iranian people.

He further suggests that Muslims must concede that the incompatibility of modern civilization with tradition bound Islamic civilization is one of the most important causes of the crisis in Iranian society. The answer he argues lies neither in remaining immersed in our tradition bound culture, nor in melting into Western civilization but forging a new way. This new way he labels the “other way”. The “other way” will not only preserve historical Islamic identity of Iranian society but also prevent destruction and the unravelling of its social fabric.

In chapters six to eleven President Khatami offers an insightful outline of this ‘other way’ and in the process of doing so provides important insights into his government’s reform agenda. These chapters also provide a framework for resurrecting Islam’s “social project” for the future. The essential feature of the social project is to establish a viable social order on earth which is just and ethically based. For Khatami this type of social order can not be achieved by the Western civilization because of its internal contradictions. While acknowledging its great scientific and technological achievements he argues that its power is based on an unethical exploitation of fellow human beings and Nature and this is gradually eroding its appeal and legitimacy.

The alternative is an ethically based system which is centred around veneration and reverence of human beings as the ultimate measure of development. Some of these arguments are reminiscent of the neo-Marxist critiques of Western capitalist development of 1960s and 1970s. Khatami also never questions the validity or viability of one of his central arguments that the political, economic and technological survival and salvation of Iran and the Muslim world lies in accepting the precepts of “real Islam” which has been ushered in by Iran's Islamic Revolution. In particular he offers no explanation of the growing disenchantment of a majority of Iranians with the Islamic Revolution. Notwithstanding these criticisms, this book is an important contribution for it provides important insights into the political and social thought of one of the most important and influential contemporary Muslim intellectual-politicians, and the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies of the Australian National University must be commended for publishing it.

Riaz Hassan

Raimon Panikkar. *The Intrareligious Dialogue. Revised Edition*  

Raimon Panikkar was born into two major religious traditions, Catholicism and Hinduism. Since his earliest years, he has been concerned with the interplay of these traditions and disciplines. He is a renowned philosopher and theologian, with