Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse, by Abdulkader Tayob (London: C. Hurst & Co. [Publishers], 2009), viii + 200 pp., ISBN: 978-185065-953-2, £45.00 (hb)

Abdulkader Tayob in his *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse* undertook a careful study of how 'religion,' as a key variable in 'religious studies' in general and 'Islamic studies' in particular, has been employed and discussed by Muslim intellectuals at the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century. Tayob discussed engagingly about the status of 'Religion in Modern Islam' (pp. 1-22) and argued about its relevance as a distinctive variable; and like many other social scientists he made reference to how and why scholars such as Max Weber defined/explained religion in modern society. Instead of depending upon their interpretations, Tayob brought Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Armando Salvatore's ideas on board; for him they offered useful insights as to how it should be applied to present-day Muslim societies. Since their respective understandings were appropriate, Tayob employed their theoretical conceptualization throughout his study.

Since Tayob underlined that the study's concern was "on the fundamental meanings and values that Muslims produced for modern Islam" (p. 15) and that it inspected how religion acted as a key element in shaping the debates in modern Muslim discourse, it allowed him to critically reflect upon "The Essence of Religion and Religion's Essence" in Chapter 2 (pp. 23-47). In this chapter, which he incorrectly identified as Chapter One (p. 17), the focus was on religion's definition and meaning. Encountering modernity as an unstoppable process of change, Tayob brought to the fore Sayyid Aḥmad Khan's ideas and juxtaposed these with those of Muḥammad Iqbāl and Fazlur Rahman. As a result of Khan's support for the scientific approach, Tayob demonstrated how Khan redefined religion.

After Tayob discussed their ideas, he went on to examine the approaches of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh in Chapter 3 (pp. 49-71) titled "The Value of Religion and Islam." Herein Tayob illustrated how these two, who were influenced by a dominant functionalist approach, made important interventions. Al-Afghānī critiqued Khan as well as other thinkers for their obsession with materialism and he argued that all religions were good (socially and po-

litically) for society (p. 57). Tayob stated that ʿAbduh laid stress on reason as a pivotal tool for the development of religion and he considered religion as an essential part of human nature (p. 59). One is rather surprised that Tayob did not make reference to Rashīd Riḍā's *Taʾrīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Sheikh Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (1931) or to Charles C. Adams' *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (1933); both texts would have added value to his assessment of ʿAbduh.

That aside, al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh's functional method in dealing with Islamic values provided Tayob the opportunity to turn attention to "Religion, Islam and Identity" in Chapter 4 (pp. 73-99); a chapter in which he interrogated 'identity' as a central characteristic of the state and the society. He, however, studied the notion of identity as contained in the works of Ḥasan al-Bannā and Mawdūdī, and Tayob demonstrated how they differed as Islamists in their approach. Tayob, moreover, returned to Khan and ʿAbduh who "posited a universal non-differentiated meaning of Islam" (p. 79); he illustrated how they differed from one another and made inputs to the construction of Muslim identity as functionalists. Building on these points, Tayob reviewed the foundations laid by the Islamists and argued that al-Bannā benefited from ʿAbduh and Mawdūdī gained from Khan's intellectual experiences. Although Tayob mentioned Sayyid Quṭb's name and briefly compared Quṭb's views with Mawdūdī's insights, it might have been educative if he had compared in greater detail the ideas of these two ideologues.

Now when Tayob discoursed about "The Meaning and Symbolism of the Islamic State" in Chapter 5 (pp. 101-126), he did so to "show how the position of Islam in the modern state has become essentially a problem of identity." Tayob demonstrated how the Muslim state was burdened with the modern meanings of Islam and made reference to ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq who rejected the idea of an 'Islamic state.' He was among those who drew a sharp line between the Prophet's religious and political roles. Tayob juxtaposed the latter's views with Rashīd Riḍā who held an opposing stance. Riḍā theologically proposed a Muslim republic that was to be led by a religious government; an idea that is rather different from Mawdūdī whose views Tayob revisited. Tayob also analyzed Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and Ayatollah Khomeini's views on the topic.

Tayob then discussed "Religion between Sharīʿa and Law" in Chapter 6 (pp. 127-154). Herein Tayob visited the opinions of three

Muslim legal minds. He first assessed the intellectual appreciation of Asaf Fyzee; the Indian scholar who adopted a gradualist approach to the study of Muslim jurisprudence and who made a clear distinction between religion and law. He then engaged with the views of Abdullahi An-Naʿim – the Sudanese/American scholar. Compared to Fyzee, An-Naʿim, according to Tayob, preferred a radical reformist approach in dealing with Muslim jurisprudence; a method that advocated that *ijtihād* (judicial examination) as a legal tool should not be uncritically accepted but that it be fundamentally employed to bring about sweeping legal reforms that are in line with universal principles such as 'freedom of religion.'

Being a critical thinker who ardently upholds the principles of secularism, An-Naʿim naturally countered and constantly challenged the conservatives and modernists' arguments; the upshot of An-Naʿim's fundamental approach was that he set himself apart from the established conservative scholars such as Mufti Taqi Usmani, the pragmatist Pakistani traditional theologian. Tayob explored Usmani's ideas and highlighted the fact that though Usmani adopted an "open attitude towards change" (p.146) during modern times Usmani was wary of modernity's shortcomings. Though Tayob mentioned that Muslim modernists such as Fazlur Rahman were heavily critiqued by Usmani for "simply following the latest trends in the West" (p. 147), he did not indicate why Usmani failed to scrutinize Rahman's personal engagement with Western thought as an academic and nor did he tangibly demonstrate how 'religion' as a pivotal variable was employed in Usmani's texts. Nonetheless, Tayob provide the reader with a fairly good insight into the varied legal approaches; approaches that accommodated 'religion' in the theoretical *sharʿī* frame.

Sharīʿa as a legal system was also seriously discoursed by female scholarly circles. In Tayob's "Reading (of) Islamic Feminism: Modernism and Beyond" (pp. 155-180), he evaluated the feminist theory of religion. Before Tayob assessed Nazzira Zin al-Din and Amina Wadud-Muhsin's views, he prefaced it with an account of women's place in Muslim beliefs with the intention of showing that many studies neglected to inform the reader to what degree women interact with religion. Tayob critically reflected on their contributions towards the construction of modern Muslim society. Zin al-Din, influenced by ʿAbduh, advocated the 'moral choice' approach. Since Zin al-Din's writings debated the validity of veiling, Tayob did not mention as to whether she made a distinction in her text between religious dictates

and Arab cultural practices. Tayob then focused on Wadud-Muhsin whose text *Woman and Islam* (1992) made waves among Muslim women circles. Seeing herself as a post-modern feminist – influenced by Rahman – who adopted a reader-centred approach, Wadud-Muhsin argued for the support of significant principles that would allow her to deconstruct those advocated by male exegetes and to permit her to hold tight onto universals espoused by 'feminist agents.' So for her the reader (i.e., the agent) was 'a (key) producer of the meaning of the text' and that reading – as an activity – should not be something that should be left to 'individual consciousness' as argued by Zin al-Din (p. 167). Tayob stressed that Wadud-Muhsin remained committed to the sacred text. On the whole, Tayob provided an even-handed treatment of these two women scholars' insights. He, however, did not hesitate to state where and why their interpretations were inadequate. Prior to concluding his chapter Tayob surveyed the writings of, among others, Mawdūdī, al-Qaraḍāwī, and al-Ghannūshī whose approaches towards women were somewhat apologetic. Whilst Tayob made this observation as well as commending Wadud-Muhsin for having chosen a "more integrated approach to reconciling religion and social values" (p. 179), he also commented upon this approach's inherent weaknesses.

In his "Concluding Remarks" (pp. 181-186) Tayob stated that the text underlined that (a) the search for real meaning of Islam (i.e., the preoccupation with essence), (b) the efficacy of religious values in public life, and (c) the desire for representation were basically essential features of Modern Muslim society. Consequently, these three issues assisted one in getting a fair insight into the stance of religion within the diverse Muslim discourses throughout the 20th century. Tayob has certainly made a solid contribution to religious studies since it not only familiarized the student with the divergent approaches within specific strands of Muslim thinking, but it also provided him/her with a comparative overview of how intellectuals discoursed about, inter alia, Muslim identity, Islamic state, and Islamic law. It is indeed a text that should be part of the prescribed lists for those doing courses in the field of Sociology of Religion/Sociology of Islam.

Muhammed Haron
University of Botswana, Gaborone-Botswana