

Travelling Home: Essays on Islam in Europe by Abdal Hakim Murad (Cambridge: The Quilliam Press, 2020), x + 294 pp., ISBN 9781872038209 (paperback, \$24.55; E-book as PDF or ePub, \$9.97).

Religious societies in Europe, especially Christianity and Islam, have been in total disarray since the birth of atheism, much like that of a cat being thrown into a flock of pigeons. Scientism underestimates the teaching of Christianity as they believe that science has successfully flown people to the moon. Muslim radicalists, on the other hand, are condemned as only being good at flying people toward buildings.

With such a gruesome background, Dr. Timothy Winter, or Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad, has been consistent with his approach of Sufism in dealing with nearly all earthly issues. His latest book, “Travelling Home,” explains how the problem of Muslims, in particular, can be solved through such a theological and mystical approach. With layers of themes and prose, he presented his book encompassing nine chapters, in which a few of the chapters require special and separate reviews. Given the density and complexity of the ideas presented in this book, the reviewer takes a selective approach in making the main idea of this book accessible to a larger audience.

In Chapter One (“Can Liberalism Tolerate Islam?”), the shaykh demonstrates how liberalism has become increasingly intolerant or tolerating none other than themselves. The problem worsens as they embed liberal ideas on state neutrality, as intolerance and matters on sexuality contaminate them. This applies not merely to Muslims, but those with other faiths are discriminated against and persecuted. Such a pathogen is an epidemic, and Muslims are advised to be therapeutic instead of pathogenic against such matters.

The practice he proposes is perhaps an important suggestion for Muslims responding to Islamophobia. Chapter Two (“Muslims and

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National Populism”) is where we can learn and follow Shaykh’s prescription. Expecting the Muslims to compare the persecution faced by Muslims today with the persecution suffered by the great companions during the early times of Islam, Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad proposes the term “Lahabism” instead of Islamophobia. The term is more indigenously Islamic and links the current saga of hatred to Abū Lahab, the uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), who hated Islam and Muslims in the past.

Muslims are soul attractors, the Shaykh asserted. Hence, it is wrong to practice *tanfīr*, driving people away from Islam and responding with an eye for an eye. Another important piece of advice he asserted is that imitations of the West are wrong, and it is equally wrong to have “race-temple,” which is having ethnic mosques/communities as a “back at home” culture in Europe.

Religionists must understand that the issue of Lahabism is spiritualistic and not rationalistically wrong-headed. Humankind is blessed with the longing for truth and God, and praying is a form of better *da‘wah* to them.

Chapter 3 and 4, as indicated earlier, deserves a separate review, and it suffices to say in this limited space that in Chapter 3 (on “British Muslims and the Rhetoric of Indigenisation”), the Shaykh narrates about British history and how those who belonged to the Abrahamic faith fit in there. In Chapter Four (“Islamophobia and the Bosnian War”), he highlights that the Bosnian Muslims were targeted uniquely for their religion, and the Serbs saw themselves committing religious acts.

Not only is the *tanfīr* mentioned once earlier, but in Chapter Five (“The Venomous Bid‘ah of Tanfīr”), Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad claims that the rise of both anger and ignorance produces a firebrand in Islam, turning it into a domestic ideology. On top of that, terrorism and state coercion are responsible for the youths in the Muslim world drifting away from the right path.

The Shaykh stated that “it is the state of the believer who is agitated by fearfulness and unavowed envy, and who based on that agitation throws himself into religion with the assumption that narrowness is a synonym for piety, and a sign of sincerity and refusal to compromise with falsehood.”

The Shaykh reminds us that God is in control of all things. In the short chapter of Chapter Six (“Good Anger, Bad Anger, and Shirk al-Asbāb”), the Shaykh compares the philosophy of cosmopolitanism versus zealotism by mentioning that in order for the prophetic counsel to become virtuous is not through becoming a Stoic, emotionally frigid, and impassable Vulcan; but rather to use the emotions as God wishes and not in vengeful obedience towards the self.

The message that Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad puts forth is very strong, in which Islamists should trust in His Majesty as the foundation of their movement, responding to injustice against not only Muslims but also those who were wronged by attracting instead of repelling the souls guided by The Most Compassionate, free from anger, let alone violent counter-reactions.

“An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind,” as Gandhi once said, and in Chapter Seven with its slightly wordy title (“Push Back with Something More Beautiful (Q 41:34): Minority Muslims from Complainants to Therapists”), the Shaykh highlights on the science of doing beautiful things in Islam.

For this purpose, the Shaykh strengthened his case, making a detailed account of Sūrat Fuṣṣilat by citing the works of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209). According to the shaykh, these cited works mention the verse in Sūrat Fuṣṣilat’s specificity in informing Muslims to push back evil with something “more beautiful”.

Discussions under Chapter Eight for the reviewer are really head-scratching. In this chapter, the Shaykh titles it “A Theology of Ahl al-Kidhāb,” dealing with the dilemma of “Christophobia,” such as that in Spain, for instance, where churches have been burned at the hands of atheist extremists, with a bomb exploding in the Saragossa Cathedral.

In another place, the Shaykh mentions that incidents frequently occur in which feminist groups, LGBT activists, pro-abortion groups, and others break into churches, sometimes interrupting the mass, shouting and staging various provocations (nudity, gay “kisses,” etc.). Undoubtedly, atheists are in the lamplight of religious abhorrence.

The Shaykh terms this movement or group Ahl al-Kidhāb or the People of Denial. Denying the *fitrah* of the longing for God in them, Muslims should practice the act of attracting these souls, mingling with them instead of committing convivial situations.

In search for an authentic Islamic teaching, in Chapter Nine (“Seeking Knowledge: The Multiple Horizons of British Islamic Studentship”), the Shaykh lays down a significant reminder. According to him, insisting on tolerating proximity is only one of the requirements, and it is equally important to hold a creative and mutually helpful dialogue.

By doing so, he is hopeful that a return of a culture of diversity as intrinsic to the authentic and uncompromising Muslim’s pursuit of truth will prevail, and the rejection of the new totalitarian narratives of a singular Islam will materialize in the process.

That would require a syllabus that is “carefully hybridized such as the ones available in the Cambridge Muslim College in the UK, the College of Islamic Studies in Qatar, İbn Haldun University in Turkey, and Zaytuna College in the US.”

The Shaykh makes a very spiritually heart-disclosing approach to environmentalism in his discussion in Chapter Ten (“Creation Spirituality”). Worshipping the Almighty God is not restricted to human creations but expands to non-human creations as they make *tasbīh* to the Supreme Being. We cannot comprehend everything we see strictly to what the current laws of physics, chemistry, and biology tell us. On this matter, the reviewer especially touches the story of Moses and Khidr from Sūrat al-Kahf, where the reader is invited to ponder, “The smashing of the poor fisherman’s boat was revealed to be moral and wise once the context is fully disclosed.” The contents discuss various approaches to nature. Although it depends more on a philosophical perspective, it does contain references to the Qurʾān and *aḥādīth* as well.

In his critique on the excesses of modern capitalism under Chapter Eleven (“Zakat in the Postmodern Economy”), the Shaykh is very optimistic about the *zakāb* (almsgiving) institution in Islam. Considering the amount which could be raised from Britain’s Muslim millionaires, the Shaykh jolted. He quotes that according to the Muslim Council of Britain, there are more than ten thousand of them. This would represent two hundred and fifty million pounds a year for charity purely in *zakāb* terms. The shaykh further narrates many other stimulating statistics. To the skeptic, the Shaykh emphasizes not only the principles of inheritance but, more importantly, the principle of *zakāt al-rikāz*, where for minerals such as oil in the Middle Eastern

countries, the allocated tax is not at the rate of 2.5 percent, but rather 20 percent.

A single deep breath seems insufficient to supply oneself with enough knowledge and time to capture even the more minor key points in the book. However, below are my two cents.

Firstly, in his attempt to find a balance between secular scientism on the one hand and radical Islamism on the other, the most remarkable point of the heated ring, as described in his book, is probably Muslim European centered, if not British only. Hence, it should be noted that in some countries, the pendulum may swing further away from the secular scientism extreme compared to the reality in Europe.

Secondly, on being fearful towards God Almighty only and responding to evil with love. Is the latter only applicable to those with different spirituality and living standards? Those whose food on the table are neglected, with no medicinal supply and bank balance, might need a different kind of training, at least for their stop-gap relief to walk on a tightrope. Is it an act of chivalry for them to be non-responsively quiet instead?

The book may prove to be daunting among rookies. Even I had to follow Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad's YouTube discussion on the subject together with Yusuf Ali's book recension to get a glimpse of *Travelling Home*. However, the use of simple language is not sufficient to be able to explain the obscurities in this book, and a profound user of the English language, alongside their English eloquence, may be able to place his mystical and theological ideas on the table appropriately. Therefore, the book deserves a better review, as a single review such as this can only scratch its surface, and more effort should be required in other reviews to shine the diamond further.

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