

Title—The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics, and Perpetual Modernity

Author—Mohammed Hashas

Year—2019

Categories: Intellectual History, Islam, Europe, Politics, Modernity

Place: (Western) Europe

Time: 1920-2000

Argument Synopsis:

The question undergirding Hashas' *The Idea of European Islam* is whether European Islam is actually possible. He claims to present a new and different approach in the study of Islam in Europe, arguing that European Islam is possible both theologically and politically. He views Europe and the Islamic world as domains of controversy, different and intertwining, not intrinsically opposed. Hashas examines European Islam through three axes: the world, society, and individual. He finds that European Islam at its current stage (book was published in 2019) humanizes the world through divinely willed inheritance for cosmic wellbeing, historicizes revelation through practical fiqh for social wellbeing, and it rationalizes individual faith through the principle of ethical liberty. He attempts to avoid using the labels of 'Islam' and 'the West' in an attempt to overcome the dichotomy and opposition inherent in the nomenclature. This book is an intellectual history that is concerned with ideas primarily and uses analysis of various Islamic texts to come to a conclusion about the current state of European Islam and the way that it affects the wider world.

Hashas argues that emerging European Islamic thought requires a comparative and interdisciplinary approach since the texts studied in the analysis come from a variety of disciplines. The texts were selected based on five criteria: the scholar should have an Islamic background, the scholar should be living or have lived in Western Europe, the intellectual biography of the scholar is considered, as well as the public presence of the scholar, and all of these texts tend to rationalize ethics. Hashas claims to present a vision of European Islam, his book is not all-inclusive and does not comprehensively represent all of European Islam. He notes that his selection criteria led to the exclusion of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, the Shi'a voice is not referenced at all, and women are completely absent from this work.

The book is divided into two parts, the first part has four chapters each devoted to the text and teaching of various scholars of European Islam. The chapters in this section are standalone and aim to describe different projects of European Islam. The second part evaluates the idea of European Islam based on three major philosophical frameworks, two of which were created by Moroccan philosopher Taha Abderrahmane. Hashas is able to distinguish between two schools of European Islam: those that believe that Muslims in Europe think, theologize and act; and those who believe that they just interiorize modern values and act. European Islam, as it stands, can be seen as a product of both reformist native European thought and reformist Islamic thought, adapting both traditions and challenging their centrism and essentialisms.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- The European Islam conceptualized, while intellectual, is also a lived Islam of many Muslims born and/or educated in Europe
- European Islam is a continuity of the projects of reform that began in the nineteenth century, including in the classical minority contexts of India and sub-Saharan Africa
- European Islam scholars attempt to re-ground the Islamic ethical message in a liberal-secular European context