

author presents the responses given to the question, "if you were not born in Canada, where would you prefer to practice Islam?" Ambiguity of the question is acknowledged by the author in footnote 9 on page 122. But an acknowledgment of the mistake does not prevent respondents to be misled. Further, the question is still hypothetical for the Canadian-borns. This is the type of question usually avoided in survey research. Finally, as it stands, the question invites normative answers rather than the actual ones. In Table 4, a model for formation of Islamic identity is presented. Again, it is difficult to call this a model since it does not delineate the relationship between the factors involved.

The concluding chapter seems rather problematic. On page 127 the author remarks that the "length of residency in the C.N.C.R., undoubtedly affects how these problems are viewed and resolved." Although the the author is emphasizing on the 'length of residency,' he does not use this variable in any of the analysis performed. Contrary to his initial grouping of the respondents on the basis of their religious observance (50 percent was 'the most committed,' 30 percent was 'less committed' and remaining 20 percent was 'non-committed'), he now claims that the most committed segment makes up 20 percent, the less committed 70 percent and the non-committed 5 percent of the sample. Since he did not provide any rationale for the first grouping, this second grouping leaves the reader in a state of total confusion.

In sum, the book addresses a very important subject. The selection of twelve issues to measure religious observance and ten problems that the Canadian Muslims face is appropriate. However, the presentation and interpretation of the results are quite problematic and I think reanalysis of the data will be beneficial in order to remove the logical contradictions.

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Ummah or Nation: A Rejoinder

The academic community's interest and appreciation to my recent publication, *Ummah or Nation? Identity Crisis in Contemporary Muslim Society*, is a matter of great pleasure. A number of points raised in the review by Abdul Rashid Moten,¹ however, call for some clarification.

Material has been selected from subsequent chapters in writing the introduction only to attract the reader's attention to the work. Attempts were made in the introduction to highlight contradictory claims made by Muslim intellectuals which is the main subject of the book.

The classical Qur'ān commentaries have been treated as reference works and therefore their method of documentation differs from others. All books, Arabic, English and French, cited in our work have been routinely documented. Whenever necessary, even particular editions of a source book have been discussed - Abdur Rahman al-Rifa'i's *Mustafa Kamil: Ba'th al-Ḥarākah al-Wataniyah*, is an example.

Bangladesh's commitment to secularism has been mentioned in connection with the country's entry into the OIC in 1974 when one of its declared state policies was secularism.

We consider the opinion that the author "bites off much more than he can chew" as a serious one. My aim in writing the book was limited, as Abdul Rashid Moten has rightly pointed out, to "make the contemporary Muslim world more intelligible," and to "understand increasing Islamic activism in Muslim countries." Usually a historian hesitates to theorize about social changes which are so close in time. It is indeed gratifying to be recognized by social scientists, but a reader must remember that the book was written by a historian within the framework of a methodology delineated in the introduction. The question of indigestion occurs only if the work contains ideas and events from outside the defined the scope of our thesis; and we categorically deny that the book contains ideas and events outside the defined the scope of our work.

Since the primary aim in the *Ummah or Nation* was to expound the present state of Muslim society, the intellectual background of the nationalist leaders, and the legal and educational policies of some Muslim nation-state governments have been highlighted. A good deal of emphasis, of course, has been placed on the political elite in Muslim countries, but it has also been pointed out that the political elite did attempt to respond to the demands of the masses by accommodating ideas concerning *Ummah* identity consciousness. It is true that some empirical data on elite-masses relationship would have supported this study further; but then, empirical studies have their own limitations and do not necessarily lead to sound conclusions. As pointed out in the introduction, the present author is well aware of this problem of writing contemporary

history. However, any keen observer of the state of affairs of the contemporary Muslim world would agree that the society is passing through a mass of divergent ideas emanating from the traditional Islamic mould on the one hand and the western civilization on the other.

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1. Abdul Rashid Moten, review of, *Ummah or Nation? Identity Crisis in Contemporary Muslim Society* by Abdullah Al-Ahsan, *Intellectual Discourse*, 1, (1993): 94-96.