

***What is an American Muslim? Embracing Faith and Citizenship.* By Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. New York, NY, Oxford University Press. 2014. 232pp. \$27.95 cloth**

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Harold Morales
Morgan State University

In *What is an American Muslim? Embracing Faith and Citizenship*, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im calls on Muslims in the United States to take greater responsibility for their religion and citizenship through dialogue and political participation. In a clear and accessible manner, An-Na'im systematically outlines both the challenges that Muslims in America face and a path toward realizing what he terms "religious self-determination," i.e., to identify religiously by "conviction and choice" (2). Building on his previous works that argue for the compatibility between Sharia and secular states, this text provides further historical specificity by focusing on Muslim identity in an American context.

An-Na'im maintains that a Muslim is anyone who self identifies as such. Further, to identify as a Muslim is to identify as a religious minority in the United States. Individuals have many different and overlapping identities, however, and all Americans, whether Muslim or not, are part of the majority as American citizens. Rather than engage in politics as minorities, An-Na'im makes an appeal for American Muslims to proactively "exercise their full agency and rights to cultural/religious self-determination" as citizens of the United States (17). If American Muslims feel they are being culturally or institutionally discriminated against, it is their right and obligation as citizens (i.e., as part of the majority) to try to realize a more ideal situation. The book is divided into five chapters fleshed-out and supported through historical, cultural, and legal case studies. These features may be useful for courses examining religion in America and the intersections between religion, politics, and law, though An-Na'im writes in the voice of an American Muslim in dialogue with other American Muslims.

Chapter One provides a review of the ways in which European/Western theories of citizenship have developed. An-Na'im admits that "American" can be defined through numerous approaches, but nevertheless settles on the legal definition of citizenship. The review is thus meant to support his

formulation of an “American Muslim” as an individual who self-identifies as a Muslim and who is a United States citizen. Though citizenship may indeed be one of the broadest ways to define American identity, this approach is not without limitations. For example, individuals brought to America as children by their parents may lack the legal status of citizenship, but nevertheless may identify culturally as American and religiously as Muslim. An-Na’im’s emphasis on a legal, rather than a cultural, definition of American will undoubtedly alienate some individuals (including a small number of Latino Muslims I have encountered during fieldwork) who lack legal citizenship. Despite this limitation, the legal definition offers a substantial basis for An-Na’im’s approach to seeking out positive social change. In particular, citizenship provides individual Muslims with the legal right and moral obligation to attempt to realize their *religious self-determination*.

Chapter Two provides an overview of American inclusivity. It highlights how Catholics, Jews, and Mormons have historically been excluded by the Protestant majority in the United States, and how these groups have in turn proactively and successfully sought inclusion and made positive contributions to American religious pluralism. Rather than as sufficient models to be imitated, An-Na’im believes these examples of previously excluded groups can be motivational and useful for developing strategies to seek out greater inclusion. One concern, though, is that success has been historically achieved in part by altering traditions to become more like those of American Protestantism. An-Na’im understands that change is inevitable in any context however, and that the appropriate response is therefore for American Muslims to deliberately participate in the change rather than merely become passive observers of it. Chapter Three describes the diversities and internal tensions in which such deliberation amongst American Muslims is to occur.

Chapter Four closely examines legal cases to show how American civil law and Sharia are distinct and not incompatible normative systems. An-Na’im maintains that, at a conceptual level, Sharia cannot be enforced by the state because at that point its authority would become secular and cease to be religious. State enforcement would also have to select one interpretation of Sharia over other diverse schools of thought that exist — a sort of religious compulsion that An-Na’im believes is un-Islamic. Instead, civil law in the United States offers an ideal context in which non-legal Sharia norms can be sought out by American Muslims. The chapter provides examples that deal with employment discrimination, prison accommodations, education, and family law. With regard to the latter, An-Na’im draws from Julie Macfarlane’s research on Muslims in North America in order to show

that imams who are not trained as judges, but are nevertheless called on to adjudicate divorce cases among Muslim couples, are increasingly reaching agreements that “blend Islamic and civil law outcomes” (156). Though it is not altogether clear in An-Na’im’s arguments how this blending avoids the concern that secular authority will divest Sharia from religious authority, it nevertheless provides a tangible and valuable guide for proactively seeking out religious self-determination through dialogue.

Chapter Five reviews the text’s major themes as possibilities for re-imagining American Muslim communities. Here, An-Na’im includes a section on Internet communities and concludes that these are not real communities because they lack the physical geographic ties that ground traditional communities. In part because of its brevity, his discussion of Internet communities could benefit from a clearer and more consistent discussion of how he conceptualizes virtual spaces. Though not as strong as his other arguments, An-Na’im’s inclusion of contemporary communications technologies in a work that calls for increased dialogue among Muslims regarding who is an American Muslim is timely and welcomed.

As a call for American Muslims to proactively engage their faith and citizenship, An-Na’im has once again contributed clear and compelling arguments to vibrant discussions regarding modern interpretations of Islam and of civil rights advances, while providing further historical specificity to these discussions by focusing on an American context.

***Human Rights Under State-Enforced Religious Family Laws in Israel, Egypt and India.* By Yüksel Sezgin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 322 pp. \$99.00 cloth. \$79.00 eBook**

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M. Christian Green
Emory University

With the global resurgence of religion in recent decades has come new attention not only to religious pluralism, but also to legal pluralism in places where religious law is allowed, accommodated, and in some cases even applied by state systems. Plural religious laws are especially commonplace in postcolonial states, as the residue of colonial policies that often served