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Bat Yeor



Which One God?

Comparing the Muslim and Christian conceptions of God.

By Bat Yeor

With the passing of time, hidden challenges, which for a long time had been growing unnoticed and unaddressed, can suddenly emerge into the full-blown light of current events with a force which seems quite overwhelming. Today the Western world, or Judeo-Christian civilization, shaken by jihadist terror, is being rudely awakened to theological realities blurred for decades. From clashes of civilizations to the jihad that is declaring to the planet its genocidal intentions, rational discourse concerning faith is becoming increasingly fraught.

It is within this tumult and confusion that Mark Durie, an Anglican minister, has written *Revelation? Do We Worship the Same God?*, in which he raises a couple of fundamental questions: Who is God? Is God Allah? Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God? To answer these questions, he analyzes Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God in Christianity and Islam. The reader is given a concise representation of Muslim and Christian arguments. Such an endeavor needs both solid scholarship and theological training. Mark Durie possesses both, being a theologian and a graduate in the language and culture of the Acehnese, a Muslim people from the north of Sumatra in Indonesia. In addition, the subjects he addresses, in the current context, request much intellectual integrity and courage.

But how to know the identity of “God” in the Koran and in the Bible? The author stresses that this profound and deep question requires engaging with the very essence of God’s identity. With perspicacity and great objectivity, Durie delineates the diverse aspects of his investigations, but he warns that his book should be seen only as guidance, and not the last word.

Durie’s questioning grows from the Koran’s statement that Jesus is a Muslim prophet, named Isa — a prophet whose birth, life, teaching, and death are found to be totally at odds with the testimony of the Gospels and with Biblical theology. The Koran — which for Muslims is the literal word of Allah that cannot be doubted — affirms that Muhammad’s prophetic message is exactly the same as that expressed by the Torah and the Gospels. Since there are many contradictions between the Koran and the Bible, Muslim orthodoxy considers the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity as falsifications of the primal and unique Islamic revelation. It is this accusation that provided the doctrinal justification for the discriminatory legal status of Jews and Christians living under Islam.

In the first section, the author provides information about and reflections upon the Muslim Jesus (Isa). He stresses as fundamental the Koran’s teaching that Islam is the first, primordial religion, preceding Judaism and Christianity, which are dismissed as invalid traditions, being falsified versions of Islam. Because Christianity and Judaism are thought to be a corruption of the pure message of Islam, anything true in these religions comes from their Islamic roots. Consequently, to obey their true religion, Jews and Christians should “revert” to Islam and accept the prophethood of Muhammad.

This implies, writes Durie, that anyone who opposes Muhammad is not a true Christian, nor a true Jew. Seen in this light, the Koranic verses sympathetic to Jews and Christians refer to

those who will see the light and find it to be Islam. If Islam recognizes only itself in Judaism and Christianity, one can wonder whether this replacement theology is not the negation of the very principle of recognition of other religions.

Many Christians profess that Christianity is closer to Islam than to Judaism, because of a common reverence of Jesus/Isa and his mother Mary. They will be astonished to learn from Durie that according to hadiths — acts and sayings attributed to Muhammad, and endowed with theological and legislative authority — Isa, the Muslim Jesus, will be the ultimate destroyer of Christianity.

Durie examines the characters of Jesus and Isa, separated by six centuries; he compares their name and biographies and explains the differing understandings of the prophecy in the Bible and the Koran. While Christianity accepts Jewish Scriptures as the foundation of their belief and practice, and as an integral part of Christian ministry, read in churches around the world, Muslims disregard the Bible. They claim that it is Islam that is the common heritage of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and that Jews and Christians should work to recover this heritage. Durie comments that, in this process, the Islamization of Jesus and the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets destroys both Christianity and Judaism.

The author analyses with great clarity and depth the fundamental principles of the two religions and, in a powerful chapter that raises essential questions, he discusses the concept of “Abrahamic Faith” that has become so fashionable today as a framework for dialogue. This definition, he points out, originates from the Koranic statement that Abraham was a Muslim prophet and from Islam’s core doctrine that Islam was the one revelation given to humanity by Allah through the Biblical figures and through Jesus. For Durie, the many “Abrahamic Faith” conferences throughout the world point to the Islamization of Christian understandings of interfaith dialogue. How should Christians respond to this claim which is a fundamental point of Muslim doctrine? Durie develops several arguments based on a rational analysis of history and the texts.

In his conclusion, Durie writes that profound contrasts exist in Islam and Christianity in their understanding of the identity of God. These have far-reaching implications, affecting attitudes, ethics, and politics. The clarification of misunderstandings and false assumptions, masterly exposed by Durie, is a condition to open the way for more constructive dialogue.

Durie’s book could not have been more timely. He offers a well-balanced analysis, acknowledging the important similarities of the two faiths, without ever misrepresenting the real disagreements or ignoring the hard issues. In this time of globalization, when crucial challenges are emerging for the West’s post-Christian societies, Durie’s reflections provide essential and fundamental guidance that will enable Christians to engage in a dialogue based on truth.

This is all the more urgent now that the cultural jihad in the West is preventing the free expression of thought and belief, and is subverting the whole ethical foundation of Judeo-Christianity.

— *Bat Yeor is the author of studies on the conditions of Jews and Christians in the context of the jihad ideology and the sharia law. Recent books include: [Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide](#) and [Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis](#), both at Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.*