

“Allah, a Christian response” a book review

Before we proceed with the review, it is helpful to know who are the endorsers on the back cover:

1. **Brian McLaren** - one of the leaders of the emergent church in the U.S. He is involved with New Age occultism.
2. **Seyyed Hossein Nasr**- Author and professor of Islamic religion.
3. **Mona Siddiqui**- Professor of Islamic religion.
4. **Phillip Jenkins**- is a pro-Islamist, liberal Christian theologian. He teaches religion at PSU and Baylor University. In his latest book “Laying Down the Sword”, he wants to criminalize God, the Bible, Christianity, and Judaism. He charges the Bible with terror texts, asserting that much of the problems of Islam are because of Christianity. Jenkins accuses Christians of "holy amnesia" when it comes to the conquest of Canaan and the collateral damages. Believers, as well as reputable scholars, took those accounts (which Jenkins condemns) in the proper context. Jenkins is a failed scholar who ignores essential principles of anthropology and psychology specific to ancient civilizations. He simplistically pastes a contemporary populist view over complex events of antiquity. This approach is akin to liberal Christians, loathsome Gnostics, and aggressive atheists. His method reminds us of questions asked by first graders such as, “why didn’t McDonalds exist in ancient Rome”. While children can express naivetés of this sort, Jenkins is without excuse as a professor of history and religions.

In the introduction of “Allah a Christian Response” (p. 13) Miroslav Volf affirms that the goal of his writing is an exercise of *political theology*. At page 14, the full objective is stated. In a broader sense, the primary purpose of the book is *politics*. As we shall see as our review progresses, Volf’s way of using religion for political ends becomes quite ruthless. He behaves like a special envoy to the Middle East, forcing the reader to accept Muslim religious tenets. But at times, Volf almost becomes authoritarian. He employs something akin to car sales techniques, such as half-truths and false analogies. Above all, Volf espouses grave heresies.

Before we go any further, we have to take a look at two shocking statements inside the jacket cover. The first one affirms that what the Koran denies about the Holy Trinity is in agreement with the sound theology of the church throughout its history. We will deal with this outrageous claim later on. The other one is his view that a Muslim can remain as such, and adopt Christianity 100% and still be okay in his faith.

Why are these two horrendous heresies placed on the cover? Most likely the goal is to shock the reader and create some openness for the bizarre and heretical content of the book.

Chrislam is Volf's political theology in this work. He does not explicitly call it so, but he clearly fleshes it out. The thesis of the book is that Allah and the God of the Bible is one and the same person. He conditions the world's peace by bringing together Christians and Muslims in the mix of Chrislam (p.8,9). In order to achieve his purpose, the author tries to *gradually persuade* the reader with his combination of politics and pseudo theology. However, he is not shy to bluntly impose his views as well. It is important for the reader to identify his method of persistent cunning persuasion (almost luciferian in nature), at an early stage.

Volf denies any connection between the name "Allah" and the "Moon god of Mecca". He chastises Lt. Gen. William Boykin and Pat Robertson for making that affirmation, but when it comes for him to prove otherwise, he just quotes an Islamic encyclopedia. Is this the level of scholarship practiced at Yale? In order to prove Boykin and Robertson wrong, Volf has to provide enough evidence from historians and archeologists who researched this topic.

Here is a case of a false analogy that the author employs at the beginning of the book. He brings into discussion the American Civil War where the North and South were both Christians, had the same Bible, and prayed to the same God. Yet still they fought; but at the end they reached a compromise. So, Volf implies, Christians and Muslims have the same God, they had their wars, but they should reach a concession (p. 10,11).

And if the reader is not prepared to swallow such a huge false analogy, Volf announces that this is just the start of many controversial claims he makes all through his book. He places himself in a lofty position, criticizing both conservative and progressive people involved in cultural wars, saying they

misunderstand the Muslims and Islam. As a result he is *ready to offend* both of those camps, he brazenly states (p.11). Nice declaration from someone who wants to argue for peaceful relationships! Yes, this is the true face of ecumenism.

After he asserts his political ambition, Volf makes ten distinct statements which in part are dictatorial in nature (p. 14-15). Each statement contains a authoritative pronouncement of this sort: "I reject the idea..." . These bold and unwarranted declarations are unwelcome and reminds one of Nietzsche's style. Moreover, he sarcastically states that his ten proclamations are a "hot and spicy dish" which the reader has to take anyway.

Here are some of Volf's aberrant/heretical statements: *I reject the idea* he says... that the Muslims worship a different God than the Christians, that Muslim monotheism is not compatible with the doctrine of Trinity, that Islam is more life restrictive than Christianity. He affirms that it doesn't matter what you are, Christian or Muslim, it matters if you love...

At the end of his autocratic pronouncement, Volf dares to say that although his 10 points are "hot and spicy" (read brazenness), "this is the way he sees things" (p.16). Is this plain audacity, lack of common sense, or the overconfidence of man who thinks that his academic title allows him to mistreat the reader?

Volf goes on explaining how the document "A common word" came into being. I dealt with that in a previous section.

He admits that in the words of Mohamed there is not such a thing as love for God (p.29). Still he claims that Islam is based on the same two fundamental tenets of Christianity; love for God and for neighbor. From here, he builds the thrust of his book on a false premise.

Volf, not having any biblical support for his claims, turns to two personalities from the history of the Church: The catholic cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), and Martin Luther (1483-1546).

One cannot avoid seeing a certain level of satisfaction transcending in Volf's account of the Ottoman conquests of the Christian territories. He gives abundant space to the angst of Christian leaders such as cardinal John

Bessarion and Pope Pius II (p.40-43), probably to induce fear in the Christian reader.

Volf picks and chooses fragments of the work “A Sifting of the Koran ” by Nicholas of Cusa, in order to support his false thesis that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. Cusa wants to reconcile the Muslim view of God as one personality with the Christian view of God as a three personality. Volf is forced to acknowledge that what Cusa does is a “very heavy intellectual lifting”, in other words a work that does not stand the scrutiny of logic and the truth of the Word of God. Cusa’s backup for his theological construct is philosophical (Neoplatonic).

Using Cusa’s words, Volf argues that one religion would bring “perpetual peace”. The way to do it is through “conferences” (p.47). It should be added that the conferences are the ecumenical ones.

Volf introduces the concept of “charitable interpretation” which in fact is progressive betrayal of the fundamental Christian tenets (p. 50).

The only way Cusa will be able to come up with something which satisfies some nominal Christians and Muslims, is by using heavy Christian mysticism. He resorts to the mystical theology of Dionysius the Areopagite a Church Father of the 6th century. This particular Church Father took the name of the disciple of the Apostle Paul from Acts 17, telling his readers that he in fact was the original Dionysius, when in actuality he lived in the 6th century. Researchers in the last two centuries proved him a fraud, but still the Eastern Orthodox Church recognizes him as a Church Father. Consequently he is called Pseudo-Dionysius.

Pseudo-Dionysius was a Neoplatonic philosopher. His philosophical/theological writings are *apophatic* in nature. The *apophatic* theology states “what God is not”. It is also called the theology of negation. The rationale behind is this: God being infinite, then He is utterly unknowable. As a result we can express things about God mostly by negation. This kind of theology eludes numerous references in the Bible about God’s self revelation. (Gen. 17:1-3; Ex. 3:2-6; Col. 2:9; Jn. 14:8-11) Apophatism essentially denies the person of God, is reductionistic, and allows its proponents to speculate as they want. That is why Volf picked up Cusa’s treatise; he adapts the Christian view of the Trinity to Islam.

Volf views Pseudo-Dionysius as a profound philosopher-theologian (p. 52), but he withholds the compromising info about him. How does Volf manage to blur the Trinitarian concept using the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius? If God is infinite and unknowable, he argues, then He is beyond numbers (one or three) and beyond persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). (p. 52).

After citing Cusa's discussion of the Koran and Christian theology side by side (p. 53-54), Volf just drops an outrageous claim that everything Muslims reject concerning the Trinity, Christians reject as well. What a shameless lie! The Biblical view of God is one essence manifested in three-persons. The Koranic view of their god is one essence manifested in one person. Moreover the *one essence* of the God of the Bible is different than the essence of the god of the Muslims because we deal with two different entities. Volf's conclusion is absolutely false!

In reality everything that Christians affirm on the Trinity, the Muslims reject as we saw in an earlier discussion under "A common word" heading. The essential Muslim rejection is about the person of Christ in relation to His eternal Sonship and His deity.

In the end, Cusa in his essay returns to upholding the Trinitarian view, stating clearly that all God's actions and attributes are related to His Triunity. Volf does not like it and then decides to stick with the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius (p. 57).

The section on Nicholas of Cusa ends with a deplorable apostate set of statements from Volf. Here is a paraphrased sample: truth embraced by all is the important aspect in the battle of ideas, and not trying to portray our opponents as being wrong. This is called *charitable interpretation* (p. 58). My response to Volf is that, in the battle of ideas, truth is not going to be embraced by all, and truth is not charitable. That is postmodernism, and Volf excels in it. But he goes on reaffirming that God is beyond comprehension, and even saying that we don't need to agree on everything about God in order to worship the same God. This is the height of heresy with a postmodernist flavor.

Afterward Volf appeals to Martin Luther. He acknowledges that Luther said that Christians and Muslims worship the same God because the reformer was under the threat of Turkish conquest (p. 60). Luther denies that the

Muslims are saved as a result of their faith, which Volf does not like. As a result, he cites Erasmus of Rotterdam to counteract Luther. What did Erasmus say about the Turks? He claimed that the Turks are half Christians (p. 73). Then Volf asserts that Muslims can be saved even while having wrong convictions about God, and their belief in the Almightyness of God is good enough.

One of the new techniques Volf uses in his book is affirming cardinal Christian truths while in the same breath he denies their validity in order to gratify the Muslim expectations. (pp.127-147) Volf uses this devise to make the reader believe that his book is not an outrageous heresy.

At page 74, Volf states that Muslim distortions of who God is, are not radically different from the distortions of Christians on the same subject. But then at page 79, he affirms that the Muslims reject a Trinitarian view of God. Self contradiction is at home with Volf. At page 81, he puts Dr. Al Mohler on the same stand with Malay Islamic militants. This occurrence proves how intolerant Volf is with true Christians and how he bends over backwards to the Islamic ideology. *This is the real face of ecumenism, the most intolerant form of religions mixed together.*

Volf acknowledges that Christians and Muslims share *some* Scriptural ideas, but not at the level Christians and Jews share The Old Testament. Later, he admits that Muslims reject the Bible as it exists today, claiming that the Scriptures were altered. We heard this same story from the Mormons too. Every sect that wants to prop up their ideology against the Church and the Bible will come up with this unfounded childish theory. In spite of all these aberrations, Volf proposes a way out from his own mess by coining another term called “sufficient similarity” p. 89.

Then he comes with a political proposal, to concentrate in what is common between Christians and Muslims and keep out what is different. A quick assessment will prove that almost nothing is in common between the two groups. But Volf is undeterred in his ecumenical pursuit and calls Christians to love their Muslim neighbors as themselves to the extent of embracing their beliefs and practices (p. 94).

On page 95, he uses a sweeping generalization implying that Second Vatican Council (1962-65) is an authoritative statement for Christians in relation to Allah being the same god with the God of the Bible. In reality, the Vatican's decrees are acknowledged only by Roman Catholics.

After awhile, Volf lays bare his ecumenist/Chrislamist convictions. Here they are: at page 124 he “wonders” if Islam and Christianity are two different but equally good paths to the same God, or that the way of Christ and the way of Mohamed are two versions of the same religion. On page 191, he views Muslims and Christians as having a common God, and Islam and Christianity as two versions of the same thing, and then on page 193, he affirms Islam and Christianity as variants of the same thing. **Volf makes quite a blasphemous assertion!**

Next he brazenly puts forth “rules for blending religions”. He pushes Christians to participate in Ramadan, adding to it prayer five times a day in prostration and saying *Al Fatiha*, the first 7 verses of the Koran. We have to stop here for a moment! If somebody would say *Al Fatiha*, the first verses of the Koran, that person later on will accept other Koranic verses, and from there a conversion to Islam is not too far. Volf knows that, but he wants to push people into Chrislam. **This is devilish!**

Volf's “rules for blending religions” goes further, asking the Christian reader to believe that Mohamed was a prophet, at least like Martin Luther King Jr. , he says.

He even allows for people who would like to mix their religion in less than 100% each Christianity and Islam. Volf will settle for a smaller percentage, just to press on Christians to have a start in Chrislam.

This is what the Bible says about those who promote a different Gospel:
But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8,9)

Volf placed himself under the anathema of the Word of God.

It must be noted that half of the content of the book is the same thing recycled over and over again. Volf repeats himself ad nauseam pleading with the reader to practice ecumenical love and give up the distinctiveness of Christianity. At page 152 Volf decries the fact that Christians are so dedicated to their identity and don't want to dilute it in favor of Christian-Muslim religious relations that would please Muslims.

He confesses that "Allah, a Christian response" book was written by him as a completion to the book "Yale, a Christian response". I agree, "Yale response" was a wholesale betrayal of Christianity, and this book is the final act of it. Miroslav Volf betrayed Christ in the first place, and then betrayed the true Christian church. To a moral level he is no different than Judas Iscariot. Hence, the signatories of the "Yale response" committed an act of apostasy.

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