

BOOK REVIEW

A World without Islam

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A World Without Islam

Graham Fuller

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Buenos Aires city seems to be a vivid example of how Jews and Muslims may live together in peace. In spite of suffering two terrorist attacks against Jew community, Argentineans have not recurred to demonize Islam as a bloody religion. After all, both cultures keep further commonalities than differences. Similarly to this, the book authored by Graham Fuller, *a World without Islam* explores not only the forced that historically determined Islam but also its nature and evolution. What if the Islam never existed? Brilliantly, Fuller demonstrates how if Islam would never take room in Middle East,

West would have faced the similar tragic events respecting to terrorism. This seminal work is not exhibited as a narrative, but as an argument in favour of tolerance and understanding of others. His main thesis is that the crisis West-East has nothing to do with religions or cultural asymmetries as scholars precluded. The interventions of Western power in Middle East have paved the pathways for the consolidation of Islam, but in nature, Muslims is divided in thousand of views and subcultures. The ignorance of United States about the rich cultural life of Middle East not necessary resulted in 9/11 this tragic event was the corollary of a set of economic interventions in the area. The admiration the world feels by US because of its technology seems to be a fertile ground for a later military expansion. But this does not mean that civilizations clash, this exhibits only a cross-cultural encounter which may be troublesome or not. This book reminds how the world of ideas, proper of science, paves the ways for the advent of Imperialism indeed at a later day.

It is important to note that in Islam as many other religions too coexists two contrasting tendencies or in other terms, levels of violence. At the outset, Islam was adapted to the local beliefs and negotiated with neighbouring tribes in order to convert further new subjects. At a

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second stage, once Mohammad dead, his legacy was imposed by the imposition of bloody boundaries between Muslims and non-believers. In perspective, Fuller conducts a brilliant review of the evolution of Christianity as well as its internal conflicts that made from this incipient religion a powerful mechanism of indoctrination in politic fields. One of the most troubling questions about the legacy of a religion seems to be associated to the way in interpreting the founding lessons. Christianity, Judaism and Islam are abrahamic faiths that marked a watershed in the last centuries in Middle East and beyond. At some extent, Islam is considered by Muslims as the last and refined version of Christianity and Judaism but while not only Islam but Judaism agree in criticising that Christianity is based on heresy, the idea Jesus is self-proclaimed the son of god, Muslims consider *"the prophet Muhammad brought the final and perfect revelation that cannot be improved upon; there will be no more legitimate prophets. This belief has put Islam in the curious position of being quite tolerant in looking back into religious history, but intolerant in looking forward to any possible post-Muhammad religious teaching that involve new revelation"* (p. 39).

Following this reasoning, Fuller acknowledges that concepts as power, heresy and religion are inextricably intertwined. Although doctrine and religion may evolve by diverse ways, the fact is that doctrine is almost always under the control of state. In doing so, the question as to how interpreting events are of paramount importance at time of drawing the boundaries of legitimacy. The diversity of views respecting to who is God and what are their intentions by me, determines not only the goal of church but also the people opinions. It is important not to loose the sight that certain intransigence seeks an exclusive way of interpreting facts in order for status-quo to monopolize the legitimacy of state. Those ideas or assumptions that try to discuss with dogma, are considered as heresies. Most certainly, to challenge the monopoly of church is challenge the hegemony of state. For that reason, the so-called intransigence which is often associated of Islam, Fuller explains, is present

in Judaism and Christianity indistinctively. One might speculate if Islam never existed, things would not have so pretty different than today.

Fuller's book deals with an interesting point which has not explored up to date in the specialized literature; to what an extent, the resistance and rivalry of Islam, respecting to West and Christianity is based under constituency of religious values. Rather, from its inception Islam was adapted to the rivalry already coined by Byzantine Empire against Rome. Textually cited, *"Islam, as a new geopolitical force, inherited not only much of the anti-Rome views that grew over time within Byzantine Empire itself. While Byzantium drew its deepest identity from the belief that it was perpetuating the true tradition of the Roman Empire, it increasingly came to view the Western Church as a geopolitical rival whose power was ultimately as threatening to Byzantine power and identity as Islam itself"* (p. 68).

As already stated, if the faith is monopolized by states to gain further legitimacy, religious dogma constitutes the power-will to make the life safer. Without the guidelines of religion and dogma the negative effects of uncertainty surface. After formal acceptance by Roman Empire, the interpretation of Jesus' legacy was in dispute, even inside the Catholic Church. Certainly, Mohammad not only was familiar with in the rivalries at time of interpreting holly texts but also capitalized part of Byzantium's resentment to forge a new fresh alternative in order for human beings to hear the message of God. Therefore, if Muhammad would have never taken appearance in Middle East, the region would anyway have adopted any other anti-West attitudes, enrooted in Eastern Christianity.

But things come worse to worst; the Province of Syria promptly experienced some important problems with the abusive tribute to pay to Byzantine Empire. To the conflict West vs. East, one must add a dispute against Christianity by the side of some Byzantine provinces. Under this turbulent context, Islam arrived to Middle East and Syria. Secondly, the expansion of Islam, unlike Huntington precluded,

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