

## Muslims and Christians Debate Justice and Love

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There are some minor errors in the text. Muḥammad ‘Abduh wrote *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, not *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (13). Ibn Taymiyya did not claim the superiority of revelation (*naql*) over reason (*‘aql*), but rather stressed the essential harmony between the two (44). ‘Foreigners’ is an inadequate translation of *ghurabā*, which should be read as ‘strangers’ and as referring to the Hadith, central to Wahhabi-Salafi discourse, that says Islam will ‘return strange as it began’, not to IS attempts to recruit foreigners (179). This adds to the sense that the book is aimed more at students than at specialists. Yet this should not detract from its value. Beránek and Ťupek offer a timely overview of iconoclasm in the Wahhabi-Salafi tradition and the book is bound to become the standard primer on the subject. It will be of value as a gateway to students new to the fields of Salafism and Wahhabism, including militant groups such as IS, or to the history of Saudi Arabia, and all those interested in the preservation or destruction of cultural heritage.

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**Muslims and Christians Debate Justice and Love**, by David L. Johnston, Bristol, Equinox, 2020, 193 pp., £24.95/\$32.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-78179-935-2; £75.00/\$100.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-78179-934-5

*Muslims and Christians Debate Justice and Love* challenges two dominant stereotypes in the study of justice in Muslim–Christian relations. The stereotypes are (1) justice and love are on opposite sides of a spectrum (enforcing law and transcending all law, respectively) and (2) Christianity is a religion of love while Islam is a religion of justice.

In this clearly written and cogently argued book, David Johnston examines Christian and Islamic texts from Antiquity to the present day that address justice, love and human rights. Johnston’s work includes texts in multiple disciplines, the most prominent of which are history, sociology, theology, religious studies and jurisprudence. He applies the method of ‘dialogic pluralism’ (10) from the books of Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (2008) and *Justice in Love* (2011),<sup>1</sup> to the 2007 letter ‘A Common Word between Us and You’.<sup>2</sup> This is his most important contribution.

The book neither suggests policies nor offers a new theory of love and justice, but reflects on Johnston’s 15 years as a teacher and cleric in Arab countries in order to prove that justice is fundamentally connected to respect for universal rights. He also draws on his previous book, *Earth, Empire and Sacred Text*,<sup>3</sup> in which he argued that Muslims and Christians both see themselves as empowered by God to exercise dominion on the earth as his stewards and

trustees. In this new book, he responds to the secular concepts of rational capacity or moral agency as grounds of human worth, arguing that it is human nature's quality of resembling God that qualifies every human being to be a bearer of human rights.

The first chapter examines the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow laws and the continuing racism that Blacks face today in America. He addresses Johan Galtung's insight into structural and cultural violence. Johnston compares his own experiences and insights with those of Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr in his analysis of the connection between desire for healing and the inherent dignity of every person.

Chapter 2 reviews the treatment of justice in Western thought. Johnston argues that, from Antiquity to the Enlightenment, justice referred to the ordering of society: justice is what the law says. He then examines how justice was defined in several nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideologies including positivism, legal conventionalism, pragmatism and post-modernism. Drawing on Wolterstorff, the author traces a second thread in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Church Fathers which defined justice as inherent rights. Here, the author switches the focus from distributive, retributive and procedural justice to primary justice, 'defining what justice is and grounding it, not in some kind of natural order or social contract but in certain rights that belong to human beings as human beings' (11).

Chapter 3 examines the contributions of three reformist scholars of Islamic Sharia and the objectives of Sharia. The first, Egyptian union activist Jamal al-Banna, saw social justice as one of the main objectives of God's revealed law. He placed justice ahead of the five traditional objectives of Sharia, the protection of faith, life, intellect, lineage and property. Al-Banna called for reviving the ancient Muslim debates between the Ash'arites, who preferred revelation over reason, and the Mu'tazilites, who preferred reason over revelation. He hoped to develop critical thinking within Islamic theology and focus it on the objective values of what is right and just for both the individual and society at large. The second is Mohammad Hashim Kamali, a leading Muslim reformist legal scholar, who contributed with his argument that the public benefit may trump the text. This focus on the public good over the literal text may help renew Islamic jurisprudence and place it in the service of justice and human rights. In order to develop his own theory of justice as inherent rights, Johnston uses Kamali's analysis of justice as a supreme virtue which sits alongside mankind's trusteeship and dominion over the earth. Johnston then addresses Tariq Ramadan's call to Muslims to renew their consciences and privilege value over legal rules. Ramadan believes this is possible if scholars include context sciences in the study of the Qur'anic text.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the writings of a popular and controversial scholar, Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradawi. Here Johnston examines al-Qaradawi's development of classical *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory), where al-Qaradawi applies it to the 'middle path' or the 'moderate' Islamic way (*manhaj al-wasatiyya*) and to purposive jurisprudence, and how both embody God's justice. Finally, this chapter looks at the intellectual roots of al-Qaradawi's purposive *fiqh* from the late Middle Ages to contemporary Islam, as well as its evolution in al-Qaradawi. Johnston nicely compares al-Qaradawi and Ramadan, especially their views of Muslim minorities in Western countries.

Chapter 5 returns to the 2007 Common Word initiative. It focuses on Prince Ghazi's *Love in the Holy Quran* to bring out the connection between love and justice. Ghazi holds that, in the Qur'an, love and justice are paired in three contexts: first, the balance between love and justice; second, the balance between love and beauty; and third, the connection between justice and inalienable rights. Johnston highlights the nexus between Wolterstorff and Prince Ghazi: justice is about human rights, and love is closely connected to it.

In Chapter 6, Johnston moves to Christian views of justice. Grounded in Wolterstorff's *Justice in Love*, Johnston criticizes both Kierkegaard and twentieth-century agapism which,

respectively, disassociate love from justice and limit God's love to forgiveness. Quoting Mahmoud Ayoub, who spent his entire career working in inter-faith dialogue, Johnston argues that Christianity and Islam disagree more on theological terminology than in intent.

The author succeeds in showing how both justice and love are central concepts in both Christianity and Islam; however, he departs from the mainstream of both religions. He ignores the role of Justification in Christian salvation and the importance of justice in Islamic theology and Islamic schools of ethics. He focuses primarily on the role of justice in Sharia. He overlooks the entirety of medieval Christian jurisprudence, which views justice as the act in which everyone is treated in accordance with the Image of God that resides within each of us. This is in part because he relies excessively on Wolterstorff's works.


The key strength of the volume is its concrete examples, which make it very approachable. The reader can feel the story and relate it to his/her life both individually and socially. The introduction and first chapter begin by studying racial injustice in the US, and each additional chapter begins with a case study of injustice that needs to be righted.

*Muslims and Christians Debate Justice and Love* tries to encourage readers to reexamine their understandings of justice and love, and it challenges activists to take advantage of its insights to build a more just community. It is a must-read book for activists in inter-faith dialogue, but also gives new directions to scholars of inter-faith studies and thinkers on human rights and justice.

## Notes

1. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); idem, *Justice and Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).
2. <https://www.acommonword.com/>.
3. David L. Johnston, *Earth, Empire and Sacred Text: Muslims and Christians as Trustees of Creation* (London: Equinox, 2010)

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**The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought**, by Andrew F. March, Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019, 300 pp., £36.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-674-98783-8

*The Caliphate of Man* is an ambitious book providing a much-needed impartial perspective and examination of Islamic political thought regarding the idea of popular sovereignty. The book is interested in what modern Islamic political thought has taken from pre-modern debates on the nature of divine and popular sovereignty (24). The venture of modern Islamic political sovereignty is discussed through nuanced accounts of various Muslim figures, ranging from Rashid Riḍā and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sanhūrī to Abū al-A‘lā al-Mawḍūdī, Sayyid Quṭb and Rāshid al-Ghannūshī. The author skilfully navigates his way through sophisticated normative political debates around the Sharia, the caliphate and democracy, and