anti-Semitism and Muslim terrorism have to do with an assumed failure to acknowledge causes? Don't they rather see too many causes? Reilly conceals from his readers that most Jihadists are not Ashʿarites but rather Salafists, who reject Ashʿarism. The intellectual ideal of people such as Usama bin Ladin is not al-Ghazālī but Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), and Ibn Taymiyya argued against occasionalism and fatalism and stressed moral responsibility. One could even make the point that Jihadism is much more a successor of Muʿtazilite moralism than it is of any element in Ashʿarite thinking.

At the end, Reilly's book is war literature, telling us in eloquent and often learned words why the way we think is right and our enemy's way wrong. Whether the "we" are the Catholics of America, the Christians, or simply all Americans remains intentionally vague in this book. Reilly also misleads his readers about who the enemy is. In the title, he leaps from the word *Muslim* to *Islamist*. In polemics, such subtle distinctions often fall through the cracks, which is why a theological refutation of Sunni Islam can be easily confused with a propaganda tool in the War on Terror.

Endnote

1. Al-Ghazali, *Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence*, trans. D. B. Burrell (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001), 55–149.

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Earth Empire and Sacred Text: Muslims and Christians as Trustees of Creation

David L. Johnston

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There is a new trend in the progressive quarter of American Evangelical Christianity to form common bonds with Muslims. From this impulse stem books such as Miroslav Volf's *Allah: A Christian Response* and Carl Medearis' *Muslims, Christians, and Jesus: Gaining Understanding and Building Relationships*, as well as organizations such as Rick Love's Peace Catalyst and Yale Divinity School's Reconciliation Program.

David Johnston's robust *Earth, Empire and Sacred Text* falls within this trend (although these are by no means monolithic attempts and

each must be evaluated on its own terms). As an Evangelical Christian with an academic streak and extensive international experience, Johnston is uniquely positioned to not only reach out to Muslims but also to educate his fellow American Christians. The book is an extraordinary undertaking and may be considered a three-volume work collapsed into one. Devout yet pragmatic, Johnston is prepared to engage the reality of the world in order develop a theology that acknowledges its own limitations. Johnston combines intellectual rigor with political activism, while remaining theologically inclusive yet authentic.

The key to Johnston's approach is what he calls "theology in context." Theological positions are not developed in a vacuum. They are developed by human beings who both shape and are shaped by the culture (intellectual, political, and spiritual) in which they are embedded. It, therefore, becomes imperative for Johnston to articulate the culture of the day – postmodernity – which he does in the first part of the book. Johnston guides us through a survey of the political and cultural forces that comprise the modern world, along with the intellectual worldview that sustains these forces. On any given page, one will encounter references to M. Weber, D. Harvey, the Frankfurt School, T. Adorno, T. Docherty, T. Lyotard, and M. Horkheimer. This form of writing, with uncountable references to names and schools of thought, along with numerous quotes, highlights the strength of Johnston's work. At the same time, it highlights its weakness because, in the dizzying breadth of references and quotes, one tends to lose track of the voice of the author.

Although Johnston does not shy away from speaking in the first person, as indicated in "a personal note" in the introduction and occasionally throughout the book, the overall tone remains passive. Johnston has done an arresting job of weaving together the ideas of others into a narrative that covers the following subjects: humanity finding itself in a postmodern world, in which we are destroying ourselves and our planet; our traditional theologies are incapable of meeting the challenges we confront; and we (Muslims and Christians) need new theologies, predicated on our unique contemporary predicament, in order to heal our relationships with each other and with the environment.

Part 1 of the book (chapters 1–5) provides what Johnston calls "background theories" that inform our lives in the modern world, in conscious or subconscious reference to which Muslims and Christians must inevitably theologize. Part 2 (chapters 6–10), provides traditional Muslim and Christian understandings of trusteeship and *khilāfah*. Four out of five of these chapters are devoted to Islam. I suspect that the purpose of the uneven

emphasis is twofold: the general readership would need more elaboration on Islam than Christianity; and Muslims need to do more theological work in order to catch-up to their Christian counterparts because, after all, postmodern thought has flourished in the (at least nominally) Christian West.

Part 3 (a single chapter 11), which is designed to bring everything together in order to outline a new path, is also the shortest. Entitled "A Common Theology of Trusteeship," the chapter surveys yet more Muslim views before arguing for – with the help of Ted Peters, Hans Küng, Glen Stassen, and others, as well as Muslim and Christian sources – "a greater integration of ethical theory and theology, which on the Muslim side will also include legal theory (455)." In the subsequent pages (as with the preceding ones), one encounters complex theoretical jargon and constructions, most of which are an attempt to unravel the mysterious relationship between self/subject, God, and the environment, while contending with text/revelation, in order to develop a workable hermeneutical model that embraces yet transcends secular critical scholarship that rules out all things transcendental from the equation. For those who are interested in theories, Johnston's book is a treasure-trove.

I set about devouring chapter 11 in search for the promised integration of ethics and theology, with the consequences for law in Islam. Although Johnston's integrated writing style makes it difficult to isolate one specific thread, he appears to offer little more than a summary of the requests made by other writers such as Mohammed Arkoun for Muslims to, "wrestle with the Qur'an in light of postmodern hermeneutics" (486). In the end, Johnston fails to convince me why, if theology is in context, past interpretations are so relevant (part 2) and why present Muslim theologies, instead of being understood in light of their own historical contexts, are dismissed as insufficient in light of an alternatively structured context (part 1). Moreover, do Muslims really need to rethink their history and warm up to a criticism of the Qur'ān in order to be caretakers of God's earth? This central thesis of Johnston's book is more of a working assumption than demonstrated conclusion, and I suggest Johnston rethink it.

Simple readings of the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions are capable of providing important guidance for Muslims to do the precise issues that concern Johnston. For example, the Qur'ān implores that life is not meaningless (23:115), cautions against living a life of excess (7:31), and more than hints at sustainability (or not upsetting "the balance," 55:7–8). One hadith speaks of the Prophet (ṢAAS) counseling a man not to waste water during ritual ablution, even when it is found in abundance as in a flowing river. Yes, it may be possible to develop more coherent and consistent the-

ologies around such verses and traditions, but Muslims are doing "theology in context" all the time in their everyday lives when they take recourse in plain-sense readings of their sacred texts. This is something that Johnston misses entirely. It appears that Johnston's alliance with so-called "progressive Muslims," mentioned explicitly in the introduction, does two things: it makes him uncritically partial to a certain approach that "traditional" Islamic religious thought is at best inadequate and at worst ill-formed: and it makes it difficult for him to appreciate the less complicated ways in which Muslims find meaning and seek to make the world a better place. I have yet to see how traditional Islamic thought inherently inhibits the kind of ecological or even pluralistic agenda that Johnston advocates; nevertheless, an attempt to overcome that tradition is the central and elusive agenda of the book. Ultimately, I question the extent to which Johnston's concern for the world is itself a product of the modern materialist culture that people of God attempt to overcome. This tension is bracketed in this book, but will certainly be felt by those who are most in need of convincing.

There is too much of value in Johnston's work to end this review on such a note. His evaluation of the destructive culture of postmodernity, his call to find meaning in the world by struggling to change it, his attempt to develop a systematic model for textual interpretation, and his vision to develop a common theological framework for Christians and Muslims are admirable. I see glimpses of a prophetic soul at work through Johnston's hand. Johnston's challenges to Islam should also not summarily be dismissed. These challenges take on the form of an all-out plea as the book nears its conclusion: "I am pleading with my Muslim brothers and sisters to reconsider the ethical implications of the early Muslim conquests…. Whatever justification was given in the past no longer holds today in a world community that is conscious more than ever of human solidarity and universal rights" (pp. 518f). Some might say that such a plea to jettison the entire foundational narrative of Islam is naïve, and that early Islamic conquests are incomparable to episodes such as the Christian crusades. Regardless of the differing points of view, Johnston's work offers a framework for dialogue, if not wholehearted agreement.

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