

A GOD WHO HATES: THE COURAGEOUS WOMAN WHO INFLAMED THE MUSLIM WORLD SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE EVILS OF ISLAM, BY WAFSA SULTAN (ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, NY: 2009)

REVIEWED BY ADAM SIMNOWITZ¹

Wafsa Sultan is the outspoken, female critic of Islam, made popular in the West by a 2006 video clip that appeared on the websites of *Middle East Media Research Institute* (MEMRI) and YouTube. Born in Syria to a Muslim family, she now lives in the US and is a writer and psychiatrist. In 2006 she was named by *Time* magazine as one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World."

In Middle Eastern fashion, Sultan uses a story to make her point. She begins with a fable to which she refers throughout the book. The moral of the fable is that people must face their self-imposed fears in order to overcome them. Islam, for her, is a collection of self-projected fears that Muslims must—just as she has—overcome by confronting them. The only hope that Muslims have in order to be free from those fears and their attendant tyrannies is to adapt Islam and its societies to the modern age. Written in autobiographical form, Sultan recounts several personal experiences highlighting her principal objections to Islam.

The author addresses such issues as the roles of men and women in Islamic societies, violence and terrorism in Islam, and the negative influence that the Koran and school textbooks—with their violent Islamic teachings—have on children's psyches. Most of these are the same topics that Sultan has touched upon in her three appearances on the Al-Jazeera satellite television station, except in more detail. The book also gives the reader greater insight into the reasoning that lies behind her arguments. In this reviewer's opinion, her two most significant beliefs are that "God" is simply the product of people's mental projections and that "nature" has provided us with moral absolutes:

¹ Adam Simnowitz is a minister with the Assemblies of God (US). He is involved in evangelism, church planting, and providing training and resources primarily for ministry to Arabic-speaking peoples. He lives with his family in the Metro Detroit area.

God, as I perceive him, arises out of our feeling of need for him, that need which we cannot satisfy in other ways. God, to me, is the thing that satisfies that need. People believe in God in an attempt to fill an intellectual or psychological void that cannot be satisfied by more realistic methods...We ourselves created God, and then we allowed him to create us. We shaped him to fit our need, and then we allowed him to shape us to fit his. We dressed him in our clothes, and then he dressed us in his. With time we got things confused, and we no longer knew which of us had created the other, whether he had created us or we had created him. (pp. 46, 48)

[Morals], by definition, do not change with the changing times. Unlike culture, they are not subject to the dictates of time and place, but remain applicable everywhere, at any time. Morals are a common code shared by all peoples of the world at all times in all places...The moral code is a set of natural laws that enjoin people to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. When nature drew them up, it equipped with a rational or instinctive ability to distinguish between right and wrong, so that they could adhere to these laws. Following this code helps the human species to survive in safety. (p. 207)

A God Who Hates provides well-deserved criticism about some of the negative aspects of Islam, gives a rare glimpse into some of the often unspoken practices of Muslim societies from an insider's perspective, and shows the admirable courage of a Muslim-born woman who dares to speak out against Islam. For the discerning reader, however, her proposed solutions to "civilize" the barbarian aspects of Islam fail to convince. Herein lies a caution for those who think that Sultan's points against Islam can be indiscriminately used. Her humanistic arguments about God and morality are not merely at odds with Islam but with all theistic belief systems, including Christianity! This echoes the same sentiments of the Muslim-born, Ali Dashti, the deceased Iranian politician and author of *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed* (George Allen & Unwin, London: 1985); or that of Ibn Warraq, the Muslim-born-turned-atheist author of *Why I Am Not A Muslim* (Prometheus Books, NY: 2003).

Considering the name that the author has made for herself, this book should be read by those who live in and/or are involved in the lives of Arabic-speaking peoples. Even for those who are adverse to polemical attacks against Islam, the cultural "window" that is opened for us by a Muslim-born woman willing to speak about societal taboos helps the

reader to better understand what it means to live as a Muslim female in the Arabic-speaking world. It is an easy read although at times it suffers from a lack of a strong command of English (for the most egregious example see: p. 174 where it should read "expounding" instead of "expatiating"). The book's value would have been greatly increased if English translations of the transcripts of her 3 Al-Jazeera dialogues, as well as her published articles from which she quotes, were included as indexes. Hopefully, this book will also be published in Arabic.

Sultan closes her book with a "dream" that Syria will one day proclaim from its minarets that a "new god [will be] born: a God who loves" (p. 244). May God open her eyes to realize the truths that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8, 16), that He created mankind in His own image—not vice-versa (Gen. 1:26-27), and that the rebirth that is needed is not the vain imagination of some vague, human "morality," but the change of heart prophesied by the prophets and made possible by Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection (Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26; Jn. 3:3,5).