

Endorsements

BINYAMIN ABRAHAMOV

Professor, Department of Arabic, Bar Ilan University

Erudite, showing impressive mastery of the various sources used, very vast, comprehensive and promising academic discussions of the conclusions drawn.

MUMTAZ AHMAD

President, International Islamic University, Islamabad

This is arguably one of the most important works in recent years on the study of anthropomorphism and transcendence in the comparative perspectives of the Bible and the Qur'an. Zulfiqar Ali Shah has written a truly scholarly, and yet accessible book that opens up new avenues of research in comparative religion and invites both scholars and religious leaders to reconsider the theological formulations that lie at the center of the line that separates the idea of absolute monotheism from that of anthropomorphism. Closely argued and lucidly written, this book will surely provide a rewarding reading experience to both scholars and lay educated readers.

IHSAN BAGBY

Associate Professor, University of Kentucky

A well-researched and thought-provoking work that masterfully surveys the thinking of theologians and philosophers in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim tradition on the issue of anthropomorphism. There is much here for all people to learn and ponder.

CHARLES E. BUTTERWORTH

Professor Emeritus, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland

Zulfiqar Ali Shah has read widely, very widely, in seeking to understand Hebrew Scriptures and their Christian counterparts. His reading leads him at times to fault both sets of Scriptures rather than their followers – a position that is surely in tension with the teaching of the Qur'an and that will intrigue the adherents of all three revealed traditions. The boldness of the exposition as well as its vast scope will challenge many a reader and provide fruitful material for all those interested in the comparative study of religion. These features, combined with Ali Shah's clear and lucid prose and the over-all appealing manner in which the book has been prepared, make it one to be examined and pondered.

CHARLES L. COHEN

Director, Lubar Institute for the Study of the Abrahamic Religions, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The growing recognition that the fullest appreciation of Jewish and Christian theological discourses requires setting them in dialogue with Islam as well as with each other is an extremely important and relatively recent development. By examining classic Jewish, Christian, and

Islamic sources concerning God's unity and transcendence, Zulfiqar Ali Shah makes a major contribution to both debates about anthropomorphic depictions of God within the Abrahamic religions, and, by virtue of his comparative method, to the larger "trialogue" itself. This work presents a worthy challenge to scholars and theologians of all three traditions.

FREDERICK MATHEWSON DENNY

Emeritus Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder

Zulfiqar Ali Shah's comprehensive, penetrating and masterly study of anthropomorphism across the landscape of Abrahamic traditions is a must-read for students and professional scholars, as well as all readers dedicated to constructively balancing the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of life.

JOHN L. ESPOSITO

University Professor and Professor of Islamic Studies, Georgetown University

[This work] is a masterful, thought-provoking, and insightful study by Zulfiqar Ali Shah of anthropomorphism in the conceptions of God in the Bible and the Qur'an that will be welcomed by scholars and students and all who are interested in the Abrahamic traditions.

KHALED ABOU EL FADL

Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Professor of Law, Chair of Islamic Studies Program, UCLA School of Law

I am in awe of Zulfiqar Shah's work! His exposition on anthropomorphism and transcendence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is not only learned, rigorous, and erudite, but also profound and inspiring. Every student of comparative religion, and every person of faith ought to read and reflect upon this book. I for one after completing this book, feel compelled to read it again. And this time with greater relish.

WILLIAM A. GRAHAM

Dean of The Faculty of Divinity, Harvard Divinity School, John Lord O'Brian Professor of Divinity, and Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies (Faculty of Arts And Sciences)

Zulfiqar Ali Shah's book is an extensive undertaking that is encyclopedic in its scope and ambitious in its aims. Although written with a view to demonstrating the relative superiority of the Qur'anic and Muslim understanding of the transcendent God, the book's lengthy treatments of corresponding biblical, Jewish, and Christian understandings seem largely fair, balanced and thorough. Scholars dealing with concepts of God in the three traditions will have to come to terms with this work in the future.

STEWART GUTHRIE

Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, Fordham University

The book as a whole is scholarly, engages a topic of great interest to scholars of religion, and is very well written. The opening chapter, 'Anthropomorphism: Background, Criticism, and Defining Categories', is an excellent compendium on the nature of anthropomorphism together with an excellent introduction (detailed in later chapters) to its manifestation in particular religions, primarily the Abrahamic ones. As a locus of these two related but distinct accomplishments, the chapter is one of the best I know.

YVONNE HADDAD

Professor of the History of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding

An important and timely contribution on a topic that has engaged participants in interfaith polemics as well as dialogue for centuries.

SHEIKH HAMZA YUSUF HANSON

Founder, Zaytuna College, CA

This is an extremely important topic and critical to the understanding of Western faiths and the current crisis of disbelief. Idolatry is the great sin of Judaism and Islam, and yet many of the greatest theologians have missed the idolatry of the very conception of God as mental image. The image of God that a mind holds is invariably idolatrous; hence this subject is an essential one for anyone today who takes God seriously, whether an atheist or theist. The atheist because the god he imagines he doesn't believe in probably doesn't exist, and the theist because the God he believes in through some mental image probably doesn't exist either.

JOHN HICK

Emeritus Professor, University of Birmingham, UK and the Claremont Graduate University, California

Anthropomorphism in our scriptures is a very important question for Christians as well as for Muslims and Jews, and we must all be grateful for this thoroughly researched and clearly written new treatment of the subject. I am glad to be able to recommend it.

SHERMAN A. JACKSON

King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture, The University of Southern California

This book takes in a wide range of sources, scholars and issues, all of which stood at the very core of theological debate in pre-modern Islam and continue, albeit in attenuated form, to animate theological thinking and discussions among Muslims today. Ali Shah pulls no punches in this text, stating his positions clearly and directing his critique with unflinching candor. This, alongside the wealth of information it provides, is almost certain to gain this book a wide readership and to spawn serious, constructive and seminal debate.

JOHN KELSAY

Distinguished Research Scholar (Religion), Florida State University, Tallahassee

I am glad to see Zulfiqar Ali Shah's comparative study of anthropomorphism and transcendence in print. The topic is an important one, and readers willing to invest the time will find the analysis challenging. One need not agree with the author's conclusions regarding the relative superiority of Islam on this matter in order to appreciate his contributions. The book is a welcome addition to conversations in comparative religious thought.

DANIEL C. MAGUIRE

Professor, Marquette University

Zulfiqar Ali Shah has written a masterly book that proves that true scholarship can foster dialogue, not by shying from differences, but by facing them squarely and clarifying them. He does this with a passion for fairness and objectivity that is exemplary.

DONALD W. MITCHELL

Professor of Philosophy, Purdue University. Editor CLARITAS, Journal of Dialogue and Culture

This book is an extremely important contribution to the comparative study of the attribution of anthropomorphic qualities and characteristics to God in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Qur'an as well as later thought in all three Abrahamic traditions. The encyclopedic scope of this book reflects the impressive breadth and depth of the author's scholarship. Deserving special attention is the author's comprehensive treatment of Islam's theological safeguarding of the unity and transcendence of God that is clarifying, engaging and challenging. Therefore, this comprehensive and sympathetic work adds a significant and welcome voice to both scholarship and interfaith dialogue.

EBRAHIM MOOSA

Professor of Religion and Islamic Studies, Department of Religion, Duke University, Durham, NC

This study on anthropomorphism and transcendence in the Bible and the Qur'an is a timely intervention in an ongoing theological conversation. It comes at a time when both understanding between Christians and Muslims holds promise while misunderstanding between these communities threatens global peace. This book is a tour de force and relevant to students of Islam and comparative religion. The author has painstakingly and intelligently excavated the archives of religious thought in order to render, to make available insights that show how each tradition is distinct as well as similar. A must read for the contemporary student of theology.

JACOB NEUSNER

Distinguished Service Professor of The History and Theology of Judaism

Senior Fellow, Institute of Advanced Theology Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

The chapter on Judaism is well researched and solid.

IRFAN A. OMAR

Associate Professor, Department of Theology, Marquette University

This book is based on meticulous research and presents a comparative view of the three monotheistic traditions focusing on "anthropomorphism" and "transcendence" in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. It is unique in its undertaking as it attempts to address the subject matter in light of contemporary debates about God while remaining attentive to the hermeneutical as well as theological perspectives that underlie those debates. The author utilizes all the available scholarly methodologies and approaches and more; the end result is a re-examination and reframing of key issues to help the modern reader navigate through them with relative ease. It is a welcome addition to the growing library of works that seek to discover paths of convergence and divergence within the Judeo-Christian-Islamic heritage.

ANDREW RIPPIN

Former Dean of Humanities, Professor of Islamic History, Specialist in the Qur'an and the History of Its Interpretation, University of Victoria, British Columbia

Clearly the result of many years of reading, reflection and writing, Scripture and God in the Judeo Christian and Islamic Traditions goes to the heart of theological reflections on the nature of God. By elucidating the differences and the similarities in the way God is conceived, Zulfiqar Ali Shah has produced a perceptive study from which readers will benefit greatly.

Extensively documented and lucidly written, the book provides a stimulating summary of theological articulations and controversies ranging from ancient times down to the present day.

ABDULLAH SAEED

The Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies, and Director of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies and Asia Institute, University of Melbourne

A major contribution to our understanding of anthropomorphic conceptions of God in the Abrahamic traditions. The author's mastery of the material, his depth of analysis and his ability to ask hard questions and skillful addressing of them are evident throughout the work. A must read for students of Islamic thought.

OMID SAFI

Professor of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina

This is a powerful study, simultaneously an analysis and a devastating critique of anthropomorphism in Abrahamic traditions. The author, a pious and observant Muslim, moves through Islam, Judaism, and Christianity in arguing for the devastating consequence of an anthropomorphized understanding of God for the contemporary world.

CAROLINE SEYMOUR-JORN

Associate Professor, Comparative Literature Program, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

This exploration of anthropomorphism in Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures is well researched and clearly expounded. This study provides a useful historical synopsis of anthropological, sociological and philosophical understandings of religion, and of the various religious concepts of transcendence and immanence of God. While I differ with some of Ali Shah's overarching conclusions, I find that this text generates a fascinating comparison of the three Abrahamic scriptural traditions with regard to conceptions and descriptions of deity. Moreover, it is clearly written and accessible, and thus it will therefore be of great interest to both students and scholars of comparative religions.

MUZAMMIL H. SIDDIQI

Chairman, Fiqh Council of North America

This is an extremely important work. The author brings out very clearly what unites Islam with its other Abrahamic traditions, namely, Judaism and Christianity and what sets it apart. Monotheism (*Tawhid*) is the hallmark of Islam and in a unique way it brings home the point that God (Allah) is neither an abstract reality nor an anthropomorphic being. "There is nothing like unto Him and He is All Hearing and All Seeing" (Qur'an 42:11) We are thankful to Ali Shah for presenting his thesis with careful research and high standard of scholarship.

THE MOST REVEREND RICHARD J. SKLBA

Vicar General/Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Rarely has the precise point of debate between Islam and Christianity been so carefully and extensively articulated. Ali Shah has studied the classic Christian theological sources of Scripture and the early Church Councils in order to sharpen his comprehension of the key areas for mutual understanding and radical disagreement between these two major world religious traditions. This is a profound work. His thesis is simply that Christianity's conviction regarding Jesus the Christ as incarnate Logos, divine Person and perfect Image of the Father renders

the God of Christianity as essentially corporeal. It remains a conclusion which in his judgment cannot be logically overcome, even though Catholic Christianity has long struggled with its tension between the final triumph of the Risen Christ, the sacramental system of God at work in the world and the apophatic approach of the holy mystics. Shah's work now awaits a similar study of equal erudition from the Christian perspective in order to bring the points of legitimate disagreement, especially in areas of Christology, to the table of fruitful theological interreligious dialogue.

JANE I. SMITH

Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs, Harvard Divinity School

A valuable contribution to the comparative study of the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Zulfiqar Ali Shah has shed important light on the influence of text on respective believers' perception of God.

TAMARA SONN

Kenan Professor of Humanities, Department of Religious Studies, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg. Editor-in-Chief, Oxford Bibliographies Online: Islamic Studies. Co-Editor-in-Chief, Religion Compass

Zulfiqar Ali Shah's study provides profound insight into Muslim perceptions of divine transcendence. While anthropomorphism is inevitable in human efforts to describe the divine, Shah maintains that the Qur'an's explicit insistence on divine incomparability protects Muslims from excesses in this regard. His conclusion that Islam's relatively greater emphasis on divine transcendence precludes as well the alienation he observes in the secular West provides a worthy challenge for Jews and Christians.

MERLIN SWARTZ

Professor Emeritus of Religion (Islamic Studies), Boston University

Despite differences with Z. A. Shah on certain matters of detail, he has performed a remarkable service to the scholarly community by his in-depth and fair-minded examination of anthropomorphic conceptions of God in the Bible and the Qur'an. I applaud his efforts and commend his impressive work to the world of scholarship for serious study and reflection.

ELLIOT R. WOLFSON

Abraham Lieberman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University

Zulfiqar Ali Shah's study is an honest assessment of one of the most perplexing shadows of monotheism as it has expressed itself in the history of the three Abrahamic faiths. The author painstakingly examines the anthropomorphic depictions of God in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scriptural traditions. He correctly notes that at the textual level the Qur'an is the most consistently and severely anti-anthropomorphic, upholding a more rigorous notion of divine transcendence. Beyond the historical value of this book as an exegetical work of comparative religion, it can be read as an important theological composition. The tension between a God who is wholly other and thus resistant to any human characterization, on one hand, and the basic psychological need on the part of human beings to portray God anthropomorphically, on the other hand, continues to be at the heart of religious faith and devotion. God may be without image, but in the absence of image it is hard to imagine how to worship God. In that respect, if monotheism is to persist as a vibrant force, there must always be an idolatrous element expressed in the anthropomorphic representation of the deity. And yet precisely

because this is so, we must always refine our beliefs so that we are not ensnared in representing the unrepresentable and imaging the imageless by the fabrication of images that, literally speaking, are false. Rather than expanding the analogical imagination in envisioning transcendence, the spiritual demand of the hour, the epochal duty, is the need to overcome it. Zulfikar Ali Shah's book has contributed significantly to this conversation.

MARK E. WORKMAN

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of North Florida

Zulfikar Ali Shah's monumental work, reflects equally the deep erudition and profound humanity of its author. It is a work that beneficially could be read by people of all faiths, who will discover in this rich text not only what makes certain faiths distinct from one another, but just as importantly, what it is that binds people of different faiths together in their common quest for absolute meaning and purpose.

JOHN VOLL

Professor of Islamic History and Associate Director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University

In a time when inter-faith relations are of great global significance, this volume provides an important analysis of shared visions and diversities of views held by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. I hope this book is widely read.