

Book Review

Duane Alexander Miller, *Two Stories of Everything: The Competing Metanarratives of Islam and Christianity*

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Miller, Duane Alexander (2017). *Two Stories of Everything: The Competing Metanarratives of Islam and Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Credo House Publishers, 143 pp. ISBN: 978-1625860965, \$16.

Most books on Islam and Christianity (excluding testimonial ones) deal with the subject in one or two ways: political or doctrinal. While these comparisons are helpful, they suffer two shortcomings. The first is that they tend to be polemical, which frequently obscures the understanding of the issues at hand. The second is that, as anyone involved in politics or the media knows, people generally don't think in terms of doctrine or ideology: they think in terms of narrative. That's why it's so important for "narratives" to be established in the public square; it is difficult to dislodge a narrative that is fixed in the minds of the public.

That simple fact makes this book all the more necessary. Miller, on the pastoral staff at the Anglican Cathedral of the Redeemer and an adjunct faculty member at the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Madrid, Spain, has left the usual approaches behind to paint a broad picture of Islam and Christianity as metanarratives, as ways of explaining the course of history from its beginnings to its end. His treatment of the subject is succinct and compelling.

Miller starts at the creation, which both religions agree is *ex nihilo*. Summarizing the story each teaches about the creation of man, he uses that to pinpoint the key difference between the two. Christianity shows man, fallen in the Garden, to be subject to death, and needs to be restored from the consequences of that event. Islam assumes created man to be prostrated before by the angels, but drifted into ignorance. From here Miller shows that both religions consider the Jews to have failed, but here the differences in anthropology become clear. The Christian narrative is that Jesus, the Israelite *par excellence*, came to fulfill the Jews' mission, break the power of sin and death, and establish the church and the kingdom. In Islam Muhammad, dealing with a people wallowing in ignorance, superseded the previous revelations with the final one, which informed people as to what Allah expected and created the *umma*, the worldwide Islamic community at once spiritual and political.

From here Miller charts the courses of the two communities. Those courses are compared with the natures of the two missions. Miller doesn't give either of them a very good grade. Much of Christianity has sold the pass to western secularism, although Miller, unlike many others, does not equate the success of Christianity with the success of the West. He also highlights the success of modern Pentecost in fulfilling the mission of the church, something that, as T.R. Glover would put it (in his 1909 *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*), comes across elsewhere as "...a great debt, never very generously acknowledged." With Islam the demographic success of Islam (especially in Europe) is countered by the lack of success of countries actually operating under *shari'ah*. Miller spends a great deal of time on the

demographic issue, documenting the demographic implosion of the West (and parts of Islam, too) in a way that both agrees and differs with the better known writings of David “Spengler” Goldman. Miller’s last topic is the eschatology of the two. He was most reluctant to deal with the subject, but sometimes one gets the impression he is having too much fun with it.

Miller’s narrative is crisp, clear, informative, sweeping, thoughtful, and to the point. He is able to include many details on the specific beliefs and practices both of Christianity and of Islam without getting bogged down in their internal variations (which are considerable.) It is hard to envision a better summary of the two faiths juxtaposed than this one. It is a valuable addition to the literature on the subject, and one hopes that it gets the dissemination that it well deserves.