



The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics (Advancing Human Rights series)

Irene Oh

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Promoting Islam as a defender of human rights is laden with difficulties. Advocates of human rights will readily point out numerous humanitarian failures carried out in the name of Islam. In *The Rights of God*, Irene Oh looks at human rights and Islam as a religious issue rather than a political or legal one and draws on three revered Islamic scholars to offer a broad range of perspectives that challenge our assumptions about the role of religion in human rights.

The theoretical shift from the conception of morality based in natural duty and law to one of rights has created tensions that hinder a fruitful exchange between human rights theorists and religious thinkers. Does the static identification of human rights with lists of specific rights, such as those found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, make sense given the cultural, historical, and religious diversity of the societies in which these rights are to be respected and implemented? In examining human rights issues of the contemporary Islamic world, Oh illustrates how the value of religious scholarship cannot be overestimated.

Oh analyzes the commentaries of Abul A'la Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, and Abdolkarim Soroush -- all prominent and often controversial Islamic thinkers -- on the topics of political participation, religious toleration, and freedom of conscience. While Maududi and Qutb represent traditional Islam, and Soroush a more reform and Western-friendly approach, all three contend that Islam is indeed capable of accommodating and advocating human rights.

Whereas disentangling politics and culture from religion is never easy, Oh shows that the attempt must be made in order to understand and overcome the historical obstacles that prevent genuine dialogue from taking place across religious and cultural boundaries.

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