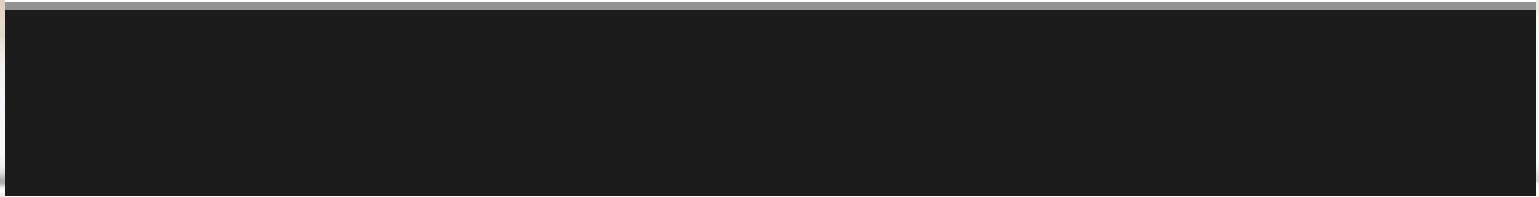


Saturday, February 16, 2019

*Book & Film*  
**GLOBE**

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# G O D

in the Qur'an

**JACK MILES**

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *God: A Biography*

NON-FICTION

## Allah Is Merciful, Christian Scholar Says

*Comparing God in the Bible, the Tanach and the Qur'an*

November 20, 2018 Michael Giltz

Scholar Jack Miles had a stroke of genius with his Pulitzer Prize winner *God: A Biography*. Putting aside religious belief, he took a literary approach and looked closely at the character of G-d as presented in the Tanach, that is, the Hebrew Bible. What is G-d like as a character? How does He (or she) change from story to story? Does he grow and evolve like characters often do? Do we understand Him better and more completely at the end or is He merely a static cardboard cutout? Does it even make sense to do this?

Miles combined erudite scholarship on religious texts with insight into the varied meaning of certain words. He also included apocryphal texts, debates over the centuries by scholars and artists and religious leaders and much more. The result was eye-opening and illuminating, a work embraced by people of faith and no faith alike. Then Miles did it again with *Christ: A Crisis In The Life Of God*, that time focusing in on the “character” of Jesus as seen in the Gospels.

With his latest book, accomplishes what he thought he would never do: approach Allah—the God of the Qur'an—in the same fashion as a literary character. In fact, Miles synthesizes all his earlier work here for the stories of

Adam and Eve and Noah and Abraham and Moses and so on appear in the texts of all three faiths. Seeing the subtle and sometimes significant ways in which the character of God differs proves genuinely fascinating and engaging, whatever your faith or lack thereof.

Spoiler alert! To be bluntly reductive, all three faiths have bloody passages that should give anyone pause. But all three faiths fundamentally offer messages of peace and love. Yet there are real differences too. The God of the Jewish and Christian faith is mercurial, dangerous and willing to bargain. The Jewish G-d is focused on the here and now, working to see the descendants of Abraham populate the world. The Christian God is focused on the next life, a reward for those who believe. The Allah of the Qur'an? Again and again, Miles reveals a God who is consistently merciful and more forgiving, always looking for any chance to bring a wayward child back into the fold. Of the three, this is the parent you'd go to first if you did something wrong.

Miles is patient and by and large focused on the text in front of him. But he's not afraid to range widely too, beginning his work with a quote from Rumi and tossing in references to everything from apocryphal texts to Shakespeare and Milton if he thinks it can breathe life into his analysis. It's a deeply respectful, engaging and rewarding book that could offend only the most fundamentalist of believers. Even then, they'd take offense only if they didn't bother to read it and merely objected to the very idea. Christian, Jew, Muslim and atheist alike would do well to embrace the open-minded curiosity on display.

**(Knopf, November 13, 2018)**

← Stradivarius

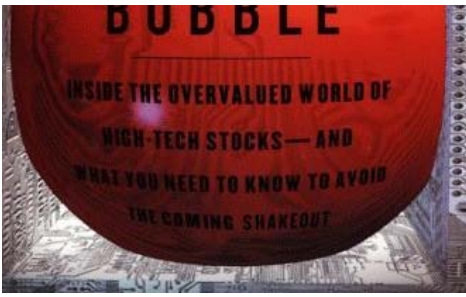
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## Michael Giltz

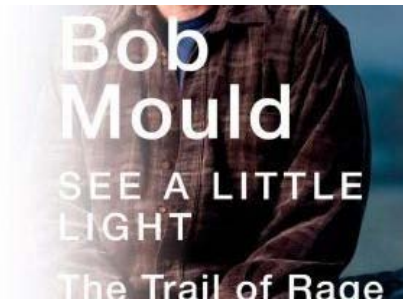
Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in New York City covering all areas of entertainment, politics, sports and more. He has written extensively for many outlets, such as New York Post, New York Daily News, New York Magazine, The Advocate, Out, Huffington Post, Premiere Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, BookFilter, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times. He's co-host of the long-running podcast Showbiz Sandbox.

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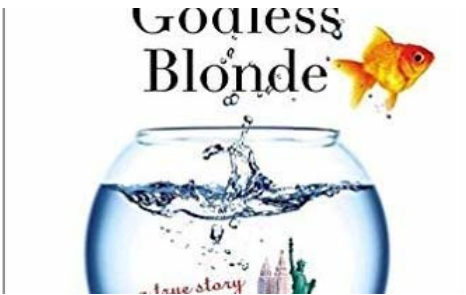
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