

Book Review

THE *DHIMMI*: Jews and Christians under Islam

Reviewed by M.K.

THE *DHIMMI*: Jews and Christians under Islam by Bat Ye'or, Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1985.

The inside flap of this revealing and informative book begins,

This study has been recognized as indispensable for a full understanding of the complexities of the Middle East conflicts. The author analyzes the historical realities of the *dhimmi* peoples, i.e., the non-Arab and non-Muslim communities subjected to Muslim domination after the conquest of their homelands. Separating fact from distortion in an extensive analysis of the history and destiny of these populations, Bat Ye'or also provides a large number of documents from different periods and regions, many of which have not been published before.

The writer has done her homework well, bringing to light, over the extended periods of Muslim history, the bitter realities that faced the *dhimmi* population. For example, as Muhammad secured his leadership in the city of Medina, he led his followers in subduing the Oasis of Khaybar, which was cultivated by a Jewish tribe. Following the siege of a month and a half, the victorious Muslim forces imposed a treaty called the *dhimma*, meaning 'those under special protection'. Only,

the cure was worse than the disease. This *dhimma* became the genesis of *jihad* and set the stage for the legal relationship between the conquering Muslims and the subjected non-Muslim population. Included in the stipulations of the treaty were requirements forcing Jews to walk bare-footed, dress differently and live in their own separate quarters; in sum, they were forced to live out an inferior status. As Islam expanded the experience of the Jews of Khaybar, it became the experience of all conquered peoples.

For some, 9/11 was their first and only encounter with *jihad*. But it should be no surprise that Muslims attacked in this fashion. There are many other examples in history.

The author details many places and events that would help the reader to understand the long-time humiliation of the *dhimmis*.

To really understand the Muslim mentality in its historical expression of reputed superiority vis-à-vis the non-Muslim, this is must reading. The book should not lead to a rejection of Muslims, but to a deeper reliance on the love of God for the outsider, to grace and to a conviction that, in the end, the battle belongs to the Lord.