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# Contemporary Turkish Approach to Christianity: The Case of the New Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam

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## Abstract

The new Turkish *Encyclopedia of Islam (DIA)*, initiated in 1988 as a corrective to Leiden's *Encyclopaedia of Islam (EI)*, primarily focuses on religious phenomena primarily related to Islam, Islamic studies and Muslim countries. *DIA* also includes entries related to other religious traditions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism etc. In this presentation, I intend to engage in the representation of the Christian tradition regarding its sacred texts, history and theology in *DIA*. As a result, I will argue that *DIA* does not have an agenda other than an *intellectual* one in general and is often quite successful in keeping a scholarly approach towards Christianity. However, *DIA* acquires a rather European-Catholic centered attitude in dealing with Christianity with respect to its history and theology. Accordingly, *DIA* entries primarily focus on Catholicism and the Catholic practices as “the envoy of Christianity.” For example, even the definition of Church indicates Catholic Church rather than other denominations. Likewise, while Church history concentrates upon Western Christianity of Europe, namely the Catholic Church and the Reformation, histories of the Orthodox and other Eastern Churches are only briefly mentioned. In the end, I will suggest that the current cultural and political predisposition is the main reason why the Catholic Church has come to represent “Christianity” for the contemporary Turkish academia with respect to its history and theology. On the other hand, modern Turkey has not had much experience with the Reformed Churches other than Protestant missionary activities particularly in the final periods of the Ottoman Empire. Alternatively, Protestantism is made up of various groups that may be quite distinct from one another whilst the Catholic Church is a single, uniform institution and hence, is easier to grasp for an “outsider.”

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