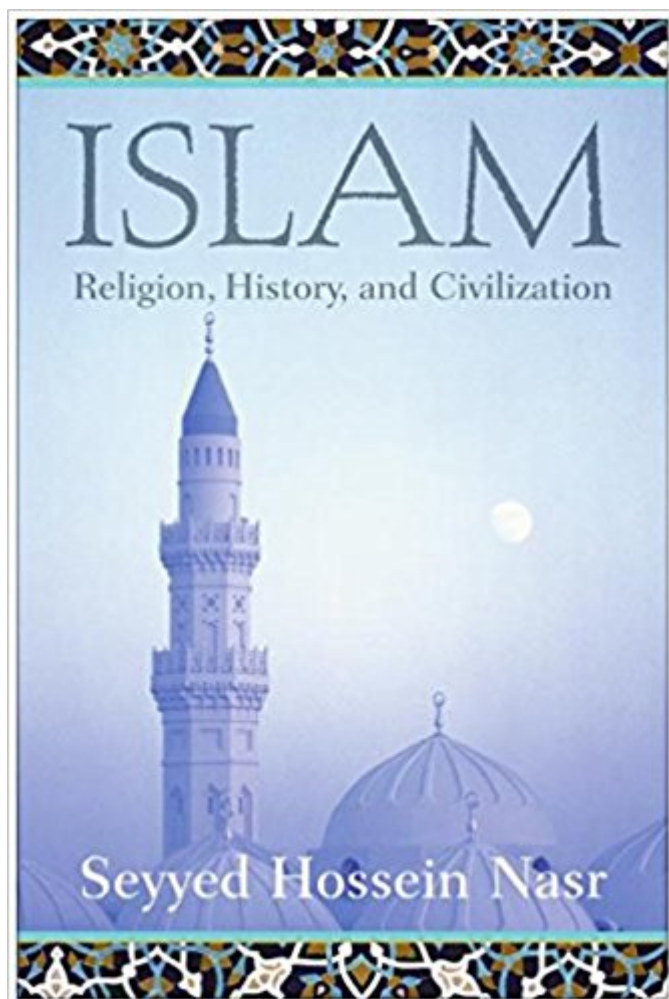


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Islam: Religion, History, And Civilization



Synopsis

The world's leading Islamicist offers a concise introduction to this rich and diverse tradition of 1.2 billion adherents. In this informative and clear introduction to the world of Islam, Seyyed Hossein Nasr explores the following topics in depth: • What Is Islam? • The Doctrines and Beliefs of Islam • Islamic Practices and Institutions • The History of Islam • Schools of Islamic Thought • Islam in the Contemporary World • Islam and Other Religions • The Spiritual and Religious Significance of Islam

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Customer Reviews

Finally, a good, up-to-date introduction to Islamic faith and history. Providing compelling analysis of contemporary Islam and its conflicts without overwhelming the reader with information, Nasr, one of the most admired Islamicists, introduces all the important movements and beliefs of Islam in broad, sweeping sections on the history of Islam, the schools of Islamic thought, and other topics. Whereas most introductions breeze past the diversity within Islam to focus on the common ground, Nasr proves himself equal to the challenge of distilling 1,400 years of faith and history by discussing and lauding Islamic diversity in some detail; for instance, he treats Sufism and Shi'ism in general and also historic and contemporary sects within those traditions. Even readers of Karen Armstrong's *Islam* (2000), by far the most popular introduction to Islam, will learn a lot here, although Nasr lacks the compelling narrative voice that makes Armstrong so popular. His is a deep, thoughtful, sympathetic introduction to the diversity and history of Islamic faith and practice. John GreenCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

“A valuable primer on a religion that, for all its monolithic appearances, is as splintered as any other.” (Kirkus Reviews) “[A] classical and timeless text....that manages to be sweeping in scope yet accessible in style.” (Publishers Weekly) “[A] deep, thoughtful, sympathetic introduction to the diversity and history of Islamic faith and practice.” (Booklist)

I purchased this book without having the slightest idea about Islam. After reading it, I can say I learned a lot, especially in the area of Islam and International Relations, pertaining to how it spread over the Muslim world, and the world as it is. This book would be a great addition to the libraries of some politicians nowadays, as they create policy affecting Islamic countries. Also, the fact that it was written by someone from the Middle-east gives it a lot more validity in my view. A must read!

Memorable . Good size to hold . Nice .Got it for \$11 in fall 2004 . I am not sure it is not registered clearly to me because I do not have enough background or the book is not super-clear but it is written better than other textbook to me . I consider it quite reasonably priced, good, and a good learning experience .

Well explained, easy to understand and very enlightened for those who want to understand this religion / civilization without entering into too deep explanations and or reflections.

Definitely recommend this book to everyone who is interested in learning more about the history of Islam, the prophet, and the Muslim community.

ok

Syyed Nasr knows his subject thoroughly and argues forcefully from a Muslim believer's point of view. However, as a Westerner, I felt more rebuked than appealed to by his somewhat condescending tone. The scholarship delivers more of an apology than an objective analysis. It is valuable to someone who seeks a Muslim's view of his own religion. [...]

Rip off. Not sure what happened here but the cover is on a book that is completely different. Take a look at the pictures I have attached.

On the positive side, this is an elegantly written book, a lucid and concise introduction to Islam for the general reader. Nasr is from Iran and educated at Harvard; he knows his Islam and gives a broad overview from the perspective of a participant and a scholar. He also avoids the typical Western biases and tendencies to demonize Islam. The book was written shortly after 9/11, to help provide a more balanced view of Islam, so the author says. Now for the less positive side. For one thing, this book is written from the perspective of religious fundamentalism. By that I mean the author is in no doubt whatever about the truth of Islam and the inerrancy of the Quran. He also clearly states twice that biological evolution must be false, since the human being was made directly by God. Nasr also rejects any of the critical historical scholarship on the Islamic tradition. Scholars have for example long held that the *Hadith*, the collection of purported oral sayings of Mohammed, is full of sayings of dubious authenticity used to support a particular belief or policy. Nasr rejects this out of hand, claiming (uncharitably and inaccurately) that this *so-called historical criticism* merely reflects a bias against Islam. He also writes that these arguments *have been negated by the discovery of recent historical evidence*. He does not however tell us what this evidence is (not even in a footnote) or say how it supports the entire Hadith tradition. This does not exactly inspire confidence in the objectivity of his methods. Moreover, the author goes to such great efforts to portray Islam in a positive light, that the book ends up being close to a whitewashing of the religion. His portrayal of Islam is nothing but peace, love, tolerance and justice -- and to be sure, it does have these aspects. Nasr achieves this effect however by leaving out the less pleasant facts about Islam and the Quran. He tells us that Islam allows only defensive wars but only a few pages before, he notes that in its early centuries Islam was spread by conquest, in what is obviously not defensive war. He refers to *Dar al-Islam* as the name for the Islamic world community, but omits to mention that its counterpart is *Dar al-Harb*, which means the *House of War*. He tells us that in Islam, the wife rules in the home, omitting to mention that the Quran declares that men are to be the rulers of their wives. He discussed the history of the spread of Islam in Africa, with no mention of the fact that the Arab slave trade enslaved at least 10 million Africans over the course of the centuries. And he says that Jerusalem is *historically part of Palestine* though it has been *occupied by Israel* since 1967 leaving out the fact that Jerusalem was the capital of Israel beginning 3000 years ago -- long before Islam even existed, until the Jews were forcibly removed. What could it possibly mean to say that it is *historically*

Palestinian? This is an extremely selective and biased use of history, and one that simply erases Jewish history so as to claim the land for the Muslims. So there you have it. The book has many virtues as a clear and broad overview of Islam, with special attention to the mystical dimension, and it is free of the usual Western bias against Islam. Yet it is hardly free from its own bias in the opposite direction, and so cannot provide a complete introduction to Islam. Islam, just like any religion, has its flaws; to appreciate a religion completely one must know its flaws as well as its virtues.

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