



Contemporary Issues in Islam (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys EUP)

By Asma Afsaruddin

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Received an honorable mention at the 2016 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize

Key 'hot-button' contemporary issues in Islam, often at the centre of public scrutiny, are the focus of this book. By placing the discussion of topics such as the Sharia, jihad, the caliphate, women's status and interfaith relations within a longer historical framework, *Contemporary Issues in Islam* reveals their multiple interpretations and contested applications over time.

Most public - and occasionally academic - discourses in the West present the Islamic tradition as unchanging and therefore unable to respond to the modern world. Such an ahistorical approach can foster the belief that Muslim-majority and Western societies are destined to clash. This book reveals instead the diversity and transformations within Islamic thought over time. Focusing on this internal diversity permits us to appreciate the scriptural and intellectual resources available within the Islamic tradition for responding to the challenges of modernity, even as this tradition interrogates and shapes modernity itself.

About the series: *The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys* is a well-established and highly regarded series of over 30 volumes introducing key areas within Islamic Studies. Each book is written by an expert in the field, offering an overview of its subject as well as presenting original thinking, making it suitable for students and academics alike.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This long after 9/11, Western public discourse about Islam appears to be getting (if possible) even less subtle and nuanced than ever before. Complex questions about context, power and history are increasingly shunned in favour of simpler and simpler questions about Islam's timeless essence. Asma Afsaruddin reminds us in this learned and timely book that only a longer historical view allows us to better understand the complexities of the public expression of Islam in modern conditions that have been both imposed on Muslims from without and developed by them from within." -- Andrew March, Yale University

"For many westerners, Islam appears peculiarly resistant to democracy, freedom, and women's rights, while simultaneously prone to violence and oppression. While numerous Muslims can critique and challenge these stereotypes through personal contacts and dialogue, few of them write books in English that are up to this task. Fortunately, we now have Asma Afsaruddin's new book, *Contemporary Issues in Islam*, which presents an openly liberal Muslim argument that Islam is (or should be) democratic, peaceful, empowering to women, and a collegial participant in interfaith dialogue." -- Scott C. Lucas, Los Angeles Review of Books

"Contemporary Issues in Islam is a mature work that reflects decades of careful research and intellectual synthesis with ample attention to both primary and secondary literature. The monograph will likely appeal not only to scholars and students in religious studies and Islamic studies, but also political science and history as well as journalists." -- Elliott Bazzano, newbooksnetwork.com

"Reading no more than the contents section of this book, one gets a pretty good idea of its considerable overall importance, dealing as it is with "The Shoals of Modernity"; Political Islam; Islam Gender Hermeneutics; War and Peace Making in Muslim Tradition; American Muslims; and interfaith Relations... Asma Afsaruddin's extraordinary analytical skills show everywhere." -- Murad Wilfried Hoffmann, The Muslim World Book Review

"Our reviewer was impressed specifically with the originality of the methodology used, suggesting that the author 'reveals herself as a considerable and formidable force in her knowledge of the historical development of the interpretation of Islam's primary sacred sources, especially the Qur'an'. The author takes the approach of tracking every single verse and showing how understanding of the verse has changed throughout history, thus enabling the author to counter prevailing understandings of Islam as 'anti-modern'. The reviewer concludes that the book is 'beautifully constructed, highly knowledgeable of primary sources' and 'challenging to popular stereotypes'. -- British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize

About the Author

Asma Afsaruddin is Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is the author and/or editor of seven books, including *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (2013) and *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (2008). She was named a Carnegie Scholar in 2005.

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