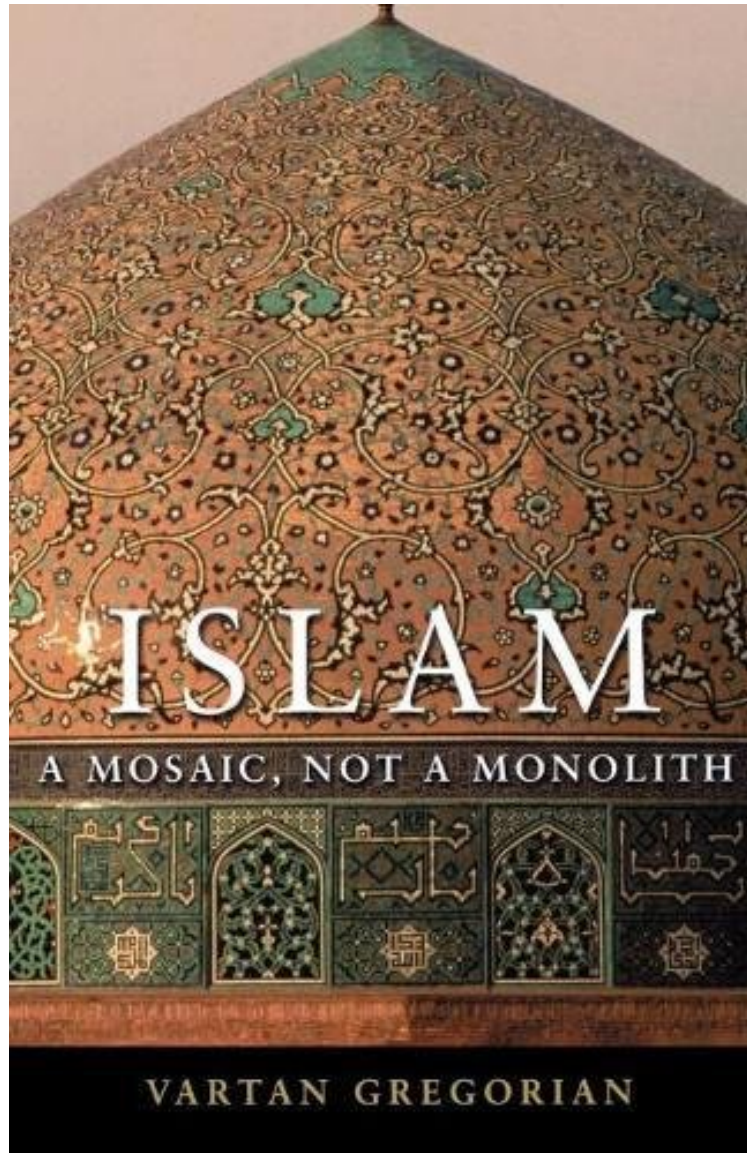


[Free read ebook] Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith

Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith

Vartan Gregorian

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Vartan Gregorian : Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Useful and reliable, but very introductory By R. M. Peterson I bought and read this book as part of my self-education program on Islam. It turned out to be not nearly as detailed as I had expected, especially in its discussion of the tenets of Islam and their application(s) in the modern world. The principal

point of the book is to refute the popular perception of Islam as a monolith bent on clashing with and destroying Christianity and/or the West. Still, as far as it goes it is a very useful introduction, both reliable and objective, and, as others have noted, superior to Karen Armstrong and far superior to Robert Spencer. (When I was in junior high school in the early '60s, the perceived threat to the U.S. was communism, and wanting to learn more about that pressing issue I bought a book by J. Edgar Hoover on communism. Needless to say, it wasn't very helpful, although it took me several years to come to that realization. Reading a book by Robert Spencer to learn about Islam would not be much different.)

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Read. By Eytayo
Level headed analysis, excellent read for people who know a little about Islam, and those who know a lot about it. its an easy read, so it will sustain your interest.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Welcome voice of reason
By H. Schneider
The book was addressed to an American audience; its mission was to provide a brief survey of the Muslim world, its religion and ideologies, with the objective to destroy the understanding that Islam is a monolith and that America was at war with 'Islam', rather than with some specific Muslims. Given the small space that it had, the book does a remarkable job. I am sure an updated reprint will take care of the newish fad of 'Islamofascism'. I must admit that I need the reminder of reason myself once in a while. Off and on I get carried away myself by popular rages. I fully endorsed Fallaci's rage after 9/11. I still will not throw her book away into the trashcan. Things like the Rushdie Fatwah, the Bahmyan destruction, the various bombs, in first place the Bali ones, make me build up very strong negative emotions. One needs to direct these into the proper channels. One needs to read Gregorian and others once in a while. My own education about Islam rested on the two pillars of a German writer of trivial adventure stories, which I read as a 12 y old, and then the remarkable Maulana Maudoodi's writings translated into English, when I was a twen. Then I put the subject away, done and settled. I looked at Islam like at Christianity, both somewhat irrational and surprisingly large sects following obscure faiths. Only the masses following them made them less than obscure. Rage and neglect don't work, only knowledge does. So ok, let's get back to acquiring some. About Gregorian: the book is not perfect. I wish he had given a bit more space to the religion and its history. The first chapter is good for 35 pages, but couldn't he have done 50? After explaining to us that Islam is not just about Arabs, Gregorian spends chapter 2, called Modernists and Traditionalists, almost entirely on Arabs. There is also some PC attitude: on page 49 he says that 'the record shows that Islam is not adverse to science or technology'. However he proceeds by telling us that no science and technology happens, or very little. Other than arms. Similarly, he mentions that the basic education sector is a possible trouble zone, with teaching being left to unqualified ideologues on a large scale, but he does not elaborate on this 'hot potato'. Out of a sense of tact? In chapter 3, Challenges of the 20th, he calls the Iran-Iraq war a war of Arab states. That must have been slipped in by an editor, I can't believe Gregorian could have made that mistake himself. Further down in that chapter, he states that Z.A. Bhutto was Pakistan's President from 71 to 73. That is not wrong, but so misleading that it looks like a mistake. ZAB was Prime Minister until 77, when he was deposed, jailed, and later executed for (alleged) murder. My point is: if the book makes these trivial mistakes where I catch them, how sure am I of the stuff which I have to take as stated for lack of own prior knowledge? I will not hold it against the book that it mentions a major European problem only in passing: the integration issue. That is outside its scope.

After World War II, leading western powers focused their attention on fighting the "Red Menace," Communism. Today, as terrorist activity is increasingly linked to militant Islamism, some politicians and scholars fear a "Green Menace," a Pan-Islamic totalitarian movement fueled by monolithic religious ideology. Such fears have no foundation in history, according to Vartan Gregorian. In this succinct, powerful survey of Islam, Gregorian focuses on Muslim diversity and division, portraying the faith and its people as a mosaic, not a monolith. The book begins with an accessible overview of Islam's tenets, institutions, evolution, and historical role. Gregorian traces its origins and fundamental principles, from Muhammad's call to faith nearly 1,400 years ago to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, and the subsequent abolition of the Caliphate. He focuses particular attention on the intense struggle between modernists and traditionalists, interaction between religion and nationalism, and key developments that have caused bitter divisions among Muslim nations and states: the partitions of Palestine, the break up and Islamization of Pakistan, the 1978 revolution in Iran, and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Today Islamist views range across the entire spectra of religious and political thought, and Islamism is anything but a unified movement. While religious extremists have attempted to form a confederacy of like-minded radicals in many countries, much of the Muslim population lives in relatively modern, secular states. Gregorian urges Westerners to distinguish between activist Islamist parties, which promotesometimes violentlyIslam as an ideology in a theocratic state, and Islamic parties, whose traditional members want their secular political systems to co-exist with the moral principles of their religion. Gregorian emphasizes the importance of religion in today's world and urges states, societies, and intellectuals to intervene in order to prevent Islam--as well as other religions--from becoming the political tool of various parties and states. He recommends continuing dialogues between modernist and traditionalist Muslims, as well as among the educated, secular elite and their clerical counterparts. He also urges U.S.-led efforts to engage and better understand the diversity of Muslim communities in the United States and the world. Lamenting widespread U.S. ignorance of the world's fastest-growing religion, Gregorian calls on "enlightened citizens" to promote international understanding,

tolerance, and peace.

From Publishers Weekly While many in the Western media have depicted Islam with broad strokes to the point of caricature, Gregorian, the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, reminds readers that it is unfair to generalize so wantonly about a religion that encompasses more than a billion people. This book is brief, but its scope is ambitious: Gregorian surveys 1,400 years of Islamic history, including such key modern events as the 1978 Iranian revolution and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Naturally, some nuance is lost with this kind of dizzying breadth, but Gregorian competently presses home the point that Islam is a tremendously diverse religion that has changed considerably throughout its history. A final chapter explores the need for knowledge and understanding about Islam, which some have labeled "the green menace" that has replaced "the red menace" of the Cold War. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. "In this slim volume, Gregorian offers a survey of the history, theology and challenges in modern, democratic societies. Gregorian, the president the the Carnegie Corp. of New York and former president of Brown University, warns against stereotyping and inflammatory characterizations of the religion and advocates understanding as a path to tolerance." The Houston Chronicle, 7/1/2003 "Gregorian is a national treasure, one of the most interesting intellects and personalities in the United States.... [He] writes with delightful clarity, an effective sense of irony, and a rich knowledge of the subject. He presents it as complex--unapologetically--but then delivers details with brisk simplicity." Michael Pakenham, The Baltimore Sun, 6/15/2003 "An exceptionally readable, panoramic view of the Islamic world." S. P. Blackburn, Hartford Seminary, Choice: Current s for Academic Libraries, 4/1/2004 "While many in the Western media have depicted Islam with broad strokes to the point of caricature, Gregorian reminds readers that it is unfair to generalize so wantonly about a religion that encompasses more than a billion people. This book is brief, but its scope is ambitious.... Gregorian competently presses home the point that Islam is a tremendously diverse religion that has changed considerably throughout its history." Publishers Weekly, 5/15/2003 "For, the scholar - he was trained as a historian at Stanford - has also written Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith. The book, aimed at non-scholarly readers across America, pleads for a positive understanding of that religion that believes in the philosophy of reconciliation." India Abroad, 10/1/2003 "the perfect primer" Karen Elliott House, Wall Street Journal, 11/11/2006 About the Author Vartan Gregorian is president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Born in Tabriz, Iran of Armenian parents, he received his elementary education in Iran, secondary education in Lebanon, and higher education in the United States. He has served as president of Brown University, president of the New York Public Library, and founding dean and provost of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. President Clinton awarded him the National Humanities Medal in 1998.