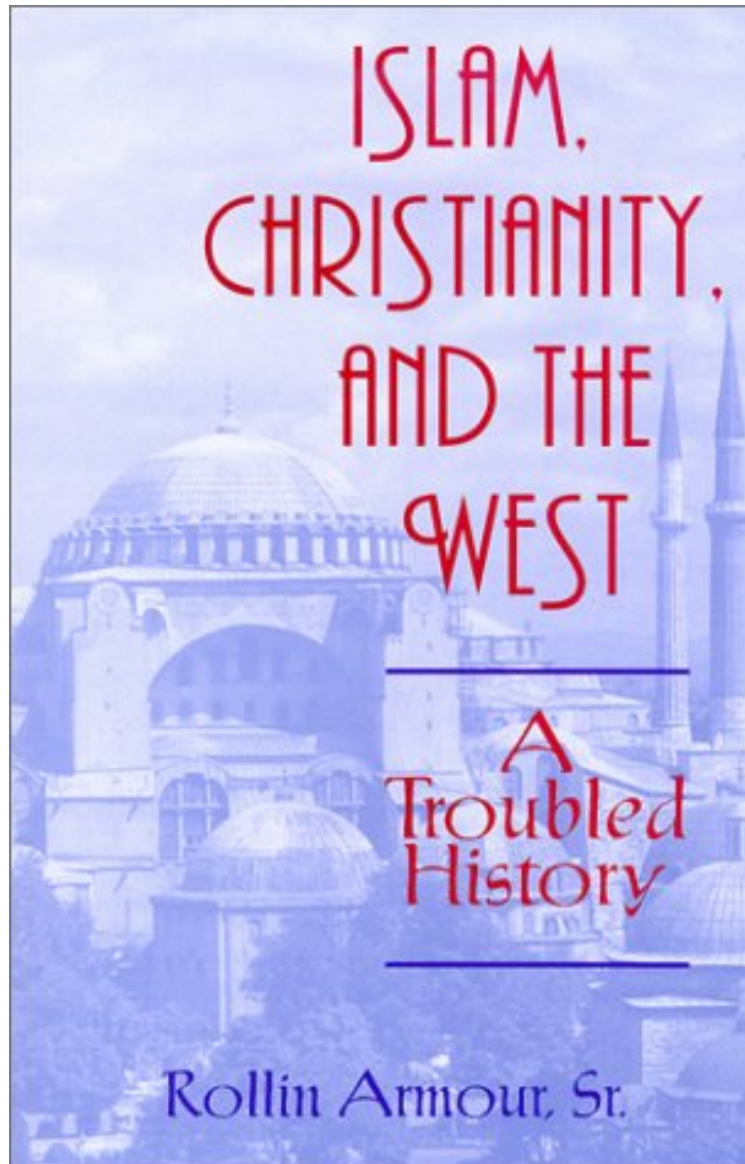


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Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History (Faith Meets Faith Series)

Rollin S. Armour

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Rollin S. Armour : Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History (Faith Meets Faith Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History (Faith Meets Faith Series):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Hardly an objective look at Christian--Muslim Relations.By Luke

S. This book was assigned reading for my undergraduate course on the history of Christian/Muslim relations, upon which I was required to write a review. During my time with this book I began to seriously question Armour's shallow and selective use of primary source materials that accompany an abundant supply of poorly supported conclusions. Armour demonstrates limited competency and ability to arrive at conclusions based on his analysis of primary sources. He admits in his preface that "...the real research has been done by others, scholars who have read the original sources in the original languages" (xiv). At best, Armour manages to amalgamate more formidable sources such as Armstrong and Daniel in an attempt to justify his fallacious conclusions. It is easy to see past Armour's tu quoque logic that actually works to distract the reader from being able to assess particular events or sources on their own. There are countless examples of this but I will choose a particularly entertaining one, Armour writes: "The Islamic pattern of relative toleration contrasts rather sharply with Christian Europe, which moved more and more to persecution and expulsion as the middle Ages passed. Exceptions to the Islamic system that allowed Jews and Christians to live undisturbed occurred from time to time, but usually as a result of mob violence or the aberrant behaviour of a local ruler. Over the centuries it was generally better to be a Christian or a Jew in an Islamic society than a Jew or Muslim in a Christian society" (29). This excerpt is taken from a chapter on "The Spread of Islam" only 4 pages in. I find it amusing that Armour somehow thinks that it is acceptable to arrive at the above conclusion from a single Nestorian Christian's opinion on the laxity of the early Caliphate. Armour jumps huge chronological hurdles while failing to mention even a single primary source that would potentially conflict with this ridiculous conclusion. He cannot be taken seriously by an honest student of history. How can we as historians, compare the 8th and 9th centuries with all of Medieval history and possibly draw a conclusion like Armour's? It would be nice if Armour actually put forward a shred of evidence to support such magnificent conclusions. Read it for yourself. Armour seems determined to present Muslim/Christian relations in a very one-sided manner. He blatantly skims over and outright omits events or sources that would implicate Muslim parties or cast a negative perception on Islamic society, praxis and theology. This is simply not a historically objective or in-depth look at Muslim/Christian relations. My Islamic studies professor forewarned the class of Armour's slanted perspective and the overwhelming consensus among the students was similar. This book is an excellent demonstration of biased, revisionist history at work. I would not recommend Armour's work as an effective introductory text to Christian/Muslim relations, however if you don't mind sacrificing your historical fidelity and enjoy a book scantily clad in both primary sources and well balanced dialogue, this book is for you. 10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History By Peter B McCall The author provides a wonderful compendium of a difficult topic in a concise, logical, and very understandable manner. Ideal for someone who wants to find the "first" book to read on the subject matter so they can see the whole picture and then hone in on the individual issues; of which there are so many. I thought I knew the history. But like the author points out so many times in the book, the "knowledge" most parties have on the struggle between Islam and Christianity is generally based on mis-information and complete falsehoods resulting from the historical separation of the two social systems. I now feel better prepared to listen and deal with all the news and information that we face in the continually complex Middle East. I no longer feel dependent on the historically biased slant one gets from the social and religious environments that we live with in the Western world. This book will help a person interpret and better understand the information that presents itself from the evolving Middle East events. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Unbalanced and Shallow By AMTMA Armour sets out to write on Islam, Christianity and Judaism without defining them. The heart of Christian belief is that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures". Armour thus confuses Christianity with what many other writers call Christendom. These are two different things, the former spiritual the latter temporal - Christ said that his "kingdom is not of this world". Armour correctly notes that Islam combines the political and religious spheres. The feeble conclusion that they "will put their differences behind them" evades the fact that he has not identified what those differences are, for the "differences" are philosophical or theological and not simply about territory. This is a poor substitute for honest analysis of the respective truth claims of these three religions as for example done by Montgomery in his Tractatus or History, Law and Christianity. Armour relies too heavily upon modern authors such as Armstrong, Billing and Daniel and comes up with little new. The book may be of interest to anyone who still believes that European history is untarnished.

Armour uses the best of contemporary research to show how events such as the Crusades and the Reconquista of Spain have indelibly shaped the mindset of the West toward Islam and vice versa. He reveals how the modern Western political and economic system - marked by the globalization of capitalism, technology, and science - has been perceived by the Islamic world as a Godless secular assault on all that is holy. He ends with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the events of 11 September 2001 as the latest concrete manifestations of the tragic encounter between the three "Peoples of the Book."