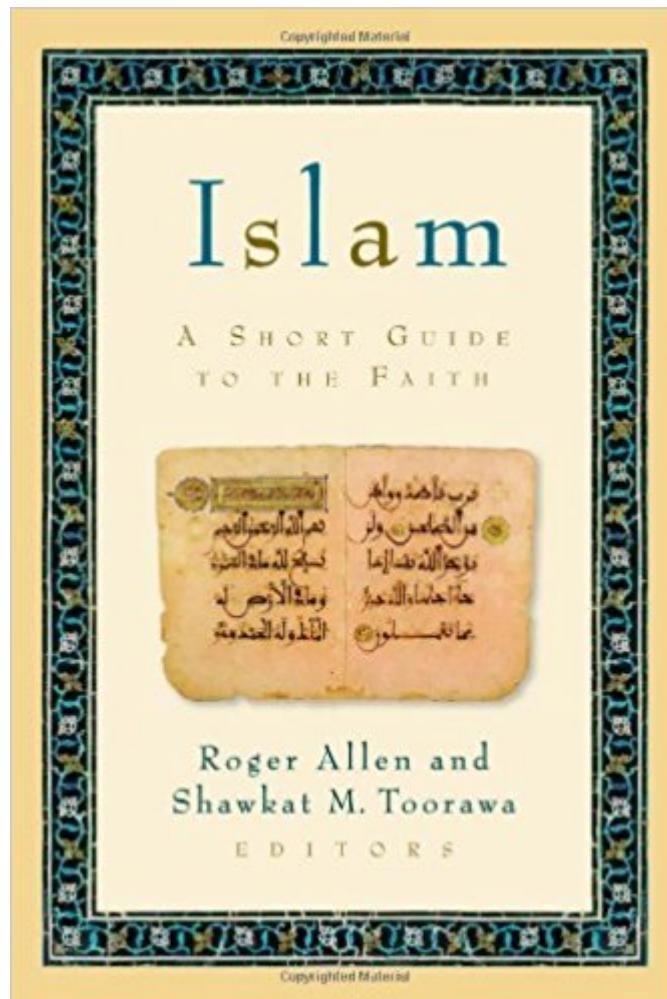


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# Islam: A Short Guide To The Faith



## Synopsis

In this straightforward and authoritative collection of fifteen essays -- each by a different, specialized expert in the field -- readers will encounter all the major elements of Islam, including its history, its beliefs, its practices, and its interactions, notably with Christianity, Judaism, and the modern world. Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith will inform and enlighten all who wish to better understand this increasingly influential world religion.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Chase Robinson • City University of New York "Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith achieves the near-impossible: it is at once pithy and comprehensive, authoritative and accessible, provocative and reliable. Introductions to Islam over the last decade have generally increased in quantity and decreased in quality. This short book, which familiarizes the newcomer with the essential history, doctrines, and institutions of the religious tradition, is a salutary exception to that pattern."

Muhammad Abdel Haleem • University of London "This attractive, reader-friendly volume has the advantage of being written not by one author but by a group of scholars, each a well-established authority. It thus stands out as something special compared to many other 'introductions' to Islam. . . Will certainly be very welcome to teachers, students, and general readers."

Ingrid Mattson • Hartford Seminary "This factual, jargon-free, and to-the-point book tells general readers just what they need to know about Islam."Reviews in Religion and Theology "[This book] is faithfully and carefully put together to guide non-Muslims to a better understanding of Islam. . . . It would be a good addition to the library of any non-Muslim

religious leaders. It also offers useful and interesting reading for anyone who might wish to know more about Islam."Critique "A helpful resource. . . . Can serve to sharpen our comprehension of specific details" and in that light the glossary is worth the price of the book."Booklist "This book is thoroughly accessible to a general reader and a much-needed and welcome addition to any collection."

Roger Allen is professor of Arabic and comparative literature and chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania. His books include *The Arabic Novel* and *The Arabic Literary Heritage*; he also serves as editor for the journal *Middle Eastern Literatures*. Visit the University of Pennsylvania website for more information about Roger Allen. Shawkat M. Toorawa is Associate Professor of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies at Cornell University

Prior to reading this book I had read the Qur'an (translated by Abdel Haleem, 2011, Oxford). I found this translation clear and easy to understand. Then I realized that Islam is more than the Qur'an. That lead me to this book which I finished this morning. Here's my evaluation. This is a book of 15 short essays written by 16 scholars. That means it exhibits both the pros and cons of scholarship. PROS Lots of facts. Not just names, dates and places but structures too. Example: The four different traditions of Sunni law. Neutral tone. Essays neither promote nor criticize Islam. CON The neutral tone often leads to bland, inoffensive writing. Fortunately the essays are short, typically about 10 pages. Often there is a lack of citation in the Qur'an. Writers should provide evidence for their statements. Topics are avoided. Political correctness? Example: The section on the growth of the Islamic empire shortly after Muhammad's death in 632 is entitled "Flowering" (page 11). It should be entitled military conquest. These conquests, most of which took place within 15 years of Muhammad's death, are contrary to instructions in the Qur'an (fighting is only allowed for self-defence, Q2.190, Q16.126, Q22.39. Muhammad's role is only to act as messenger, Q3.20, Q4.80 & 84, Q5.92 & 99, Q16.125. These citations are from the Abdel Haleem translation I mentioned above). Why, contrary to the Qur'an, military conquest took place is ignored by this book. Muhammad lead four battles to defend Medina from Meccan attacks (Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Khaybar). It was mainly under the rule of the second successor, Umar, that military conquest "Flowered". In addition, while the book does mention the startling fact that 3 of 4 successors to Muhammad were assassinated (pages 12-13) and mentions a civil war during Uthman's rule (page 69) there is no connection made to "Muhammad made no provision for successors" (page 97).

Could the lack of provision of a successor have lead to chaos, a power struggle among ambitious men, and a seachange to military conquest? The book does not say. This leads to my next Con. Lack of a single author's voice to "connect the dots". How did Islam change from a defensive state under Muhammad to an offensive state of military conquest under his immediate successors? I make no criticism of Islam as a similar comment could be made about the history of the Christian west. I'd just like to understand the whole without some critical topics missing. VERDICT If you can tolerate the academic writing style and understand that some topics are avoided this is very useful book. 5 stars. If you want the unified view of a single writer and want to avoid the challenge of scholarly writing this is not the book for you. 0 stars.

Not exactly what I had in mind. Academic, but somehow lacking something....a more human perspective?

I read this book because, like most Americans, I know little about Islam, but, like few Americans, I feel I should learn more. However, I found this book difficult for someone unfamiliar with and not especially interested in the more minute details of the religion, despite it appearing to be an introduction. It does an excellent job of condensing an extraordinary amount of information into about 150 pages, but didn't give enough context for me to retain much of that information. Unfamiliar Arabic terms were to be expected, but sometimes there would be five or six in the same short paragraph, which made for clunky, choppy reading. If the authors had spent more time explaining each concept before moving to the next one, it would have made this a smoother introductory guide, in my opinion, and I am a very advanced reader.

The Authenticity of the Quran has never been questioned, and revered by hundreds of Non Muslims, from Mahatma Gandhi to Bernard Shaw. There is no reproduction of the Holy Prophet, (OWBP), and yet every detail of his physical attributes have been meticulously described. I am happy to give it away to those who did not know that the Prophet changed the world from worshiping Idols to the belief in one Supreme Being, without intermediaries, without discrimination between Race, Color, Creed or Wealth.

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