



Islam in Context: Past, Present, and Future

By Peter G. Riddell, Peter Cotterell

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In recent months, much attention has been paid to Islam and the greater Muslim world. Some analysis has been openly hostile, while even more has been overly simplistic. *Islam in Context* goes behind the recent crisis to discuss the history of Islam, describe its basic structure and beliefs, explore the current division between Muslim moderates and extremists, and suggest a way forward.

Authors Peter G. Riddell and Peter Cotterell draw from sources such as the Qur'an, early Christian chronicles of the Crusades, and contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim writings. They move beyond the stereotypes of Muhammad—both idealized and negative—and argue against the myth that relatively recent events in the Middle East are the only cause for the clash between Islam and the West.

Riddell and Cotterell ask the non-Muslim world to attempt to understand Islam from the perspective of Muslims and to acknowledge past mistakes. At the same time, they challenge the Muslim world by suggesting that Islam stands today at a vital crossroads and only Muslims can forge the way forward.

Islam in Context will appeal to all those who are interested in an alternative to the easily packaged descriptions of the relationship between Islam and the West.

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Editorial Review

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Written primarily for Christians, this overview of historical and contemporary conflicts of the Islamic world first briefly introduces Islam and Muhammad, and then portrays Islam as a movement containing coexisting strands of violence and pacifism from the very start of its existence as a political entity. The book's second section examines relations between Christianity and Islam, from Muhammad's early interactions with Christians to Western colonization of the Islamic world and contemporary strife between Christian and Muslim communities. The third section argues that Islam faces an important moment in its history, during which large swaths of the Islamic world must reject extremism and rigidly literal readings of the Qur'an or face dire consequences. The viewpoint throughout is, of course, decidedly pro-Christian, but the information Riddell and Cotterell relay is accurate and well organized. Christians interested in the history of Islam and its relationship to Christianity would do well to start here, though they should also read an equally well-argued history of Islam from a Muslim's perspective, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Islam* [BKL Ja 1 & 15 03].

John Green

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About the Author

Peter Riddell (Ph.D., Australian National University) is Director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations at London Bible College. He is the author or editor of several books, including *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought, and Society*.

Peter Cotterell (Ph.D., London University) is Associate Senior lecturer at the Center for Islamic Studies. He has lectured for 19 years at London Bible College, where he also served as the principal.

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