

Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs

Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner
Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002. 256 pages.

Many books have been written on Muslims and Islam since 9/11. A majority of them have tried to show Islam's negative side in an attempt to prove that Islam teaches violence and that Muslims love to engage in jihad to become martyrs. Such contentions are generally made by anti-Muslim interest groups, certain religious organizations, and politicians under the influence of such extremists. These people stir up anti-Muslim sentiments to influence public opinion and bend government policies in favor of such groups. This book is a similar attempt to gain popularity for the authors and arouse anti-Muslim sentiment at a time that is trying for most Americans. The authors, Ergun Caner and Emir Caner, are brothers. The senior author is professor of theology at Criswell College, Dallas, Texas, and the second author teaches at the Baptist Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

The book contains a preface and introduction, 16 chapters on various aspects of Islam, and four appendices, including an index to the Qur'an and a glossary of Arabic terms. The preface is a story of the clash of cultures between the authors' Muslim (Turkish) father and Swedish mother, which resulted in a divorce when the Caner brothers were still very young. The father had visitation rights and would take Ergun and Emir to the Islamic Center in Columbus, Ohio, on weekends "to do the prayers, celebrate Ramadhan and read the Qur'an." This was the children's only exposure to Islam, until Ergun was 15 and visited a church after his best friend invited him to do so. Ergun found the people at church warm and "didn't mock when he stumbled through the hymns." He joined the gospel ministry in 1982 and has since been preaching (against Islam) in order "to bring salvation for 1.2 billion Muslims." Thus the title of the book is itself deceiving, as it conveys that a practicing Muslim became a Christian, when, in fact, the authors actually became Christians in their early teens and had almost no education in Islam.

It is appalling that the introductory chapter opens with a threat from "Shaikh" Osama bin Laden to the Americans and blessings for those who gave their lives to kill the 9/11 victims. The authors portray bin Laden as a typical Muslim who is out to get all people who refuse to accept Islam,

and selectively inject verses from the Qur'an rationalizing jihad. They admit that their portrayal of Islam is not academic, but rather an attempt to explain the motives of Islam and Muslims. Chapter 1 starts with a phrase, God loves you ... in Christianity, but "in the Qur'an no such statement is to be found." The authors refuse to acknowledge that the Qur'an is replete with the loving nature of Allah (God) and that its chapters start with the verse "In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful."

Chapter 2 labels Prophet Muhammad as a "militant messenger" who was skeptical of his revelations (whether they were divine or demonic), shed people's blood to gain political power, and practiced polygamy. With regards to polygamy, the authors admit that such a practice was common in the context of history even among Christians, but states that the Bible does not advocate it. The Qur'an, on the other hand, explicitly allows men to take more than one wife. Like many other critics, the authors fail to mention the following verse (4:3), which places so many conditions upon polygamy that it is next to impossible, and thus extremely limited, in the Muslim world. Obviously, the status of Christ is elevated as "he gave his life on the cross," but Muhammad is blamed for taking other people's lives. It is interesting that the authors point out the importance of hadith in the life of Muslims, but mostly quote weak ahadith or ones without reference.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of Bernard Lewis' writings on Islam's rise and fall and concludes that "the West is engaged in a battle that is political in process but religious in essence." This statement reinforces the beliefs of many Muslims that America is fighting Islam in the garb of "terrorism." The following two chapters talk of the Qur'an and ahadith in more detail, and try to show the inconsistencies and contradictions within the sources. That the Qur'an was revealed over a period of 23 years and that certain verses were later abrogated, depending upon the conditions of society, is well-known to Muslims. Also, numerous ahadith that lack proper sources are not regarded as authentic in Islamic tradition. A chapter on Allah's names speaks of His qualities (and terror), while the authors struggle to prove that Allah and God cannot be the same. They lament John Walker's conversion to Islam, the fact that America considers all religions equal, and that its elites hide the "true" (violent) nature of Islam. The remaining chapters address the "inferior" status of women in Islam, Islamic sects, jihad, and how Muslims view Christianity and Jesus.

Undoubtedly, the book covers many aspects of Islam and Muslims, but the authors' deliberate attempts to distort Islam can be sensed even by

a novice reader. The culprits to such lies are the priests who wrote glowing reviews and a foreword, as well as the publisher, all of whom have teamed up to foster anti-Islamic sentiment in America. The book is even anti-Christian and anti-American, for it denigrates a major world religion, including its Prophet, a practice that is despised in Christianity and that goes against the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. It attempts to divide a society that is in need of mutual understanding and support at a time of great hurt.

The book is obviously revengeful and comes out of frustration as Islam continues to grow in the West. Such works actually serve Islam better, as readers get turned off by the lies and seek to know Islam from the real sources. There must be an effort to compile a list of such works and organizations behind such anti-Muslim hate campaigns and to unveil their real agenda. For now, the authors must at least change their Muslim names to stop deceiving the public that they were ever Muslims in the past. The Caner brothers suffered from the childhood trauma of parental divorce and turned against Islam, the religion of their Muslim father, a man of principle who did not compromise his religion for his family.

Amber Haque

Department of Psychology

International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions
About the World's Fastest-Growing Faith**

Robert Spencer

San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002. 214 pages.

Rehashing historical animosities, polemics, and stereotypes, Spencer's work is an admirable contribution to the clash of civilizations underway. Basically a collection of diatribes, invective, and ranting against Islam consolidated by a heavy dose of disinformation, *Islam Unveiled* reflects a discursive piece of work consistent with the Imperium's policies and interests. With a pure secular discourse having proven ineffective in confronting Islam, the same discourse has been repackaged in a religious garb, pouring old wine into an even older bottle in order to fight fire with fire. The subtitle of the book, *Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest-Growing Faith*, expresses the author's main worries and underscores that similar publications are not mere religio-polemical enterprises to be