

Introducing the Qur'an for Today's Reader

by John Kaltner

Fortress, Minneapolis, 2011. 266 pp. \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-8006-9666-5.

JOHN KALTNER, PROFESSOR of Muslim-Christian Relations at Rhodes College, focuses upon issues today's readers should grasp for intelligent participation in conversations with Muslims and others about the Qur'an: our natural environment, the status of non-Muslims, violence, and the afterlife, among others. He has designed this book for use by teachers and students in classroom and book-group settings, supporting them with an index, glossary of terms, selections for further reading, questions for discussion at the end of each chapter, and additional resources posted on the book's website (www.fortresspress.com/kaltner).

Kaltner keeps an eye on content in the Qur'an that is familiar to students of the Bible, especially where similar topics are treated differently by the Bible and the Qur'an. He prepares Bible readers to cope with the unique way the Qur'an organizes and presents its material. He stresses throughout the book the importance of recognizing the textual, chronological, social, and cultural context of a passage when interpreting the Qur'an.

Kaltner's hermeneutic is similar to that of the reformist and feminist Muslims he discusses. For example, in a discussion of the "virgins" promised to men in paradise (e.g., 56:22), he first sets out the "more inclusive texts that speak of those in heaven having spouses, regardless of their gender" (p. 241) as a frame for interpreting the "virgins passages." Then, after highlighting the verb "to marry," which describes heavenly unions, he carefully exegetes these passages, noting the contexts in which they occur. Finally,

he states unequivocally, "there are no references to martyrs and others who die for Islam being rewarded with virgins in paradise" (p. 242).

The on-line resources and other features noted above make this excellent book very useful for classes in colleges and universities, book groups, and adult and late-adolescent religious instruction. The book effectively rejects stereotypical and unfair critiques of the Qur'an as well as erroneous interpretations by Muslims themselves. Kaltner leads readers by precept and example to a way of interpretation that is fair to the Qur'an's own reality and helpful for focusing conversations between Muslims and non-Muslims on issues that really matter.

A. H. MATHIAS ZAHNISER
GREENVILLE COLLEGE
GREENVILLE, ILLINOIS

Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World

by Brian D. McLaren

Jericho Books, New York, 2012. 276 pp. \$24.99. ISBN 978-1-4555-1396-3.

HOW IS ONE TO BE A Christian in a world with many religions? How do central doctrines of the church help and hinder relationships with people of other faiths? Can liturgy cultivate respect for non-Christian neighbors? How are we to perceive and practice Christian mission in a multi-faith world? Addressing a Christian, and mostly evangelical, audience, Brian McLaren's volume offers practical, pastoral, and constructive answers to these questions.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first, McLaren addresses the apparent conflict between the Christian call to love and Christians' hostility towards other religions. He