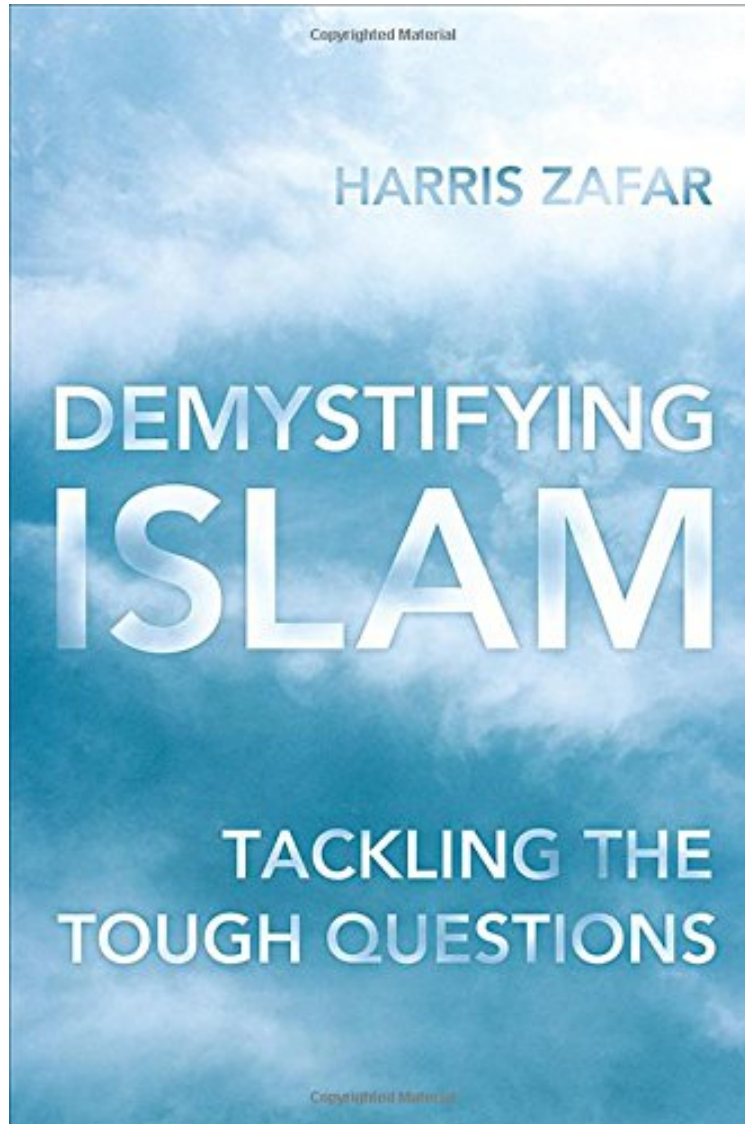


Demystifying Islam: Tackling the Tough Questions

Harris Zafar

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Harris Zafar : Demystifying Islam: Tackling the Tough Questions before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Demystifying Islam: Tackling the Tough Questions:

25 of 27 people found the following review helpful. Islam Remains MystifyingBy William CarpenterI have had the great pleasure of hearing Harris Zafar speak at interfaith gatherings and other such occasions. He is articulate, informed, and interesting. Unfortunately, these qualities are not apparent in his book, Demystifying Islam: Tackling the Tough Questions. He has chapters that explain the basics about Islam and tackle a series of difficult issues: Jihad, Shariah, Religious Freedom, Free Speech, Women's Rights, Jesus Christ, and the various sects of Islam. Over and over

again one learns that Muslims and Muslim-majority countries have misinterpreted Islam and are acting against its dictates. I was left more than a bit mystified as to why so many Muslim political entities fail to follow the teachings of Islam. The author has to engage in sometimes extremely convoluted linguistic and logical work in order to justify Islamic positions in these areas. This was particularly true in two chapters. In the chapter on women's rights for example, we learn that men and women are equal before God, but men must protect the honor of women (who should wear head coverings). Men are also responsible for earning a living while women have an equal responsibility for rearing children. In the chapter on Jesus Christ, we learn that Jesus survived his crucifixion and lived quietly the remainder of his life teaching the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel. There are other difficult claims as well, including that the text of the Quran has never been altered. Zafar notes that Muslims accept and revere the prophets of other religions - such as Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, etc. I am unaware that Socrates, the Buddha, or Confucius thought that they were founding religions. I was also surprised to read that it was the Jews that tried to execute Jesus on the cross. This libel was rejected by the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council and I was sorry to see it repeated in this book. The final chapter of the book, on the sects of Islam, was by far the best. Zafar does an excellent job giving the historical and theological background on the split between the Sunnis, Shias, and other sects, as well as a good update on more recent sects such as the Sufis and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the author's own group. This sect believes that the messiah returned in the late 1800's in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India. He advocated "Jihad by the pen," i.e. defending the faith through writing, wisdom, and intellect. Zafar is following just that path with this book. Ahmad also re-established the Khilafat (Caliphate). This is particularly interesting at a time (I wrote this review in July, 2014) when ISIS in Iraq and Syria has just declared a Caliphate. An issue of *The Economist* this month talks about "The tragedy of the Arabs" who once had a dynamic civilization and led the world in learning, tolerance, and trade - a thousand years ago. This book sheds a little light on how that tradition was lost but offers no hope for recovering it. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This book is a fantastic one for knowing about Islam with truth and basics ...By Sheraz Ahmed This book is a fantastic one for knowing about Islam with truth and basics without false interpretations and references. I recommend to all who wants to learn about Islam this book is a gem. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By literary10A wonderfully clear book. Zafar was able to address the common misconceptions and critics allegations about Islam.

Despite heightened interest in the study of the Muslim faith, for many people Islam remains shrouded in mystery and confusion. What really is Shariah law? How is a Muslim to understand Jihad? Does Islam oppose Western values such as free speech or freedom of religion? What place do women have according to Islam? Understanding that this confusion has as much to do with the behavior and words of Muslims as it does with allegations made by anti-Islam activists, *Demystifying Islam* offers refreshingly bold answers to provocative questions about Islam today. Author Harris Zafar lecturer, writer, teacher and national spokesperson for Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA is forthright about issues where Muslims disagree, and he digs into history through vast research and scholarship to track the origins of differing beliefs. From the burqa to the role of Jesus in Islam, *Demystifying Islam* is an essential resource and concise guide to understanding the fastest growing religion in the world.

In the wake of 9/11, Zafar, a blogger, speaker, and teacher, found himself invited to explain Islam to non-Muslim audiences in a climate of fear and misinformation at the age of twenty-two. Now a national spokesperson for Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, he addresses common misunderstandings about Islamic faith and culture. Following an introduction to the basics of Islam, Harris covers, chapter by chapter, the major areas of confusion for Westerners, from the realities of shariah law to the relationship between Islam and Christianity. Harris does not remain entirely neutral; he is not afraid to criticize distorted perceptions of Islam from Western pundits and politicians advocating xenophobic agendas, nor Middle Eastern and other political groups and extremist factions for using similar distortions to justify violations of human rights. This book is less of a spiritual introduction than it is a cultural one, and an excellent starting point for people navigating interfaith relationships or working to improve understanding and representation in organizations and public discussion. (Publishers Weekly) An intelligent, daring, and much-needed contribution to the debate about Islam in the modern world. Harris Zafar has written a remarkable book. (Reza Aslan, author of *Zealot* and *No god but God*) This book is an important contribution to an enlightened and public conversation about Islam in our time. Harris Zafar has written a very informative and accessible interpretation of Islam for English-speaking readers. I recommend this book to those who are interested in learning about Islam and Muslim communities today. (Ali Mirsepassi, New York University) Harris Zafar's book, *Demystifying Islam*, is a clear and important statement by a recognized Muslim leader on his faith's engagement of a diversity of issues and concerns of great consequence in the twenty-first century. Orthodox Christians will certainly disagree with Mr. Zafar's perspectives on such matters as the identity and work of Jesus Christ and his mission. However, we should heartily welcome this courageous and irenic Muslim voice, as Zafar champions civic virtue that promotes the well-being of all peoples. *Demystifying Islam* is a significant contribution to the global conversation on peace, freedom, and justice in a world mystified and threatened by geopolitical and religious tensions. (Paul Louis Metzger, Multnomah University) Harris

Zafar is an insightful and often inspiring writer who leaves readers feeling richer for having spent time with his work. (Omar Sacirbey, Correspondent for the Religion News Service) Harris Zafar's book is both enlightening and informative. *Demystifying Islam* aims to deflate misconceptions of Islam, breaking them down to their essence and offering honest reasoning and historical context behind their existence. A great resource for practicing Muslims as well as those looking to gain a better understanding of one of the world's major religions. (Andr Carson, Congressman)

About the Author Harris Zafar is a public speaker, writer, and national spokesperson for Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA--among the oldest Muslim organizations in America--where he is also the national director of youth outreach. He speaks nationwide about Islam, interfaith dialogue, and pluralism, and he teaches courses about Islam's doctrines and history at two colleges. Zafar has published articles in *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *New York Daily News*, *BeliefNet*, *Oregonian*, and more, and he blogs for *The Huffington Post*. He regularly appears on national media, such as the *O'Reilly Factor*, to provide commentary on current issues from an Islamic perspective. Follow him on Twitter at @Harris_Zafar.