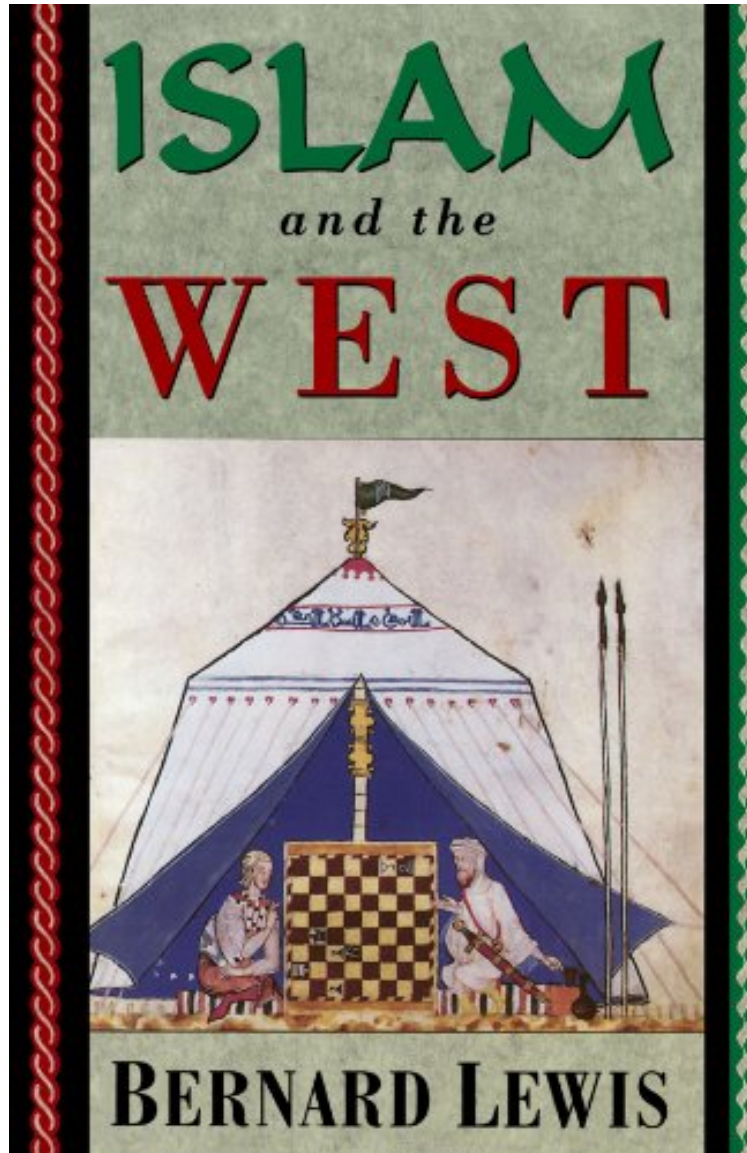


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Islam and the West

Bernard Lewis

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Bernard Lewis : Islam and the West before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islam and the West:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Too much obscure material By Polanco The first chapter of the book discusses the geopolitical relations between Islam and Europe, including an interesting treatment of Islamic law. However, the middle sections of the book are dedicated to very technical criticisms of other authors, some of whom wrote centuries ago, for their ignorance of arabic vocabulary, as well as reviews of earlier European books, some of

which date back centuries, about Islam. The author is free with his criticisms of other writers whose knowledge of Arabic and Turkish clearly does not match his own. There is a chapter attacking the theory of "Orientalism" as propounded by the late Edward Said. Lewis and Said were free with their criticism of each other, and Lewis gives a full treatment of his side of the argument. All of this material is fairly remote from what I expected from the title and summary, especially from a well-known expert on Middle Eastern history and culture. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Should I recommend a book concerning to Western-Muslim relations? By Emin Byk Having seen citations from this book again and again, I ordered it. This is a milestone in terms of containing very important details about Ottoman history. Should I recommend a book concerning to Western-Muslim relations, I would definitely say Islam and the West. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Anil C. Great source to understand the interactions between Islam and the Western world.

Hailed in *The New York Times Book Review* as "the doyen of Middle Eastern studies," Bernard Lewis has been for half a century one of the West's foremost scholars of Islamic history and culture, the author of over two dozen books, most notably *The Arabs in History*, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, *The Political Language of Islam*, and *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*. Eminent French historian Robert Mantran has written of Lewis's work: "How could one resist being attracted to the books of an author who opens for you the doors of an unknown or misunderstood universe, who leads you within to its innermost domains: religion, ways of thinking, conceptions of power, culture--an author who upsets notions too often fixed, fallacious, or partisan." In *Islam and the West*, Bernard Lewis brings together in one volume eleven essays that indeed open doors to the innermost domains of Islam. Lewis ranges far and wide in these essays. He includes long pieces, such as his capsule history of the interaction--in war and peace, in commerce and culture--between Europe and its Islamic neighbors, and shorter ones, such as his deft study of the Arabic word *watan* and what its linguistic history reveals about the introduction of the idea of patriotism from the West. Lewis offers a revealing look at Edward Gibbon's portrait of Muhammad in *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (unlike previous writers, Gibbon saw the rise of Islam not as something separate and isolated, nor as a regrettable aberration from the onward march of the church, but simply as a part of human history); he offers a devastating critique of Edward Said's controversial book, *Orientalism*; and he gives an account of the impediments to translating from classic Arabic to other languages (the old dictionaries, for one, are packed with scribal errors, misreadings, false analogies, and etymological deductions that pay little attention to the evolution of the language). And he concludes with an astute commentary on the Islamic world today, examining revivalism, fundamentalism, the role of the Shi'a, and the larger question of religious co-existence between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. A matchless guide to the background of Middle East conflicts today, *Islam and the West* presents the seasoned reflections of an eminent authority on one of the most intriguing and little understood regions in the world.

From *Library Journal* In this collection of essays, Lewis (Professor Emeritus of Near East Studies, Princeton) is concerned with relations between the Islamic and European civilizations. Lewis, well known for his myriad works on the Middle East (most recently, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, Oxford, 1990), focuses on perceptions and reactions to intercultural contact and the problems that preclude understanding. In 11 essays, he explores questions of patriotism, economics, and linguistics. In part, this collection is a skillful rebuttal to the attack by Edward Said (*Orientalism*, LJ 11/1/78) and others against Western scholarship, motives, and interpretations of the Middle East, which challenged savants such as Lewis himself. A work of sound scholarship; highly recommended.- Paula I. Nielson, Loyola Marymount Univ. Lib., Los Angeles Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Kirkus* Eleven superb essays on the culture clash between the Islamic nations of the Middle East and the more secularized West; from distinguished Orientalist Lewis (*Near Eastern Studies/Princeton; Semites and Anti-Semites*, 1986, etc.). Scholarly but not pedantic, writing without fear or favor, Lewis makes an ideal guide through the political, religious, and cultural thickets of Islam. As the range of subjects demonstrates, his reach is as wide as his touch is sure. His tone is objective throughout, except for two pieces: a searing critique of Edward Said and other critics of Orientalism for their "science-fiction history and...lexical Humpty-Dumptyism"; and an impassioned defense of non-Western studies against adversaries who employ contradictory rhetoric to mask a hidden agenda ("If we don't study and teach other cultures we are called arrogant and ethnocentric and if we do we are accused of spoliation and exploitation"). Lewis begins with a capsule history that outlines the odd affinities and tensions between Europe and the Islamic nations--a struggle in which each side has called the other "infidel" and has swapped commercial and military supremacy. He also considers medieval Islamic debates on worship in lands where the teachings of Mohammed did not hold sway--and the implications of this today amid the Arab diaspora to Europe and America. Lewis is equally comfortable with more specialized topics, including Edward Gibbon's influence on the Western image of Mohammed; the difficulties of translating from Arabic; and the Ottoman threat to Europe until the Turkish defeat at Vienna in 1683. The author concludes with four meditations on the contemporary Islamic response to Western might, discussing resurgent Islamic fundamentalism as a unifying factor in Mideast politics; the split between the Shi'a and Sunni sects; the passage of the concept of "country" into Islamic lands; and why few Islamic countries have traditions of religious coexistence and

secularism. A learned, forceful analysis that treats Islam with respect, not condescension. (Photos) -- Copyright 1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. "Islam and the West is a well-written and erudite book, affording many important insights on the history of cultural interaction between Europe and the Middle East."--Diplomatic History "Demonstrate[s] breadth and depth of scholarship and an ability to communicate with both specialists and nonspecialists."--Journal of Ecumenical Studies "A valuable collection of essays and topics for introductory graduate seminars on Middle East politics."--Sandra Halperin, University of Pittsburgh "Lewis's scholarship is prodigious...He avoids dogmatic positions himself and sees dogma as something to be analyzed. It is this sense of nuance, of historical setting, of honesty to texts, that informs the essays in Islam and the West."--The New York of Books "Lewis speaks with authority, in prose marked by lucidity, elegance, wit and force...A challenging book that deserves a wide audience...Lewis writes with great force and clarity."--New York Newsday "Brilliant...weaves a seamless web between past and present. In collection of remarkable learning and range Mr. Lewis takes us, as he alone among today's historians and interpreters of Islam can, from the early encouters of Christendom and Islam to today's Islamic dilemmas. To read Mr. Lewis on Europe's obsession with the Ottoman Turks, the raging battle between secularism and fundamentalism in the Muslim world, or the difficulty of studying other peoples' histories is to be taken through a treacherous terrain by the coolest and most reassuring of guides. You are in the hands of the Islamic world's foremost living historian. Of that world's ordeal he writes with the greatest care and authority and no small measure of sympathy."--Fouad Ajami, The Wall Street Journal "Mr. Lewis contrasts the Christian and Islamic civilizations and explains their interaction in war and peace, commerce and culture...Islam and the West is a primer for greater understanding of the countries engaged in cold and hot wars that, directly or indirectly, are rooted in religion."--The New York Times "A leading Islamicist, though sometimes a controversial one, Lewis here gathers some 11 essays that seek to 'open doors to the innermost domains of Islam.' There are long pieces on Gibbon, Edward Said's Orientalism, the trickiness of translating Arabic, and on the 'shi'a in Islamic history,' among other subjects. As the title suggests, the book's main thrust is one the encounter--all too frequently the clash--between Europe and the Middle East."--Washington Post "Provocative"--Chicago Tribune "Even when one disagrees with Lewis, he is well worth reading for the experience and erudition of his writing, and the refreshing lucidity of his style."--San Francisco Chronicle "A scholar who through industry and intellectual brilliance has achieved pre-eminence in his field."--Washington Times "Eleven superb essays on the culture clash between the Islamic nations of the Middle East and the more secularized West...Scholarly but not pedantic, writing without fear or favor, Lewis makes an ideal guide through the political, religious, and cultural thickets of Islam...A learned, forceful analysis that treats Islam with respect, not condescension."--Kirkus s "Erudite...powerful and revealing. Everywhere in this book Mr. Lewis's commanding achievement is evident--his great learning, his deep knowledge of Arabic philology, his masterly acquaintance with the history and culture of the Middle East, and his intimate familiarity with the relations of East and West."--The New York Times Book "A very learned and thoughtful work. Lewis' comparative and synthetic approaches to the issues discussed are highly informative and worthy of careful reading by both specialists in the field(s) and lay readers."--Andrej Kreutz, Arab Studies Quarterly