Clarion Review

Political Science

Sacred freedom
Haneef Oliver
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Four Stars (out of Five)

In this slim well-written volume Oliver presents an Islamist view of the world that should be read widely by people of all faiths for a greater understanding of Islam. Oliver has used passages from the *Qur'aan* to illustrate points of view that are poorly if at all understood by Westerners; his careful work has resulted in an excellent book eminently readable and clear.

While Western readers will be uncomfortable with many of his assertions and even some Muslims may disagree with some of what he says he has done an exceptional job of highlighting the flawed logic in use in religious arguments today on all sides of the issue of faith. However the *Qur'aan* allows for no faith but Islam (as the New Testament allows for no faith but Christianity). This will make nonbelievers as uncomfortable as they would be in reading a similarly oriented text in the Christian faith or indeed any other faith since many religions claim to be the exclusive "One True Path to God." The doctrine of exclusivity is convincing only to a faith's own members.

That said Oliver cites the *Qur'aan* first to explain how Islamist believers regard the world and then to support his criticism of Western nations that seek to conquer civilizations they deem inferior. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's assertion in particular that "Islaamic civilization 'is stuck where it was 1400 years ago'" is ridiculous since the Islamic world was long revered for its advances in astronomy mathematics and medicine. Oliver also criticizes democracy in particular citing "a Western thinker" as stating that "Democracy is 'a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance.'" Many of his rebukes are all too true — a civilization that "spreads" freedom by conquering other peoples and enforcing its own ways upon them is hardly superior — yet it could as easily be said that the faults of the West are the result of Westerners not following the dictates of their own faiths. After all one who loves his brother as himself will not make war upon his brother.

Muslims are not exempt from Oliver's examination as he declares through supporting verses of the *Qur'aan* that "Muslims will only find relief from the calamities they are facing when they return to their religion in the manner that their Creator has ordained for them."

Ironically many "liberalist" thinkers in the West will agree with much of what Oliver says about such issues as freedom charity and the need to treat one's fellow human beings with respect — as well as his criticisms of those who go to war to enforce their own principles and way of life upon others. Those who will argue most strongly against him are those whose religious beliefs allow for no deviation from their own "one true path" and they will fail to see the wisdom contained within these pages.