

“A” Is for Apologist

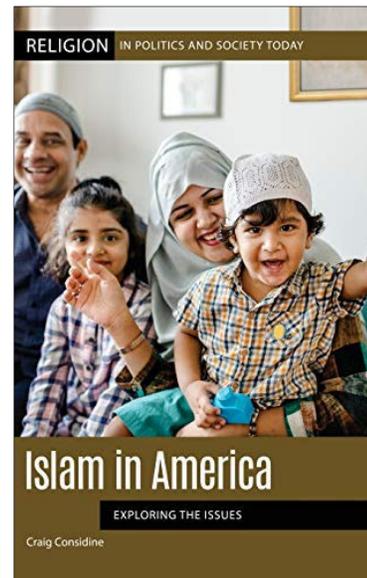
by A.J. Caschetta

Islam in America: Exploring the Issues. By Craig Considine. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Greenwood Imprints, LLC, 2019. 219 pp. \$40.

Rice University’s Considine is one of academia’s most oleaginous apologists for Islamism. Aspiring to build bridges between Muslims and allegedly intolerant non-Muslims (mostly Christian) who have been lied to by a cabal of anti-Muslim “Islamophobes,” his writing aims to convince non-Muslims that Muhammad was a broad-minded, unprejudiced, peaceful man, wise beyond his time, and that Islam is a pluralistic, feminist, open-minded religion.

Considine’s book is aimed at the impressionable high-school and college student and written as an A to Z alphabetical encyclopedia of forty-eight topics from “Abrahamic Tradition” to “Zakat.” It is a polemic, arguing that Islam and violence are unrelated and that the world is full of bigoted “Islamophobes” who constantly link the two. The prophet Muhammad and the greatness of Islam are celebrated on virtually every page while any criticism is belittled.

After a preening “Preface” and an “Overview” filled with strawman arguments, comes a selective timeline of “Islam in America.” It begins on August 3, 1492, with a dubious claim: “Historians suggest that Muslims were likely on board the ships as part of Columbus’s first exploration.” It ends on November 6, 2018, the



day “Democrat politicians Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib became the first two Muslim women elected to the House of Representatives.” There are many omissions in between, such as February 26, 1993, when Ramzi Yousef of the nascent al-Qaeda organization first struck the World Trade Center.

Each entry contains something objectionable, evasive, misleading, or outright wrong. A few stand out, illustrating the book’s tenor.

“D” is for “dhimmi,” portrayed as a generous and tolerant form of protection extended by Muhammad to Christians and Jews to guarantee them “freedom of religion, freedom of worship in sacred places, freedom of speech, and freedom to be judged by their own

religious laws.” Considine falsely argues that “anti-Islam critics and polemicists” have misrepresented the condition of dhimmitude. Mark Durie’s excellent book *The Third Choice* explains precisely

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how dhimmitude forced non-Muslim “people of the book” (i.e., Jews and Christians) to give up their freedoms in exchange for their lives.¹ They were forced to wear clothes identifying them as dhimmis, to live in ghettos, and to endure ritual humiliation among other things.

“Jizya” is the tax dhimmis were forced to pay their Muslim overlords; Considine calls it “misunderstood and used by anti-Muslim polemicists to further demonize Muslims in the United States.” Rather than a confiscatory tax imposed on Christians and Jews to humiliate them and keep them in their place, the practice is described as “a distinct response to aggression by a powerful Christian figure of the Byzantine Empire.”

“J” is also for “jihad,” which Considine tells us emphatically “does not mean ‘holy war.’ In fact, the Islamic tradition does not have any notion of ‘holy war’ in the literal sense.” Here, he follows the longstanding practice of some Islamists (and many apologists) who pretend that there is only a so-called “greater” or psychological, inner jihad, and when pushed, will acknowledge only a defensive component to the so-called “lesser” or physical jihad. War is only permitted “for defensive purposes ... only to prevent the enemies of Muslims from impinging on their homeland.” Considine makes no mention of the massive expansion by conquest of Islam in Muhammad’s lifetime and for centuries after.

Under “M” comes “media coverage and

the entertainment industry” and “misrepresentations of Muslims in Western media coverage.” The entertainment industry depicts Muslims as “the main ‘terrorist threats’ to the United

States,” but Considine laments that “white supremacists” are ignored. Hollywood is a monolithic, anti-Muslim propaganda machine, where movies such as *Argo* and *American Sniper* and television shows *Homeland* and *24* are the norm. But the Hollywood Considine finds so anti-Islamic changed the villains in Tom Clancy’s novel *The Sum of All Fears* from Islamists to white supremacist neo-Nazis. And most outrageous is Considine’s offhand reference to Osama bin Laden as “the alleged perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks,” as if his guilt remains in question.

Under “U” for “U.S. founding fathers,” Considine manipulates Jefferson, claiming he was the first president to hold an iftar dinner in 1805, starting a tradition that Considine complains “ended in 2017 during the Trump administration.” Oddly, Considine does not mention Jefferson using the navy to defeat the Muslim Barbary pirates. Moreover, claiming that Jefferson hosted an iftar is misleading, as all he did was delay dinner to accommodate Sidi Soliman Mellimelli, an envoy from Tunis who was observing the Ramadan fast. Considine also fails to note that no iftar dinner took place until 1996 when first-lady Hillary Clinton hosted one. He falsely implies that Trump’s cancellation of the iftar in 2017 abrogated a 212-year tradition, rather than ending a practice of just the three previous presidents.

Under “W” comes “women’s rights,” which gives Considine scope to deploy all his rhetorical tricks: evasion (“Islam never condones humiliation, beatings, mutilation, or

¹ Melbourne: Deror Books, 2010.

outright murder”); dubious assertion (“the emancipation of women was a project close to the Prophet Muhammad’s heart”); and the ever-handly straw man (“Countless numbers of U.S. Muslim women see themselves as strong, independent, and empowered women who are transcending the extremist narratives perpetuated by ignorance and anti-Muslim bigotry”).

Islam in America is disingenuous and bereft of substance. Its argument is unconvincing to anyone with any knowledge of

Islamic history and texts. But that is exactly Considine’s audience—students with no background knowledge of Islam, an open mind, and a tendency to believe what is offered to them.

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