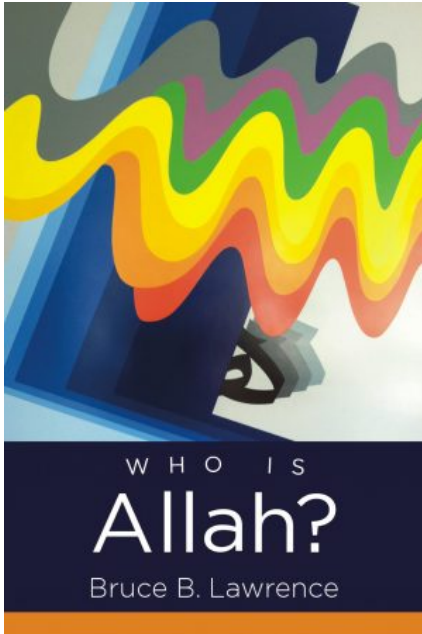


Who is Allah?



Author: Bruce B. Lawrence

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About the Book

This vivid introduction to the heart of Islam offers a unique approach to understanding Allah, the central focus of Muslim religious expression. Drawing on history, culture, theology, politics, and the media, Bruce B. Lawrence identifies key religious practices by which Allah is revered and remembered, illuminating how the very name of Allah is interwoven into the everyday experience of millions of Muslims.

For Muslims, as for adherents of other religions, intentions as well as practices are paramount in one's religious life. Lawrence elucidates how public utterances, together with private pursuits, reflect the emotive, sensory, and intellectual aspirations of the devout. Ranging from the practice of the tongue (speaking) to practices in cyberspace (online religious activities), Lawrence explores how Allah is invoked, defined, remembered, and also debated. While the practice of the heart demonstrates how Allah is remembered in Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, the practice of the mind examines how theologians and philosophers have defined Allah in numerous contexts, often with conflicting aims. The practice of the ear marks the contemporary period, in which Lawrence locates and then assesses competing calls for jihad, or religious struggle, within the cacophony of an immensely diverse umma, the worldwide Muslim community.

About the Author

Bruce B. Lawrence, a leading scholar of Islam, is the author or editor of many books, including *The Qur'an: A Biography* and *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*. He is Nancy and Jeffrey Marcus Professor of the Humanities and Professor of Islamic Studies Emeritus

at Duke University.

Review

“Bravely expresses and explores a thesis that is hard to grasp, reflective of the paradoxically known and unknown nature of the deity.”

–Publishers Weekly

“The anticipation evoked by the title ‘Who Is Allah?’ is divinely gratified by this innovative and engaging approach to hinting at the unknowable. In his masterfully concise book, Bruce B. Lawrence navigates vast epochs of history and traverses a multitude of cultures, weaving threads of traditions and disciplines into a guide for a brief yet intimate encounter with the infinity of the Divine. This labor of love is an eloquent and erudite inquiry that is compassionate yet candid and keenly probing. The mystery of this fast and vast quest for Allah is that it manages to say so much with superb clarity and wit.”

–Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, author of *What Is an American Muslim?*

“This very original and rewarding book on Islam’s core tenet—the belief in the unity and unicity of God—emphasizes the holistic nature of Islam as a lived religion. Lawrence addresses the intellectual and experiential dimensions of faith and brings together the insider and outsider dimensions of the study of religions. One of the key authorities in both Islamic and religious studies, he draws on his rich experience as a veteran teacher to offer different angles on the Muslim experience of the transcendent in the past and present.”

–Carool Kersten, author of *Cosmopolitans and Heretics*

“Lawrence dares to imagine the unimaginable: refusing the clichés, he locates plurality inside Muslims’ own engagement with Allah, identifies Islam as the ‘conduit for Allah,’ and expands our lens to identify how conversations about Allah are relevant not only for Muslims, but indeed for the whole of humanity. An absolute masterpiece, and a must read for everyone who wishes to understand Islam, Muslims, and Allah.”

–Omid Safi, author of *Memories of Muhammad*

“Uniquely focused on the theme of Allah, which serves as a vehicle to examine the many dimensions of Muslim understandings of and engagements with Allah, Lawrence demonstrates a respectful recognition of Islamic perspectives while maintaining a secular approach that does not reduce the question to simple social, psychological, economic, or political causes. A fresh take for both general readers and students of Islam and Muslim cultures learning in secular or Islamic classrooms.”

–Peter Gottschalk, author of *Religion, Science, and Empire*

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