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Review of 'Islam in the West: Key Issues in Multiculturalism' by Max Farrar, Simon Robinson, Yasmin Valli and Paul Wetherly (eds)

Bonino, Stefano

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Thank you for offering to review:

Max Farrar, Simon Robinson, Yasmin Valli and Paul Wetherly (2012) *Islam in the West: Key Issues in Multiculturalism.* **Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 272pp, £60.00 (h/b), ISBN 978 0 230 23874 9**

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Thank you for agreeing to write for *Political Studies Review* and enriching the development of information in political science.

With *Islam in the West: Key Issues in Multiculturalism*, Farrar, Robinson, Valli and Wetherly aim to bring together a range of sociological, philosophical, theological and ethical topics that can help us understand the relationship between Islam and Western societies, with particular reference to Europe and the UK. Its main focus lies in the exploration of various aspects of Islamic belief, principles and doctrine, Muslim daily experiences and Western culture and institutions. This is done in order to unearth the ways in which European societies have responded to and, in certain instances, accommodated Islam and Muslim communities within their own social, cultural and political structures. More broadly, this collection of essays aims to set itself as a carrier of academic and social dialogue that can pave the way for more constructive engagement between Islam and Western societies.

In order to do so, the authors draw from a very wide range of topics that deal with intra-national relations between Muslims and European (mostly, British) host countries, ranging from freedom of expression, secularism and religion, through issues on gender, Islam and society, to broad discourses around ethnicity, race and terrorism. The reader is taken through a series of loosely interconnected topics that look at how various aspects of Islamic beliefs, principles and practices and Muslim social, cultural and political experiences have been set against the landscape of multicultural theories and practices of Britain and other European societies.

The book makes it for an interesting, informed and rather engaging reading. The reader makes a journey through the key issues in the accommodation of Islam within practices of multiculturalism and will surely feel academically enriched by the fifteen essays. However, the book proves to be inconsistent at times and it is difficult to locate a main theoretical thread running through the various chapters and holding them together. While all chapters, when taken alone, make for a very good reading, it is not always obvious what the editors' underlying argument is. A more explicit theoretical and argumentative stance and a further refinement in some chapters' structure and editing would have raised the standards of this book dramatically.

Despite the fact that some chapters might require the reader to possess some foundational understandings of sociological, philosophical and theological concepts, the book's appeal seems to extend beyond the 'ivory tower' of the academic world. Instead, the breadth of its scope and the implications of some chapters for policy and practice make this book a useful resource for a wider range of users that deal with the integration of diversity within Western socio-political structures.

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