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Hossein Askari.

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American Congressman Keith Ellison took his Oath of Office on a copy of the Quran originally owned by Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of America, the principle author of the Declaration of Independence and the third President of the United States.

In 12th. century C.E. Robert of Ketton, a medieval theologian from Lincolnshire, produced one of the earliest translations of the Quran. This Latin translation became the most widely used until the 17th. century. John Greaves, the Savillian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, also showed interest in matters well outside his scientific discipline. His notebook has excerpts from various chapters of the Quran which he translated into Latin, the scholarly language of the day.

King Offa of Mercia, middle England (775 C.E.) inscribed on his coins, in Arabic: "La ilaha ilallah", meaning that 'There is no authority to rank with the One God.'

Muslims in Europe: Muslim rule in Spain is part of the Golden Age of Jewish history. This was the period of freedom and tolerance for Jews. Along with Christians, they entered the fields of government, science, medicine, and literature. Spain was home to by far the largest and most brilliant Jewish community in Europe; elsewhere, the Jews were hounded and persecuted.

A muslim is recognised by the high standards of personal probity an individual maintains. Anyone whose beliefs and actions harmonise with the Permanent Values is in fact a muslim - another Arabic word that alongside alcohol, sugar and algebra is now part of the English language.

The trend today is to malign and demonise Islam, but history shows that it has always been valued by astute and intelligent individuals, and those who implemented the Quran gained esteem and success through its application.

The world has changed and is changing at a rapid pace. Events in that last few decades have put Islam in the news almost on a daily basis, though not generally in the best light.

It's more important now than ever before to understand the Quran. This is simply because what Muslims say and do in the name of Islam affects people in every corner of the world.

Suicide bombers, stonings, beheadings, honour killings, genital mutilation, misogyny, sectarian and vigilante murders: when we see the violence and backward culture often associated with Islam and Muslims, the question that comes to mind is, what kind of doctrine is it that leads men and women to behave in this way?

Therefore it's important to understand what Islam really is and what the Quran actually decrees.

Poor translations and the lack of fresh interpretation free from any indoctrination by the imams, the self-appointed guardians of faith, have left the Muslims stagnant and backward. But the Quran, when read with true understanding, gives an invigorating perspective.

When seen through the unique prism of the Quran alone, Islam raises the measure of human endeavour because it is a guidance for the development of both the individual and society.

NEW MILLENNIUM EXPOSITION: Now for the first time we have an exposition of the Quran in English that really is different. Unrestrained by traditional bias and cultural influence, the values and concepts, however, remain entirely as originally expounded when the Quran was first revealed. Now with the added clarity and accuracy of an improved translation, this rendition is far better than any edition available today. Also the Quranic thought process that had deteriorated over time, stagnated and stunted progress has been reconstructed and strengthened on its original foundation.

Whatever your belief, the Quran is a compelling read. It is life enhancing. And that is why YOU should read it.

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ISBN: 978-0-9955098-8-9

A 'muslim', describes someone whose actions portray the Quranic Permanent Values, and 'Muslim' is a title or a label for one who professes to follow the Quran. A person need not be called a muslim in order to be one.

Published by Xeitire-Signat
International House London EC1A 2BN

Ireland 'leads the world in Islamic values as Muslim states lag'

Ireland best embodies the Islamic values of opportunity and justice, according to a survey by a leading US academic

The Koran's teachings are better represented in Western societies than in Islamic countries, which have failed to embrace the values of their own faith in politics, business, law and society, a leading academic at George Washington University has said.

A study of 208 countries and territories has found that the top countries in both economic achievement and social values are Ireland, Denmark, Luxembourg and New Zealand. Britain also ranks in the top ten.

The first Muslim-majority nation is Malaysia ranking at 33, while the only other state in the top 50 is Kuwait at 48.

Hossein Askari, an Iranian-born professor of International Business and International Affairs at George Washington University, said Muslim countries used religion as an instrument of state control.

He said: "We must emphasise that many countries that profess Islam and are called Islamic are unjust, corrupt, and underdeveloped and are in fact not 'Islamic' by any stretch of the imagination.

"Looking at an index of Economic Islamicity, or how closely the policies and achievements of countries reflect Islamic economic teachings - Ireland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Singapore, Finland, Norway, and Belgium round up the first 10".

"If a country, society, or community displays characteristics such as unelected, corrupt, oppressive, and unjust rulers, inequality before the law, unequal opportunities for human development, absence of freedom of choice (including that of religion), opulence alongside poverty,

force, and aggression as the instruments of conflict resolution as opposed to dialogue and reconciliation, and, above all, the prevalence of injustice of any kind, it is prima facie evidence that it is not an Islamic community," he said.

An Overall Islamicity Index analysing social rules and human rights measures found that similar rankings were generated in 2010.

"New Zealand, Luxembourg, Ireland, Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands; and again only Malaysia (38) and Kuwait (48) make it into the top 50 from Muslim countries," he said. "Islam is, and has been for centuries, the articulation of the universal love of Allah for his creation and for its unity, and all that this implies for all-encompassing human and economic development."

"We must emphasise that many countries that profess Islam and are called Islamic are unjust, corrupt, and underdeveloped and are in fact not 'Islamic' by any stretch of the imagination."