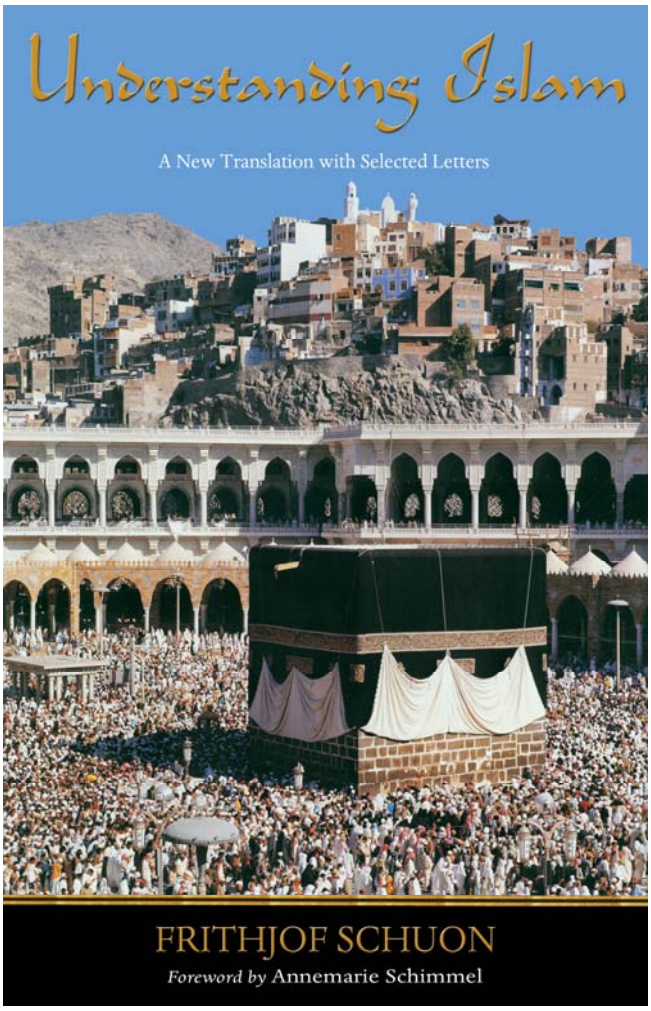
Understanding Islam

A New Translation with Selected Letters

by Frithjof Schuon

edited by Patrick Laude

foreword by Annemarie Schimmel



This Book Features:

- A fully revised translation of Schuon's classic work
- A new Editor's Preface by Patrick Laude and a foreword by renowned scholar Annemarie Schimmel
- 77 pages of completely new material, including previously unpublished letters and other writings and a new chapter called "The Three Dimensions of Sufism" which has never been published before in book form
- Extensive Editor's Notes added by Patrick Laude (Georgetown University), the editor, which help to explain various concepts, key terms and historical figures who are mentioned in the text
- A complete glossary of foreign terms and phrases and a comprehensive index

Publication Details

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The purpose of this book "is not so much to give a description of Islam as to explain why Muslims believe in it". With over one and a half billion believers throughout the globe, Islam remains one of the most misunderstood of the world's great Revelations. In this fully revised and amended translation of his masterpiece, philosopher Frithjof Schuon offers readers a deeper understanding of Islam, the world's second largest religion. Both Westerners unfamiliar with Islam and Muslims seeking a deeper understanding of the basis of faith will be struck by Schuon's masterful explanation of the spiritual world of Islam. Featuring an extensive appendix of previously unpublished materials and detailed editor's notes to aid readers, this book is a must for any collection.

World Wisdom

Praise for *Understanding Islam*

"This is by far the best single volume on its subject that I know, or can even conceive of. It contains no wasted words and omits nothing that is essential."
—**Huston Smith**, author of *The World's Religions*

"The best work in English on the meaning of Islam and why Muslims believe in it… This book also seeks to answer many of the questions Christians have posed concerning Islam."
—**Seyyed Hossein Nasr**, The George Washington University

"In an age in which the word 'Islam'—both in the West and increasingly even among a younger generation of Muslims estranged from traditional forms of faith—has become almost exclusively identified with a familiar set of highly visible political ideologies, this is a truly providential book. For Frithjof Schuon's works on Islam offer an incomparably clear and articulate introduction to the very heart of the Islamic revelation, in both its spiritual roots and practical manifestations, making this work a clear and insightful 'guide for the perplexed' that is uniquely accessible and enlightening for readers from all backgrounds."
—**James W. Morris**, Boston College, author of *The Reflective Heart*

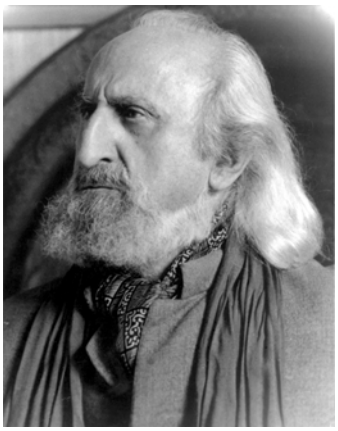
"This is a book that grasps Islam in all its fullness, restoring its universalism which has been so badly affected by modern ideologies. It is a work that is strong, essential, dynamic, and without undue solemnity, one whose 'verticality' has been in no way diminished by the passage of time."
—**Éric Geoffroy**, Marc Bloch-Strasbourg II University, author of *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*

"In an era of rampant misunderstanding, it is providential that Schuon's classic work *Understanding Islam*, more often reprinted and rendered into more languages than any other book in his multifaceted corpus, should now appear in this freshly translated and helpfully annotated new English edition."
—**James S. Cutsinger**, University of South Carolina, author of *Advice to the Serious Seeker: Meditations on the Teaching of Frithjof Schuon*

"Long regarded as a masterpiece, this book should be read not only as an original, profound, and beautiful view of the spiritual philosophy, rituals, art, and culture of Islam, but also as a much needed intelligent introduction to Religion in general."
—**Mateus Soares de Azevedo**, author of *Men of a Single Book: Fundamentalism in Islam, Christianity, and Modern Thought*

"Frithjof Schuon's book . . . sets out 'not so much to give a description of Islam as to explain why Muslims believe in it'. . . . *Understanding Islam* is, moreover, rich in references to other religions, to Hinduism and Buddhism and in particular to Christianity, and almost every mention of Islamic doctrine or practice is still further elucidated by a mention of what corresponds to it or takes the place of it in the religion of the Western world."
—**Martin Lings**, author of *What is Sufism?*

About the Author



Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) is best known as the foremost spokesman of the "Traditionalist" or "Perennialist" school and as a philosopher in the metaphysical current of Shankara and Plato. He wrote more than two dozen books on metaphysical, spiritual, artistic, and ethnic themes and was a regular contributor to journals on comparative religion in both Europe and America. Schuon's writings have been consistently featured and reviewed in a wide range of scholarly and philosophical publications around the world, respected by both scholars and spiritual authorities. Besides his prose writings, Schuon was also a prolific poet and a gifted painter of images that always portrayed the beauty and power of the divine, and the nobility and virtue of primordial humanity.

About the Editor

Patrick Laude was born in France in 1958. He came to the US in the early 1980s and obtained a Ph.D. in French literature from Indiana University, with a Minor in Philosophy, in 1985. He has taught classes and done research in French language and literature, mystical literature and poetry, comparative religion (including Christianity, Islam, and Sufism), and on the connections between cultures and religions. He is the author of several books, including *Pathways to an Inner Islam: Massignon, Corbin, Guénon, and Schuon*. Dr. Laude currently is a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

About the Author of the Foreword

Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003) was one of the leading experts on Islamic literature and mysticism (Sufism) in the world. She wrote more than 80 books and essays, and lectured at universities and conferences around the world. Professor Schimmel translated and conducted research in the major Islamic languages of Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Turkish. Her book *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975) is considered a classic in its field.