



The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam

Simon Cottee

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The Apostates is the first major study of apostasy from Islam in the western secular context. Drawing on life-history interviews with ex-Muslims from the UK and Canada, Simon Cottee explores how and with what consequences Muslims leave Islam and become irreligious. Apostasy in Islam is a deeply controversial issue and features prominently in current debates over the expansion of Islam in the West and what this means. Yet it remains poorly understood, in large part because it has become so politicized-with protagonists on either side of the debate selectively invoking Islamic theology to make claims about the 'true' face of Islam. The Apostates charts a different course by examining the social situation and experiences of ex-Muslims. Cottee suggests that Islamic apostasy in the West is best understood not as a legal or political problem, but as a moral issue within Muslim families and communities. Outside of Muslim-majority societies, ex-Muslims are not living in fear for their lives. But they face and must manage the stigma attached to leaving the faith from among their own families and the wider Muslim community.

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