Abstract

What's it like to be a Muslim living in the West today? And how different is it to the experiences of Muslims who lived in Western countries many generations ago? Recent events have given these questions a new importance. It is a difficult time right now for the Muslim diaspora throughout the United States and Europe. George W. Bush's 'war on terror' is seen through much of the Muslim world as a war on Islam. This has complex repercussions for Muslims living in the West. Tensions and anxieties are running high as many Muslims in America and Europe are caught in a climate of social unrest, much of it compounded by living in the spotlight of the media. This book generates a fresh perspective on the problematic relationships between Islam, the West and so-called modernity -- in the light of an increasingly vocal Muslim diaspora in Europe and the United States. This is not the first time that conflict has arisen between Muslims in the West and their other communities -- this book examines a long history of volatile social relations based on extensive travels and research across four continents. Iftikhar H. Malik offers a wealth of case studies ranging from Muslim Spain and the Ottoman Empire to the present day; from the eruptions of anti-Islamic feeling over the Salman Rushdie affair to the demonisation of Islam currently running high on the agenda of the 'war on terror'.

Islamic thinkers and activists are facing the great social changes associated with modernity that other religious traditions have and are facing. Cultural diaspora; the context of pluralism; the breakdown of traditional family and social patterns; changing cultural values including the shifting gender roles and sexual attitudes; and the intersection of political and spiritual ideas — all these are elements of modernity that have confronted all religious traditions. Are the Islamic responses any different? Are they diverse and changing? I think we muslims have a long way to go before we ourselves make islam work again on a collective schale. But let’s face it: islamic thinking is more evolved than 30 years ago when our parents settled here in Europe.