

Praise for
It's Really All About God:
Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian

By Samir Selmanovic (Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2009)

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“Samir Selmanovic is asking the right questions at the right time, and refusing the consolations of certainty at a time when strident orthodoxies--atheist as well as religious--are perilously dividing us.”

--Karen Armstrong, Author, *A History of God* and *The Great Transformation*

“Why are thousands not saying what this man is saying? Such obvious truth must be made even more obvious, and this is exactly what Samir Selmanovic is doing for all of us and for the future of humanity. After you read this wise book, you will say, ‘Of course!’ and ‘Thank God!’”

--Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M., Center for Action and Contemplation, Albuquerque, New Mexico

“This is an important book at an important moment in American history. As religious issues come to the fore internationally--and the influence of American religious leaders who preach ‘my way or the highway’ begins to fade--we need a new generation of believers who can articulate their own spiritual integrity while actively respecting the integrity of others. Samir Selmanovic is such a leader. Samir's personal and professional life has been richly formed by diversity. Now he offers us the fruits of his experience in this wonderfully readable book, grounded in his work in New York City with religious communities dedicated to honor and learn from ‘the other.’ We need a million more Samirs on the planet--people of conviction and humility who know that the vast mystery called God calls us not to the arrogance of “ownership” but to the beloved community.”

--Parker J. Palmer, Author, *A Hidden Wholeness*, *Let Your Life Speak*, and *The Courage to Teach*

“Samir Selmanovic offers a deeply personal reflection on faith, doubt and ultimately, spiritual peace. As the son of a Muslim father and Christian mother, Selmanovic was raised as a Muslim but later converted to Christianity, though his respect for Islam never abated. This unique interfaith background facilitates his telling a sophisticated and introspective story that simultaneously stirs the heart, challenges the intellect and inspires the soul. Readers of this profoundly spiritual book will find themselves holders of a new and important perspective on their own religion, the religion of others, and even those without religion.”

--Daisy Khan, Executive Director, American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA)

“In a world in which religious traditions are too often digging in their heels into the tired sod of exclusionary self-righteousness, this love-song to the God of all Existence is a much longed for work of hope and optimism. Pastor Samir Selmanovic's expansive vision goes beyond polite formalities of “interfaith dialogue” to urge us all toward new vistas of mutual learning, sharing and celebration of Life. Drawing from his own extraordinary life story--his conversion to Christianity and his growing discovery that both love and God thrive beyond its borders, he helps us celebrate the many miraculous and mysterious ways that the loving and life-giving power we call God moves through us all.”

--Rabbi Marcia Prager, Author, *The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine*

“If atheists, agnostics, and non-religious people like myself want to gain understanding and improve the world--not just complain about the evils of fundamentalism--we need to read not only the hard-line voices of ancient religions but also the freshest and wisest voices of modern progressive religion. Samir Selmanovic's is just such a fresh voice. I can disagree with him on theology-- indeed, I can deny the very God he thinks it's all about--and yet I have learned much from his sensitivity, intellect, and generous spirit towards humanity.”

--Greg Epstein, Humanist Chaplain of Harvard University and Author, *Good Without God: What a Billion Non-Religious People Do Believe*

“For all Seekers of the Truth, Samir's deeply insightful, uniquely personal, lyrical quest for a relationship with God provides a clear vision on the need to dig deep, transcending traditional boundaries of faith and theology, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu....”

--Rathi Raja, President, Arsha Vedanta Center of Long Island; Executive Director, Young Indian Culture Group

“A remarkable book that combines memoir, insight, wisdom, passion and compassion.”

--Marcus Borg, Author, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time, The Heart of Christianity*, and *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teaching and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*

“The author’s spiritual journey has been truly unique. This puts him in a position to say some profoundly important things about God and the way religious people relate to God and to each other. You may not always like how the author says things, but he gives fresh meaning to the words of Jesus, ‘Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’ I *needed* to read this book and I am glad I did.”

--Jon Paulien, Dean, School of Religion, Loma Linda University

“I'm speechless in trying to describe this book. I laughed out loud in places and cried big tears at the end. It's a work of faith, a work of art, and to some, no doubt, it will be a work of damnable heresy. I think this book will change people's lives, and more: it can *save* lives, in the many senses of that word. All the religious pundits and broadcasters on radio and cable TV had better take notice, because this book threatens our conventional, comfortable categories and familiar black-and-white polarities. Selmanovic has the nerve to imagine our religions becoming, not walls behind which we hide and over which we lob bombs of damnation, but bridges over which we travel to find God in the other.”

--Brian McLaren, Author/Activist (brianmclaren.net)

“Samir Selmanovic is a brave, compassionate and wise spiritual teacher and community leader. This inspiring memoir/manifesto is a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on contemporary interreligious dialogue and action. Read it and be enriched!”

--Rabbi Or Rose, Director of Interfaith & Social Justice Initiatives, Hebrew College, Co-editor, *Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call For Justice*

“Samir has written a book that reads like an extended poem; an ode to life. Where others see only the darkness and destructiveness of religion, Samir sees beauty and hope. Where others see only competition and violence, Samir sees synergy and life. And his vision is no simple syncretism; a blending of all religions into one inoffensive ‘smoothie’ of goodness and light. This book is a celebration of postmodern ‘otherness’ of the first order. It will inspire you, frustrate you, maybe even anger you. Samir will not answer all your questions or tell you exactly what to do next. But if you’ve ever felt that nagging deep in your soul that God is lurking just beneath the surface in places you have least expected, you need to read this book!”

--Ryan J. Bell, Pastor, Hollywood Adventist Church, (ryanjbell.net)

“This is a delightfully seductive book. In a conversational and imaginatively colorful style, Selmanovic leads the reader, gently but engagingly, along the steps of his own life’s path to a conclusion that is as clear as it is challenging – that the only God worth believing in cannot be just ‘my’ or ‘our’ God. For all those committed to creating a truly multi-religious civil society, this book is a gift.”

--Paul F. Knitter, Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture, Union Theological Seminary, New York City, and Author, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be A Christian*

“Samir has done what seems impossible--he’s written a book about God that’s fresh. Books about God, faith and religion are a dime a dozen these days--but this one is so full of hope and enthusiasm. Completely honest. In the end, I found myself breathing more freely and wanting to love God and people more fully. I recommend this book!”

--Carl Medearis, Author, *Muslims, Christians and Jesus*, and Co-Author, *Tea with Hezbollah*

“Prepare to have your world expanded. Samir Selmanovic is like that voice in your head that causes you to reflect on the bigger questions. Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike will grow from this exploration of an un-managed God.”

--Rabbi Justus Baird, Director, Multifaith Education, Auburn Seminary

“This is a solidly researched book that reads like a love song. My inner mystic jumped and leaped and shouted for joy. I found myself less lonely in this big old world. I felt like I was at a really good party, each paragraph a song, each page another glass of wine, each chapter the prospect of another dance with a beautiful woman. At this party, nobody got mad at me for letting my hair down. In fact, everyone, including God, encouraged me to go a little crazy.”

--Rev. Vince Anderson, bandleader, songwriter, honky-tonkist, co-pastor of Revolution Church NYC, (reverendvince.com)

“For those who love armchair travel, Samir Selmanovic provides a breathtaking report on his spiritual journey, one that has taken him deep into the thicket of interfaith encounter. This book allows you to experience that adventure through his eyes. It may move you to take the next step in your own exploring. If so, fasten your seat belt and bring Samir Selmanovic along as a guide. As more of us take those risks, I can't help thinking our world will be the better for it.”

--Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, Director, Department of Multifaith Studies, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

“What if the excruciating tension between God and religion is not something to be denied but, rather, embraced as an act of loving devotion to both divinity and humanity? In *It's Really All About God*, Selmanovic offers a vision of spirituality which holds this tension as sacred. Rather than remain isolated in our ‘God management systems’ we can partner with each other across the boundaries that define us. The world would be better off and our religions would be more true, more just, and more beautiful.”

--Sammer Aboelela, Community Organizer, New York Community of Muslim Progressives

“In a most refreshing yet startling way, *It's Really All About God* confronts my Christian worldview and challenges my assumptions about God. But I understand that Selmanovic does not seek to persuade or convert, but to explore, to imagine with. His story is a remarkable demonstration of and testimony to the beauty and possibilities of radically God-oriented imagination.”

--Julius Nam, Religion Professor, Loma Linda University

“This book nourished my soul; it fed my life; it centered me on what truly matters: life-giving, radical, and hospitable love. Samir Selmanovic has a way of telling stories that is simple yet profound, down to earth yet not bound, prophetic yet loving, and serious yet full of humor. I laughed, cried, and wondered. I became nostalgic for the home of my childhood and the ‘thin places’ where divine encounters occurred. Samir’s love for life shines and his faith unsettles us. This is a powerful, moving and empowering work, full of audacious hope.”

--Eleazar S. Fernandez, Professor of Constructive Theology, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

"Society is bearing a heavy cost due to our lack of meaningful discussion, growing divisiveness, and the mockery of religion. It is a long road back--or ahead--but Selmanovic has placed a roadmap before us. This book is epochal; it is for every atheist who is willing to converse and all the religionists willing to lift their head and look over the walls they have created."

--William Bevington, Professor of Information Design and former Executive Director, The Parsons Institute for Information Mapping, The New School, New York.

"I am excited, unsettled and inspired by the vision of *It's Really All About God*. Through sharing the story of his own faith and family, Samir shows how this growing vision of the kingdom of God has changed his world—and can change our world, too."

--Nathan Brown, Author, *Nemesis Train*

"In his book, *It's Really All About God: Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian*, Samir Selmanovic takes us on his personal spiritual journey, a journey that winds through different cultures, continents, and religions. The insights he gains along the way lead him to a unique understanding of the meaning of all religions, one that is grounded in the encounter with 'the other,' and one with which he intends to gently challenge all of us into rethinking what our faith means to us. Even if one does not agree with all of his conclusions, one can appreciate the invitation to go along on this journey as part of one's own journey to deeper religious--and inter-religious--understanding."

--Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, Senior Program Director for Faith and Order and Interfaith Relations of the National Council of Churches USA

"A keen and compelling storyteller, Samir Selmanovic has crafted a spiritual autobiography which interweaves humor and lyricism with practical theology in a tale of conversion, embrace, and reconciliation. Provocative yet delightful, *It's Really All About God* is a welcome addition to the literature of interreligious relations."

--Lucinda Mosher, Th.D., Executive Director, Religions for Peace – USA

"Samir Selmanovic delivers a message of vital importance to each of us in our increasingly interdependent world: that we only live the fullness of any of our religious (or non-religious) traditions when we pay attention--serious, loving and appreciative attention--to those outside our own faith. As a former Christian, this book filled my heart with genuine optimism that the vision of a human family, inclusive of and rich with all of our many different traditions, is not only necessary but also possible."

--Phil Robinson, Leader, Joseph Campbell Foundation (JCF) Mythological RoundTable® group of New York

"How can our religions become inter-dependent, and thus viable and valuable, for the 21st century and our children's children? Samir Selmanovic has devoted his life to this question and *It's Really All About God* invites us to join him on the journey."

--Bowie Snodgrass, Director, Faith House Manhattan

"Anyone tired of the constant tensions between peoples in the world religions will enjoy this book."

--Bruce L. Bauer, Chair, Department of World Mission, Andrews University

"This book comes at a critical time, offering help for those of us left wondering how to faithfully bring our traditional religious practice into the pluralistic world of the 21st century."

--David Oakley, PhD, Founder and Chief Science Officer, WAVi Co.; Founder, Addison College Project

"The Dalai Lama says that when he was young, he thought Tibetan Buddhism was the only way, but later came to know Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and realized they greatly enriched his life. He and Samir Selmanovic have a lot in common, as detailed in this fine, brave book, which explores, through personal experience, '... this treasure of difference, and why our first valid response ... should be gratitude.'"

--Marcia Kelly, Author, *Sanctuaries* and *100 Graces*