



**VALUES & VISIONS REVIEWS SERVICE**

**AIRING MARCH 1995**

**BOOK REVIEW BY FREDERIC A. BRUSSAT**

**The Vision of Islam by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick**

Two professors from the State University of New York have written a very accessible book on Islam. Here's a review from the Values & Visions Reviews Service.

The Vision of Islam, published by Paragon House, by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick succeeds admirably in its goal "to pry open the door to the Islamic universe." The authors have taught courses in this religion for ten years at the State University of New York. They focus on the four dimensions of Islam--practice, faith, spirituality, and the Islamic view of history. Thanks to the breadth of their purview, the depth of their interpretive skills, and the accessibility of the material, The Vision of Islam is now the best book available on the subject.

For Muslims, submission to God is the sum and substance of their faith. They look to the Koran for instructions on how to pray, fast, and take care of the needy. Muhammad, the messenger of God, has said, "Faith is knowledge in the heart, a voicing with the tongue and an activity with the limbs."

Murata and Chittick dutifully explicate the significance of the five pillars of Islam. They spell out in detail the importance of angels, the prophets, the Last Day, and the ways God measures out knowledge, power, mercy, and good.

The authors show how Muslims see the entire universe and everything in it as signs of God. Paying attention is a religious rule as is gratitude. In addition, believers must attend to the promptings of their souls and treasure God's beauty in imaginal forms. Although this dimension of Islam has been underplayed, Murata and Chittick emphasize that imagination and beauty have always been essential to the faith. The Vision of Islam opens the door to many of these interesting aspects of this world religion.