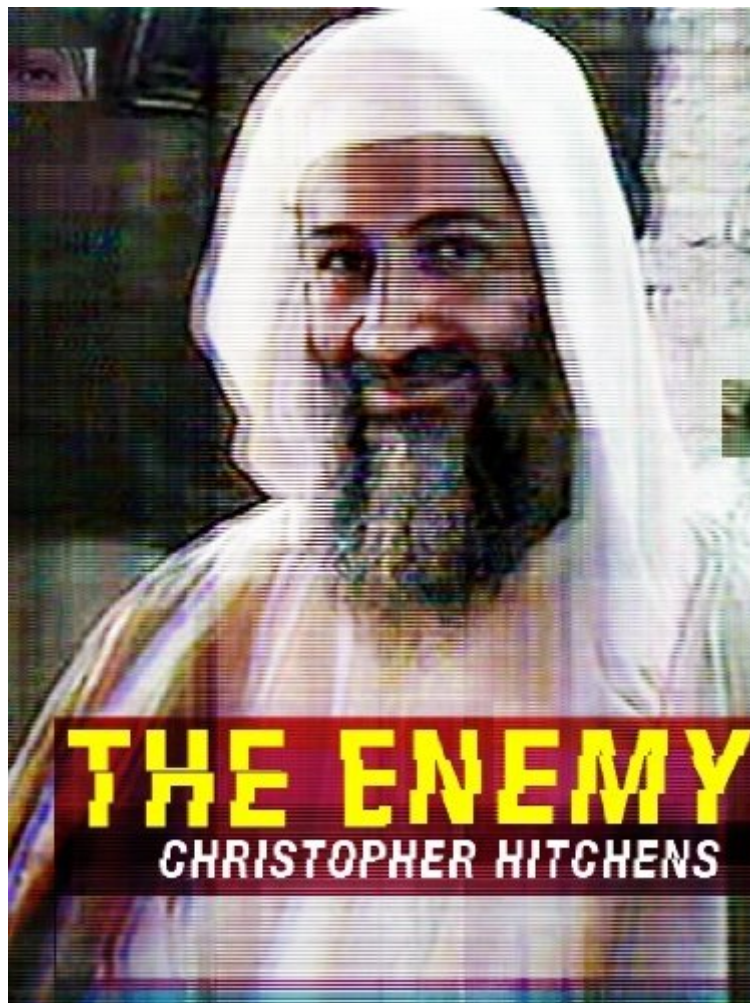


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The Enemy (Kindle Single)



Synopsis

In a brilliant essay on the death of Osama bin Laden, Christopher Hitchens insists that the necessity to resist the threat of theocratic fanaticism is by no means cancelled. Hitchens argues that bin Laden and his adherents represented the most serious and determined and bloodthirsty attempt to revive totalitarian and racist ideology since 1945. Further, that while the unending struggle for reason is entitled to take some especial comfort in his demise, the values of secularism, libertarianism, internationalism, and solidarity will always need to be defended and reaffirmed.

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Customer Reviews

I've been a big fan of Hitchens and have loved reading his articles on Slate.com. It has been good to see that whatever toll his cancer is taking on him, his writing has not skipped a beat. Hitchens does a very erudite take down of Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, and his protectors in Pakistan. Hitchens gives a good biography of Bin Laden. I learned quite a bit that I hadn't known about his childhood and his time in Afghanistan. He compares Bin Laden's dream of an Islamic state to the desires of the Fascists in the 1940s and draws some very good comparisons. Hitchens, as always, doesn't pull any punches in condemning everyone alive or dead who had anything to do with the rise of Bin Laden or his place in the media as the face of Islamic extremism. He explains how the life and death

of Bin Laden are actually small potatoes, compared to the fact that there are thousands that are of like mind that are still alive. Of course, another threat is that our politicians are completely unable to be up to the task of setting real priorities, or to speak in frank language about how people living in medieval Islamic kingdoms are not allowed to live lives as human beings and will live and die in slavery. The most gratifying part of this short is that Hitchens got to write the obituary for this pathetic wretch. It was a perfect half-hour read and well worth the time and pocket change it took to enjoy it. Keep well Mr. Hitchens and may you live to write the obituary of many more of these evil thugs.

I appreciate this author's ability to express complex ideas in a quick and understandable way, while still being interesting. With the amount of information shared in this essay, many authors would have churned out something about as compelling as a trigonometry textbook. This was actually pretty hard to put down, I am amazed!! If you're at all curious, just give this one a try.

Christopher Hitchens' well-honed and well-worn blade has been put to many individuals throughout his extensive (though, now we must realize, always too short) career, and now one can say it has been put to no one more justified, at least in the popular mindset. While facing controversy that was his homestead in scorching, well-researched books against Mother Teresa among others, little of such would understandably be expected here. It cannot be an understatement to say that few individuals have shaped American culture and politics in the last fifty years, at least, as Osama bin Laden. This compact e-book 'single', something we might call a long essay, does concise yet thorough work of grasping the presence of bin Laden both in his vile, formative work before September 11th as well as in the American zeitgeist after. While there was neither room nor need to delve into anything that might terribly surprise the average reader in this piece, I do think Hitchens succeeds in his usual brilliant way on two very key issues that Americans (and the rest of the world) should carefully bear in mind in the wake of bin Laden's death, woven through as it is with clichés about chapters and eras coming to a close. First, Hitchens quickly but surgically dismantles any notions, arguably fringe as they may be, that percolate (I'm tempted to say 'infest') the left in particular from thinkers that like to make either clumsily imply or recklessly, thoughtlessly proclaim outright that bin Laden, in so many words, isn't such a bad guy and is merely acting in justified, even admirable retaliation against the imperialistic bullying of the United States. One can hear the same disjointed harmonies at work in the words of Ron Paul and others, even within the last week, in regards to Iran in particular. Hitchens offers more of the few pages here than these notions deserve, and promptly reminds the reader of the reasoning behind bin Laden's body of work--9/11

included--that show the ultimate desire of returning the region to an Islamic caliphate that then grows to encompass the world. No imperialism here, right? While he only very passingly gives nod to the very morally robust position of humanitarian intervention against accusations of imperialism, he's written on it extensively elsewhere and anyone needing to guess at his thoughts on this facet of the argument would be insulting him. The other key point, larger and more important, I would argue, is the overarching reminder that the war against terrorism--against totalitarian rule, theocratic or otherwise--is quite genuinely and endless one, which might be something of a defeatist were it not so eminently (and imminently) true as well as being the most justified war there is, the one most worth fighting and so necessary (and available) to fight at every turn. This idea permeates this short text--that while perhaps we can agree a specific chapter has ended, one spectre of many put to dust, the book won't ever end we cannot become complacent in fighting it. It feels too tempting to not let Hitchens speak for this point himself; he ends 'The Enemy' with the following: "But it is in this struggle that we develop the muscles and sinews that enable us to defend civilization, and the moral courage to name it as something worth fighting for. As the cleansing ocean washes over bin Laden's carcass, may the earth lie lightly on the countless graves of this he sentenced without compunction to be burned alive or dismembered in the street."

Regardless of your religious beliefs, you must read this book with an open mind and not let the author's personal belief and philosophy prejudice your examination of a pivotal point in American history.

I have a lot of love for Christopher Hitchens, not necessarily because I agree with everything he says, but because he was a smart man who always told the truth as he saw it. You can easily dismiss him as an alcoholic racist, but you do so at the risk of forgetting he was a very well researched alcoholic racist. This release serves as a bookend to Bin Laden's death, a subject about which I knew little before perusing this piece. Don't make the mistake, though, of thinking the author is objective. There's no shortage of Hitchens' arguably snarky perspective on the life, death and legacy of his subject, but the source of his vitriol should not be overlooked. The question of how secular or religious a society should be is asked every day in every language there is, and Bin Laden represented an extreme of the faction that would see theocracy reign with absolute power. Long story short: If you like Hitchens' writing but don't have time to pour over hundreds of thousands of words condemning "islamofacism," this is a worthy single. Otherwise, keep on shopping.

It's Hitch !! -- What more do I need say

Hitchens writes for those taken by the arguments that characterize Islam as a religion of peace, one that didn't approve of flying planes into buildings, and one that surely wasn't a basis for 9/11. I recommend the book to all who have an interest in 9/11, bin Laden, Islam, in learning how Islam fits in and in particular all who like me love Hitchens. Jim Hurley

An excellent summary of both bin Laden and bin Ladenism. Obviously on the short side but it makes the essay no less powerful or persuasive.

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