Prophet as the messenger of God and the Qur'an as revelation. Bennett's excellent point that there is a hermeneutic of faith that is tied into reading the texts and constructing our perception of the Prophet or Jesus is very true considering one's spirituality is connected to this very process. It is here that Bennett brings a real dialogue of theological inquiry of Christian-Muslim relations that is not only meaningful for mutual understanding, but more importantly, it is tied into genuine efforts to learn from each other based on what we believe, where our faiths take us, and what faith really means at the core of our spiritual lives.

This is a valuable book for any student of Islam and anyone involved in contemporary Christian-Islamic dialogue. Bennett's *In Search of Muhammad* is a welcome addition to the field of comparative religious studies because it represents the author's striving to truly understand the theology of faith according to Muslims while not compromising with the Christian tradition to which the author belongs. If there were more impressive books like this one, it would be possible to move closer toward a real theological mutual understanding.

Qamar-ul Huda


While Islamic law has always been one of the topics of study in Islamic studies from the earliest periods of Orientalist scholarship, it has come to the fore in the eighties and nineties with a renewed relevance. This is partly due to a renewed interest among Islamist leaders, whose discourse focuses on the Shari'ah as a tool for social and political reform. Another important factor is the steadily increasing interest in comparative law, or international law, which has been demonstrated by law schools around the country. As the business and economics seem to become increasingly global in scope, lawyers, scholars, and businessmen are being forced to deal with progressively complex legal interactions of fundamentally differing legal traditions.

As a result of this as well as other factors, more and more law schools are offering Islamic law courses, and academia has been encouraged as well to further develop this area of Islamic Studies. Kamali's book is a welcome addition to the body of English works available to students especially at a time when the study of Islamic law is becoming a more frequent specialty in the field of Islamic Studies. The book sets out to summarize the basic techniques
of Islamic Jurisprudence for English speaking students of Islamic Studies. The primary audience are not necessarily students who specialize in Islamic law or even in law generally, but rather is comprehensible to anyone with a basic knowledge of Islamic studies, either at the graduate or undergraduate level. The basic structure of the work is thematic, or rather by technique. In other words, the author presents the basic tools of Islamic jurisprudence one at a time, and explains its use and application on a technical, yet practical level.

Kamali begins with a discussion of the primary sources of Islamic fiqh, namely the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. This is followed by a discussion of usūl al-fiqh, which consists of a two-chapter discussion of the broad theoretical system of authentication, and interpretation of relevant texts in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. It is in these two chapters that Kamali covers the system as a whole, without getting into exhaustive details regarding its individual elements. After a brief discussion of the nature and categories of rulings, he then moves to specific elements of fiqh methodology, beginning with naskh (abrogation), then moving on to ijma' (consensus), qiyas (analogical deduction), the role of laws revealed to the previous prophets, the fatwa or ruling of a Companion of the Prophet, the principle of istihsan (juristic preference), maslahah mursalah (consideration of public interest), 'urf (customary laws), istishbāb (presumption of continuity), sadd al-dhara'i' (blocking the means), hukm shari'ah (law, or value of Shari'ah), conflict of evidences and finally, ijtihād (personal reasoning). A chapter is devoted to each of these elements of fiqh, with specific examples given of the use of each technique. These examples are used to demonstrate the subdivisions of each technique as well as to demonstrate how they are applied in practice.

This approach is quite different from the more common approaches of works available in English such as N.J. Coulson’s A History of Islamic Law. As the title implies, Coulson is interested in the historical development of Islamic law. He therefore spends very little time on the technical aspects of fiqh. However, he does successfully demonstrate the historical development of specific concepts in Islamic law such as ijtihād. Another major work worth mentioning, in contrast to Kamali’s work, is Joseph Schacht’s major work The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence, which presents Islamic law primarily as a historical phenomenon, and secondly as a system of laws. He focused primarily on the historical development of the schools of the law and the development of the legal system. In the second part of his book, where he deals with the more technical aspects of fiqh, he focuses on outcome more than method, by categorizing, based on types of legal issues and categories of analysis. In other words, the topic and the outcome are given priority over the basic tools of jurisprudence.

The strength of Kamali’s work in relation to other books available in English is also one of its main limitations, namely its focus on Islamic jurisprudence techniques and methods rather than its historical development. Unlike the works of Coulson and Schacht, Kamali’s approach is distinctly
the fundamental relationships between the sacredness of these texts and the profound significance of the Sirah and Hadith stories that contribute to Muslim perception and spirituality of the Prophet. Despite this problem, these texts are significant accounts because they encompass a collection of stories that illustrate a special time and place where the Prophet existed and how the community worked toward preserving that unique moment, but in terms of connecting the association of context, text, and spirituality he has neglected this area of concern.

Chapter two of the book is entitled “The Sources: A Critical Evaluation” and this was one section wherein Bennett could have integrated his creative theological engagement as a virtual insider. However, he has merely highlighted the modern Western criticisms of the primary sources instead. For Bennett, critical evaluations consisted of Schacht’s theories of hadith fabrication; Watt’s assertion that the historicism of ahadith was questionable Bennett even desperately includes Crone’s erroneous ideas of all sources being false and fabricated. For some reason, not quite clear, he likes to briefly touch on controversial issues by pointing out the main points and not expanding upon the complexities of those issues. For instance, he consistently turns to the works of Sir William Muir, The Life of Mahomet (1858), as a scholar who believed that records were fabricated posthumously to defend the political authorities of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid dynasties. The issue of use or misuse of ahadith, the unjustified grounds of isnâds being falsely created, theories that ahadith were created to insert the narrator in the isnâds, or modern feminist critique of ahadith as misogynist are not relevant to the work at large. One can only assume that Bennett did not have the requisite theological grounding in Islam or the imagination to come up with real critical evaluations, thus he depended on the constructive identities and histories that he is trying to deconstruct.

If there is one section of the book that is related to his thesis and that is truly worth reading, it is part two that contains sixty-six pages of Christian and non-Muslim literature on the Prophet. In chapters three and four Bennett discusses how the process of relating to the Prophet, for the early Christians was more tied with attacking the Prophet’s religious beliefs or having an agenda to earn merit with fellow Christians. As Bennett clearly points out, Christian polemical literature against the Prophet had little to do with really understanding his spiritual message, but writers like John of Damascus were really concerned with focusing on issues like falsifying revelation, multiple-marriages, use of violence and self-delusional spiritual existence. Bennett successfully demonstrates that the early Christian polemical writings against the Prophet created a cycle of hate and an undeserved anti-Christ association, all of which has contributed to a complex confusion of Christian European writers who had disjointed references to the Prophet and also could not distinguish any real differences between the Qur’an and Hadith. (p. 90)
ahistorical. He presents elements of fiqh such as naskh without any consideration of its historical development. For example, except for a brief mention in the preface, Kamali ignores John Burton's argument that early Islamic schools of law used naskh as a means to support regional variations in interpretation which were hard to support in the usul. In fact, there is almost no scholarly analysis in the book at all. However, while this significantly limits the academic value of the book, it is not relevant to the value of the book as a teaching tool, which is its primary intent. In fact, in terms of introducing students to the basic elements of fiqh, it is the most useful book currently available in English. In this regard Kamali made a good choice in rejecting the more common practice of Schacht and other scholars of translating many of the technical terms into English.

This book, therefore, serves as an introduction to the Arabic terminology of fiqh, which is a good prelude to tackling the primary literature on the subject in Arabic. One might argue that with the availability in English of such major primary works as al-Shäfi‘i’s Risâlah and Ibn Rushd’s Bidayat al-Mujtahid, students would be better served to refer to these works. However, Kamali’s book is much more accessible to English speaking students. For example, Ibn Rushd uses an organizational structure similar to part of Schacht’s book in that he organizes the book according to categories of law, such as zakât, jihâd, etc. In fact, it is almost certain that Schacht was influenced by this common practice. Another good example of inaccessibility is al-Shäfi‘i’s use of the question and answer format for explaining some legal rulings.

On the other hand, Kamali’s approach is clear and easy for students to understand fiqh. His book does have certain shortcomings, such as supplying only the Hanafi perspective on many aspects of fiqh like in the area of istihsân, as well as, his inconsistent and problematic discussions of Ja‘fari fiqh and the schools of law, such as the Zâhirîs, which no longer exist. He should have either left these out completely or covered them properly in relation to the text. And of course his treatment of material from a normative perspective can be criticized, although it can also be argued that this actually adds an additional useful element in that it familiarizes the students with some of the attitudes and intellectual discussions of the fuqahâ’. In any case, the author does not cross over the line into polemics as Ahmad von Denffer does in his ‘Ulim al-Qur‘ân, which is similarly intended to introduce students to the basic elements of the Qur’ânic sciences. While this book could not be used without an accompanying text, which deals with the historical development of Islamic Law, it is unique in its approach and is tremendously useful as an instructional text.

Kamran S. Aghaie