insists that source analysis is highly pertinent, and he clearly believes that it is possible to trace much of the Qurʾān’s content back to older Jewish and Christian sources. The ease with which he identifies these sources is astonishing and, in my view, reflects a failure to appreciate the enormous difficulty involved in attempting to identify the sources of a text like the Qurʾān. Newman clearly believes that it can be done and apparently with relative ease. The scholarly studies he cites throughout the work are revealing; they are almost entirely older studies of what is now generally referred to as the “orientalist” variety, among them those of Thoedore Nöldeke, F. Buhl, T. Andrae, R. Bell, etc. Judging from the notes to this study, Newman is either unaware of the immense scholarship on the Qurʾān produced over the past half century or he has intentionally chosen to ignore it, perhaps because much of it flies in the face of the conclusions he wishes to advance.

Newman’s approach to the sirah literature is equally dismissive. He believes that it is for the most part unreliable since it is driven by what he believes to be an ideological agenda. One cannot doubt that it is, to some extent, partisan in its orientation, but it does not follow that it is eo ipso untrustworthy. His cavalier and uncritical approach to the question of the sirah appears to be dictated by his starting point. It is interesting that he nowhere cites studies produced over the past several decades by those who stand within what might be called the Wansbrough tradition of Islamic studies; this is particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that some of their conclusions do occasionally tend to reinforce those defended by Newman. It may be that he is unaware of their existence. Although one can criticize some of the more excessive claims made by members of the Wansbrough “school”, their scholarship is painstaking and detailed. This can hardly be said of Newman’s work.

In his approach to the Qurʾān and the sirah literature, Newman appears to be driven by an overriding objective, viz., to call into question the reliability of the earliest sources on which Islam rests. Though he does not spell it out, his reasoning seems to be that by calling into question Islam’s primary sources one can show that Islam rests on shaky grounds and that its foundational claims are therefore to be taken with a grain of salt, if not dismissed outright. In my view, there is no place in the academy for pretentious and tendentious works of this sort.

Merlin Swartz
Muslim presence in Europe goes back to many centuries, yet it became noticeable only during the last half of the twentieth century when a large number of Muslim professionals, labourers and displaced persons steadily migrated to different countries of this continent. One of the reasons for this migration was the wave of terror and persecution of moderate Muslims with commitment to the cause of Islam by the rulers of the newly liberated Muslim countries.

Though random acceptance of Islam among native Europeans can be easily traced back to the past three centuries, there has been a visible rise in that phenomenon in recent decades in several European countries. As a result of both immigration and conversion there are around two million Muslims in UK alone. In Britain today there are certainly more practicing Muslims than practicing Anglicans (p. 1). The fact of the matter is that in almost every neighbourhood in Europe, USA and Canada, there lives at least one Muslim family. If a Christian living in Europe wants to follow the real teachings of Sayyidnā ʾĪsā [Jesus] (peace be on him), i.e. to know and love one’s neighbour, this cannot be done without knowing well the next door Muslim neighbour. That makes knowing about Muslims and Islam a Christian duty. In this sense Ruqaiyyah’s Waris Maqsood’s book helps a Christian to know some of the basic facts about Islam.

The author of this book carries an honours degree in Christian theology from the University of Hull and has taught in Religious Studies departments in various schools till her retirement in 1996. Her knowledge of Christianity and other religions consists of both knowing their doctrines as well as praxis. In 1986, ten years prior to retirement from her academic job, Ruqaiyyah embraced Islam.

The book, *What Christian Should Know About Islam*, has four sections which deal with the religious beliefs, religious duties, answers to some of the questions frequently asked by non-Muslims, and a brief comparison between Islam and Christianity. The book provides preliminary information about Islam to a lay person with objectivity and fairness.

The author is correct in the analysis of the Christian problem as essentially a cultural inhibition which impeds the acceptance of absolute oneness of God owing to the long standing belief in the divinity of Sayyidnā ʿĪsā [Jesus] (peace be on him). “It is the hardest thing in the world, and seems
so unreasonable and such a betrayal, of a Christian to consider that, whereas belief in God is absolutely required, it is not only mistaken but wrong to believe that Jesus was His Son, in that special Trinitarian sense. It is so automatic to end one’s prayers with the phrases ‘in Jesus’s name’ or ‘through Jesus Christ Our Lord’. Since childhood Christians have celebrated, with rituals enhanced by emotion, God being born as a helpless baby in the Bethlehem stable at Christmas, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross and his subsequent resurrection to glory at Easter – the two supreme demonstrations of God’s amazing love for humanity ....” (p. 5). Ruqaiyyah concludes that in view of this cultural and theological baggage, it is not easy for a person to make a total theological turn-around and dethrone Jesus (peace be on him) from his divinity, lordship, and godhead.

The author is of the view that “in the West, God is no longer the central topic of conversation around the table” (p. 7). The nineteenth century revolution against the church authority was also due to the overall belief that the church was responsible for condoning corruption in high places (p. 7). This made discussion about God a hypothetical exercise. Yet the author tries to deliberate on the well known philosophical answer to the basic issues. These include ontological, teleological and theological reasons for the existence of God (pp. 9–10).

With simple and direct communication, the author discusses whether Muslim women were allowed to choose their husbands? Are Muslim men allowed to beat their wives? Are women inferior to men? How do Muslims treat their children? Why do Muslims not eat pork? And so on, and so forth. In the last section she deals with questions such as the following: do Muslims and Christians worship one and the same God? Is the Qur’an a sacred text? Was the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) greater than Jesus (peace be on him)? Can there be a reconciliation on theological issues between Muslims and Christians?

In my opinion some of the ideas in the book need further elaboration. For example, while dealing with ḍbikr (remembrance of Allah), four important aspects are explained namely awareness of our being in constant presence: “We are always in the presence of Allah”, thankfulness to Him “for all that He has given us”, the remembrance that “... nothing in this world can happen without His permission” and that everyone “will return to Allah when one’s time span [in this world] is complete” (pp. 36–37). The most crucial aspect of ḍbikr, however, which is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’an (at around 290 places) is ḍbikr in and through ṣalāh (see especially 20: 14). Somehow this has not been elaborated upon by the author. We also know that the Qur’an itself has been called ʿal-ḍbikr (36: 69 and 21: 50).
Certain controversial theological issues could have been easily avoided in order to save the reader’s time. It does not seem necessary to deal with issues on which, after long systematic discussions, a consensus has already been reached. This relates particularly to the question of bodily resurrection in the Hereafter. The author claims: “So far as we know, in our Life to Come our bodies are not physical in the way that they are now. Such things as eating, drinking, evacuation, and sexual interchange will not exist, certainly not in the ways that we now recognise them” (p. 39). This does not represent the mainstream view of the Qur’anic exegetes (mufassirūn) and systematic theologians (mutakallīmūn). It only represents a minority view, the view of the Mu’tazilah. For instance, when the Qur’ān talks about chaste women (who have not been touched by a jinn nor by any human being) as mates of the righteous in Paradise (55: 74), this is suggestive of a relationship that includes intimacy. If such an intimacy is not inconsistent with the piety of the Prophets in this life, on which rational basis can it be excluded from the range of possibilities in the life Hereafter?

The author is right when she says that: “No Muslim man ever has the right to hit a women, out of irritation, or to force himself upon her or to keep her in fear of him. The Prophet (peace be on him) said: ‘The best of you are those who are kindest to the families’” (p. 80). She is also correct when she says that “The problem of male chauvinism is not limited to Muslim men. All over the world there are men who regard women as inferior and treat them accordingly” (p. 77). Here it does not logically follow that “The Qur’ān actually makes it very clear that man and woman are of equal worth, deserve equal opportunities to attain spirituality and should be given equal responsibilities (Surah 33: 35). The religious and moral duties of male and female Muslims are exactly the same” (p. 77).

In fact responsibilities need not be “exactly the same”. To illustrate, while the Qur’ān makes a Muslim male responsible for the care of his wife and children it does not make a Muslim woman responsible for the fulfilment of her spouse’s material needs. Likewise, Muslim men have an obligation to take part in physical jihād to defend their own and others’ human rights whereas Muslim women are not obligated to do so. The fact of the matter is that what is affirmed by Islam is spiritual and moral equality between the sexes as has been mentioned in a crystal clear manner in the Qur’ānic verse 33: 35. It cannot be stretched, however, to embrace the secular capitalist concept of quantitative equality. There is no need for a Muslim to be apologetic on such issues.

If Islam is oriented to treating women with deference and granting them, to the exclusion of men, certain privileges why should we, in the name of so-
called equality, force an artificial equality on them? Can’t Muslim women be superior to Muslim males in their beauty, in intelligence, in certain managerial skills, and in the treatment of certain specialised *fiq̲ī* issues? It will be a gross injustice to treat a Muslim lady like Sayyidah ‘A’ishah, who transmitted to us a vast quantum of traditions pertaining to legal matters, as equal to a male who might have greater muscle power, but does not necessarily have a deep knowledge of *fiq̲h* like her. The Western secular concept of equality, in our view, is a highly unjust, blind, monotonous and mechanical concept which violates all norms of justice (*’adl*). If Muslim men in their capacity have been given a degree of higher authority in running the affairs of one’s home and Muslim women have been endowed by the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* with three times greater esteem than men; a greater esteem as a mother, as a wife and as a sister, what is wrong with that?

Ruqaiyyah is perfectly correct, on the other hand, in saying that “Muslims should not regard non-Muslim territory as ‘Dar al-Harb’ (the house of war), but as ‘Dar al-Dawah’ (the house of possible converts)” (p. 93). The words she has used, however, need a little modification. Dār al-Da’wah, an expression which I personally prefer to Dār al-Harb, cannot be translated as “the house of possible converts”. Islam is essentially a da’wah, a call, an invitation to find out, to reflect, to feel, and to act morally and ethically. This may lead one to voluntarily accept, Allah’s message, His guidance in the form of the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah*. Yet the purpose of da’wah is to convey and not necessarily to convert. The latter is in the hands of Allah. He alone controls the hearts and minds of His creatures.

The last section of the book is instructive, and yet needs a thorough review. It seems a bit too simplistic to say that “Muslim and Jewish theology is virtually identical. Where Muslims and Jews are in conflict is over the concept of a ‘chosen race’ and the notion that a particular piece of the Middle East was granted to the Jews as a ‘Promised Land’” (p. 107).

In our view, while certain Islamic beliefs may be closer to the Hebrew Abrahamic tradition, Judaism in history cannot be easily compared with Islam. The very concept of Yahweh as the Creator God and Father of the Hebrews falls short of the universality of the Islamic teaching of *tawḥīd*. The Jewish concept of the prophets, their understanding of the last judgement, and their theology reveal more points of disagreement than agreement between Islam and Judaism.

These points aside, the book is laudable and provides an instructive reading both for Muslims and non-Muslims interested in knowing about Islam. It would, however, have been better if on every issue discussed in the book, at least one or two works had been recommended for further reading.
Absence of a bibliography and proper referencing is another aspect that needs to be improved in the later editions of the book.

Anis Ahmad

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In the string of scriptures, the Qur'ān is the last one, the Final Testament. By the same token, Islam represents the last and final version of the Abrahamic religious tradition. From this perspective, the Qur'ān not only provides the final statement of the religious doctrines and norms of Judaism and Christianity, but also modifies their notions regarding sacred personalities: the Prophets. Jesus Christ is one of those personalities who has been grossly misunderstood not only by his opponents, the Jews, but also by his professed followers, the Christians.

The Qur'ān regards Jesus as one who had announced his prophethood miraculously, for he did so while he was in cradle (Qur’ān 19: 30). Similarly, it declares his mother, Maryam, a chosen one, who was exalted over the whole of womanhood (Qur’ān 3: 42). The Qur’ān makes it clear that inspite of being endowed with miracles, Jesus was virtually like others as regards his humanity: he was created by God and was, therefore, God’s servant (‘abd) as were all other Prophets. The Qur’ān also tells us that Jesus’ birth took place in an extraordinary manner. In that respect his birth was like Adam’s in so far as the latter too had no father. Adams’ birth took place by dint of just one word of God — *kun* (be) (Qur’ān 3: 59). Jesus’ birth, therefore, challenged people’s understanding. As a result a large number of people questioned the virginity of his mother, and declined for that reason to acknowledge him as a legitimate child. This made it impossible for them to accept him as a Prophet. In time, Jesus’ followers retorted by declaring him to be a son of God, a belief that does not seem to be supported by the Gospels.

In his learned work, *Jesus in the Qur'ān*, Geoffrey Parrinder attempts to present the Qur’ānic view of Jesus. He deals with almost every dogmatic and biographical aspect of Jesus’ life and makes an earnest effort to understand the