This book is an excellent contribution to understanding Islam in the contemporary world and to Christian and Western dialogue with Islam.

To make it accessible to a wider readership, especially to those whose knowledge of Islam is minimal and superficial, the first part of the book is a detailed exposition of the fundamental beliefs, scripture, tradition and practice of Islam. This is not only a useful summary but provides many new insights into Islamic origins, belief, law and practice. This is mostly an accurate representation of Islam with the exception of one or two points. For example, the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong is more intrinsic to Muslim obligations than *da'wa*, the call to spread the faith. It is overlooked that this duty is aimed at Muslims as much as non-Muslims. The statement that Iblis is a fallen angel has to be qualified since many scholars aver that Iblis is a Jinn rather than an angel. These minor inaccuracies of course do not detract from the fact that this is a very intelligible summary of facts about Islam and gives the reader more than a mere outline or summary of the subjects dealt with.

The second part is on encounter of Islam with Judaism and Christianity. Chapter 6 provides a perceptive analysis of Christian–Muslim encounters including polemics in different epochs of history and a hopeful prognosis. This section could have benefited from a discussion of the common roots and theologies of the two religions. Perhaps a more elaborate discussion of this is to be found in a later section on dialogue.

Not many scholars have written on Jewish–Muslim relations so the next chapter is a very useful and illuminating analysis of such relations, from the origins of Islam to the present day. It is rightly noted that anti-semitism in Palestine and other Arab states is more anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli than anti-Jewish. Moreover in the modern context Israel would be subsumed within Western culture both due to the origins of the Jewish diaspora and because of the support of the West for Israel. It could also be significant that much of the anti-Israelism in the Islamic world is not religious in origin but arises from the perceived injustice both of Israeli oppression of Palestinians and their illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. Perhaps the discussion on the Palestine issue merits a more detailed analysis than is to be found here, since this vexed problem is the genesis of not only Jewish–Muslim but also Christian–Muslim conflict and much of the current problems in world politics.

Discussion of Islamic ideologies such as fundamentalism, Islamism and modernism follow in the next chapter and provides a close and in-depth analysis of the issues involved. Secularist ideologies such as found in Turkey also get mention. This is a useful section for understanding the present worldview of Muslims. In the discussion of Islamism one would have expected a more detailed consideration of the role of Saudi Arabia and Wahabism in the resurgence of a conservative and fundamentalist type of Islam in non-Arab Muslim regions. The issue of terrorism, and Bin Laden and al-Qaeda surprisingly get little attention. One would have thought that this is a significant development in contemporary Islam.
The third part of the book analyses the prospects for dialogue between both Christianity and the West with Islam. Strangely, the author seems to approve Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis. I do not know whether this detracts from the objectivity of Pratt’s analysis. In the following chapters there is a fine and detailed analysis of elements that form barriers to dialogue in both Christianity and Islam. This section reveals a close study of, reflection on and careful and clear exposition of the issues involved and might constitute one of the best studies of the factors involved in Christian–Muslim dialogue. Muslim barriers to understanding Christianity and vice versa are carefully analysed, categorized and pertinent solutions offered, not all of which might be practicable. The author advocates dialogue in the theological front, which some analysts might look upon as a hindrance to Christian–Muslim relations. Pratt attempts a delineation of the concept of the Trinity which ultimately fails in its attempt to clarify the concept for Muslims and leaves a doubt whether it is clear even to Christians. It would have been better to present it as a mystery and to keep an open mind about the Trinity than to condemn the doctrine outright, as many Muslims are wont to do. The critical question of whether the Christian God and Allah are the same being is put forward and meaningfully discussed. It is suggested that the Christian and Muslim understanding of God can be seen as complimentary rather than contradictory. Again strangely religious pluralism is depicted as a hindrance rather than as a way forward. Pluralism, unlike its possible alternatives of Exclusivism and Inclusivism, in religion has the advantage of bypassing the problems of truth claims and considering disputed understanding of God, salvation and related issues as being complimentary rather than contradictory.

Overall the treatment of the subject is neutral but perhaps overlooks the fact that there are more Christian initiatives for dialogue than there are Muslim. This is a problem that Muslims have to address if they are to be seen as genuinely seeking rapport and peace with other religions.

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