

accurate to simply refer to the work as "Christ in Islam". We are left with the conclusion that the Muslim polemicists and commentators began with the unquestioned dogma that the Qur'an was entirely accurate and that the Christian Scriptures were false. This is hardly surprising. We may share such an outlook in reverse order. But it remains for someone other than Robinson to show us how to move from such a position to effective interaction in open-hearted love with our Muslim friends created in God's image and worthy of His grace.

***Why I am not a Muslim*, Ibn Warraq, Prometheus Books, N.York, 1995, 360 pages, reviewed by Abe Wiebe**

Never have I read a book that is so openly critical of Islam, its tenets, its culture, its history and its influence on today's world. Writing under an obvious pseudonym, Ibn Warraq, who now lives and teaches in Ohio, plunges right into his thesis from the very first pages. His observations are well supported, his analysis is without apology and his attacks against Islam are daring and well aimed. Much of his writing is frankly brutal. If you agree with him, you can only conclude that the world would be much better off had Islam never existed.

Ibn Warraq postures himself as an open-minded crusader in favour of a society governed by intellectual secularism and producing a thoroughly humanistic culture. To quote the author himself, "human reason or rationality is the ultimate arbiter of rights," communal and individual. By

this he means rights in all the diverse areas of human endeavour or behaviour, be they religion, governance or human relationships, be they in a pagan, Christian, Jewish or Muslim context. The mind is the only avenue through which there is any hope of finding an equitable understanding of man's existence. Therefore, it is not surprising that he draws his sword repeatedly against 'revealed truth' or imposed religious structures. These, he claims, are the cause of the world's woes. Actually the title of the book is a misnomer. It should have read, "Why I am not a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew or anything similar."

To my way of thinking the book merits as full-blown exposure in the media as the publication of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. But the western media has long since decided to play it safe when confronting Islam. Things might get nasty, so why look for trouble.

The first hundred pages, along with the concluding chapter, are the main carriers of Ibn Warraq's ideas. He first chastises the uncritical thinking of the western experts. Then he reviews the origins of Islam, highlighting the serious problem of the insufficient credible sources needed to substantiate what Muslims and Orientalists have been telling us about how Islam arose and how the Qur'an was constituted. He agrees with Wansbrough, Cook and Crone, a trio of orientalist who hold that Islam grew as much out of the traditions and collective efforts of the Muslim teachers of the 8th and 9th centuries as out of the direct revelations

that the Prophet supposedly received from the Angel Gabriel. (We remember that Muhammad's dates are normally given as 570-632). The implications of such assertions are revolutionary in our understanding of Islamic history and culture.

Having made this point, Ibn Warraq then proceeds to engage in a long analysis of the composition and message of the Qur'an, which for all Muslims is the ultimate authority of their faith. This section is tedious and suffers from over-kill. His general conclusion seem to be, 'there is no soundness in it anywhere.'

The succeeding chapters are fairly predictable and reveal very little that is new. He touches on such topics as, *The Totalitarian Nature Of Islam*, *Arab Conquests And The Position Of The Non-Muslim Subject*, *Women In Islam*, etc. In each he quotes extensively from both modern and ancient sources; however his arguments are not as sharp as in the earlier sections. One gets the impression that he has long ago decided that all of Islam is irreparably bad and is now merely citing examples to prove his point.

The final chapter, "Islam in the West," should be must reading for everyone. The author delineates how Muslims have profited from British 'softness' to move into a powerful position within that society, claiming their rights at the expense of the British democratic institutions. Islam, he says, has nothing but contempt for the liberal democratic nation-state. He quotes Dr. Badawi who says, "Islam is a universal

religion, its aim is to bring its message to all corners of the earth." Or again citing an Imam from Bradford, "Islam must be accepted uncritically as the divine revelation by non-Muslims as well as Muslims and thus be reflected in the structure and conduct of the state and of society." He does not contest Islam's right to express itself in Britain on an equal footing. He maintains, however, that, while pluralism is a necessary ingredient in our society, our unquestioned acceptance of multiculturalism as a child of relativism makes us incapable of criticizing cultures on any basis and of making cross-cultural judgments. However, he states, if we value freedom, such critical examination is absolutely necessary. Ibn Warraq believes that the time has come to speak out passionately. He has shown us how!