

Christmas in the Koran: Luxenberg, Syriac, and the Near Eastern and Judeo-Christian **Background of Islam**

From Prometheus Books



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Centering on the pioneering work of Christoph Luxenberg, this anthology of scholarly yet accessible studies of the Koran makes a convincing case that Islam's holy book borrowed heavily from Christian texts in Syriac and other Near Eastern sources.

In this important compilation, Ibn Warraq focuses on the pioneering work in Syriac and Arabic linguistics of Christoph Luxenberg, a native speaker of Arabic who lives in the West and writes under a pseudonym. Luxenberg's careful studies of the Koran are significant for many reasons. First, he has clarified numerous obscurities in the Koran by treating the confusing passages as poor translations into Arabic of original Syriac texts. He demonstrates that when one translates the difficult Arabic words back into Syriac, the meaning becomes clear. Beyond textual clarity, Luxenberg's scholarship provides ample evidence that the Koran developed from a Judeo-Christian background, since Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic) was the main language of both Jews and Christians in the Middle East before the advent of Islam.

Ibn Warraq supplies English translations of key articles by Luxenberg that originally appeared in German and have never before been available to an English readership. This is followed by commentary by other scholars on Luxenberg's work. Also included are articles by earlier specialists who anticipated the later insights of Luxenberg, and more recent scholarship inspired by his methodology.

Erudite but accessible, this groundbreaking collection is must reading for anyone with an interest in the origins of the Koran and the early history of Islam.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for Christmas in the Koran:

"Ibn Warraq presents, translates, and synthesizes a massive number of hard-to-get articles on the Aramaic-Syriac substratum of the Koran. He proves that he is not only a master of past scholarship, but of the present, interacting with Luxenberg's controversial work on the Syriac Christian (Aramaic) meanings of obscure Koranic words and phrases. Additionally he gives us a mountain of evidence that traditional Muslim understandings (all too often parroted by apologists for Islam) of the Arabic Koranic text are fatally flawed and even in places ludicrous, raising questions about its textual transmission as well as the issue of interpretation. It is rare today to find a scholar with Warraq's courage to confront these issues. . . . His work could not be more timely."

—David Cook, Department of Religious Studies, Rice University

"[A] brilliant collection of scintillating inquiries concerning the true origin of the Koran.... The...essays in this exhaustive volume are paragons of critical scholarship in a hermeneutic ocean that contains the early history not only of Islam, but of Christianity also; comparative Aramaic scholarship; general and comparative Semitic linguistics; and new coherent and insightful interpretations of Koranic textual difficulties. The authors of these works represent the most rigorous and consequential scholars in their respective field(s), past and present.... Warraq is always discreet yet irrefutable in his literary skill and scholarship. His intellectual contribution is for our age, and for the ages."

—Michael B. Schub, PhD, Lecturer in Arabic, Hebrew, and comparative religions at Cornell, Yale, the University of Miami, and Trinity College

"Warraq creates new syntheses that will be indispensable reference tools for the specialized and wider public and will certainly stimulate and orient future research. He satisfies the urgent need of a larger public for reliable, state-of-the-art information on Islam, its prophet, and its fundamental texts. His introduction is a well-documented and detailed overview of the problem of language conflicts between Semitic and other languages, Semitic languages themselves, and Arabic and Aramaic (Syriac) in particular. In short a splendid volume packed with information, stimulating and controversial."

—Professor Dr. Manfred Kropp, Semitic and Islamic Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz

Praise for Ibn Warraq:

- "Ibn Warraq exemplifies the rarely combined qualities of courage, integrity, and intelligence."
- —Bernard Lewis, Cleveland E. Dodge Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, author of *The Arabs in History* and *What Went Wrong?*
- "Warraq's work has been responsible for a paradigm shift."
- —Judith Mendelsohn Rood, professor of history and Middle Eastern studies, Biola University

About the Author

Ibn Warraq is the highly acclaimed author of *Why I Am Not a Muslim, Defending the West, Virgins? What Virgins?* and *Why the West Is Best.* He is also the editor of *Which Koran?, Leaving Islam, What the Koran Really Says, The Quest for the Historical Muhammad,* and *The Origins of the Koran.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Holt:

The book Christmas in the Koran: Luxenberg, Syriac, and the Near Eastern and Judeo-Christian Background of Islam will bring someone to the new experience of reading the book. The author style to spell out the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book to read, this book very ideal to you. The book Christmas in the Koran: Luxenberg, Syriac, and the Near Eastern and Judeo-Christian Background of Islam is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book through the official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

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