

INTRODUCTION

One in every four men, women, and children now living on the earth believes that “there is no god except Allah, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.” Proclaimed by the tongue and attested in the heart, this testimony (*shahāda*) makes them Muslims. Muslims believe the Qur’ān is the last revealed Scripture, sent to guide humanity to the Straight Path (*al-ṣīrāt al-mustaqīm*), and that the best model to follow is the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace. The Qur’ān and the vast repository of texts dealing with the life of the Prophet (Sunna) are in classical Arabic, as are most of their commentaries. Only about 15 percent of all Muslims today speak Arabic as their mother tongue, and not all of them understand classical Arabic. Of the non-Arabic speaking majority, which is rapidly increasing due to population growth and conversion, it is estimated that only about 8–10 percent have knowledge of classical Arabic. This means that, at best, only 20 percent of all Muslims today understand the language of the primary sources of their tradition.

This disconnection from the primary sources is a recent phenomenon for Muslims. Until the middle of the twentieth century, a large proportion of literate Muslims had at least a working knowledge of Arabic, even though various colonial languages had begun in the eighteenth century to replace it as the lingua franca. This rupture occurred through a number of fundamental shifts in the makeup of the Muslim world over the last three centuries, shifts that resulted in the emergence of men and women whose links with their intellectual heritage were at best tenuous. The imposition of new and alien educational systems as part of modernist (often colonial) projects further intensified the destruction of traditional Islamic institutions of learning. It is no exaggeration to say that the intellectual, social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of the Muslim world was rewoven during these centuries with new material foreign to its spiritual ethos through a complex process of social engineering on a grand scale.

These radical changes—which have induced a widespread cultural schizophrenia—have exiled most Muslims from their spiritual and intellectual traditions, primarily by severing their links to the language of revelation and traditional scholarship. Such widespread religious illiteracy has exacerbated (and perhaps precipitated) certain crises of authority and concomitant regimes of belief and practice. This has in turn contributed to the social and political instability, sometimes accompanied by rampant violence, in various regions of *Dār al-Islām*—the vast geographical area across which Islam has been practiced for centuries and where its intellectual traditions flourished. Similar disruptions have affected small minority communities of Muslims living in many parts of the world.

The Qur’ān and Muslims

Despite these enormous changes, intellectual displacements, and widespread religious illiteracy, the Qur’ān remains the uncontested source of Muslim beliefs and practices. It is a relatively small text: according to the enumeration of Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī (d. 444/1052) in his *al-Bayān fī ‘add āy al-Qur’ān*, it comprises 77,439 words (*kalīm*) in 6,216 verses (*āyāt*) arranged into 114 *suwar* (sing. *sūra*). The shortest *sūra* contains 3 verses; the longest, 286. Muslims believe the Qur’ān to be the actual Speech of Allah (*kalām Allāh*), which cannot properly be translated, having been revealed at a specific place and time but transcending both geography and history. The Descent (*muzūl*) of the Qur’ān from the Well-Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) was a solemn event that took place within the sacred time of revelation, not in the time of profane history marked by its incessant flow from one moment to the next. Furthermore, Muslims believe that this entrance into human history—the “event” of the Qur’ān—completes and culminates the cycle of revelation that began with Ādam, upon him peace.

Revealed in a language spoken by human beings, the Qur’ān bowed neither to the conventions of Arabic prosody (*nazm*) nor to the rhymed prose (*saj’*) of the pre-Islamic Arab poets, whose idiom set the contemporary standards for eloquence. Rather, it came with its own characteristic style, in the process imparting to Arabic a quintessential sublimity. The consecration of its language prevented any corruption of the text of the Qur’ān through historical linguistic variation and change. The remarkable stability of the root forms of Arabic, moreover, is such that the etymology of every Arabic word can be

traced to one of fifteen verbal forms, making it possible to connect with the living source of the fundamental meanings of its consonantal root. The Qurʾān is preserved by Divine command: *Falsehood cannot come to it from before it or behind it; [a Revelation] sent down by the All-Wise, Worthy of all praise* (Q 41:42).

Neither poetry nor prose, the Qurʾān makes full use of the resources of the Arabic language but is not confined to them. Its eloquence, its grandeur, and its sublime beauty inspire awe and reverence of an order unmatched by any other book. In any passage can be found vivid imagery, powerful oaths, parables, and arguments employing both dialectical (*jadali*) and syllogistic (*burhānī*) formulations, all contributing to its inimitability (*iʿjāz*). Its terse prose and rhymed passages, its ellipses, its parallelisms, its characteristic way of presenting two propositions of striking contrast—all impose upon the intelligence an irresistible imperative to discover Truth, while making it impossible to be properly rendered into any other language.

Reading the Qurʾān is no ordinary event. A first-time reciter or listener—whether a believer in its Divine origin or not—is awestruck and unsettled by this unearthly text. The narrative structures are unique: one might find oneself reading the story of a past Prophet, then encounter a reminder of God’s unchanging way of dealing with transgressors, and soon thereafter receive mention of His unbounded Mercy and Compassion. The Qurʾān seizes its readers in the midst of their everyday lives and makes demands on their spiritual and intellectual resources in a manner that no other book does. The sheer force of its narrative, its evocative imagery, its powerful oaths, its historical sweep, its insistent reproaches, and its gentle invitations to discover and dwell in the sublime and tranquil realm of awe (*khashya*) and Godwariness (*taqwā*)—all combine to produce in receptive readers a flowering of the heart, leading to an unquenchable thirst for further discovery of this extraordinary Book that has remained the most revered source of guidance for countless generations since its revelation some fourteen centuries ago.

Even though such a large proportion of contemporary Muslims do not know classical Arabic, the Qurʾān remains central to their lives. It is recited at all solemn occasions during one’s passage through life. Millions of believers recite it or hear it recited in its entirety in their mosques and homes, especially during the month of Ramadan—the month wherein is the blessed Night of Qadr, *a night better than one thousand months* (Q 97:3)—in which the Qurʾān was first brought down from the Well-Guarded Tablet to be gradually revealed to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, over a period of twenty-three years, beginning when he was forty and ending a few days before his death (11/632). Linguistic barriers notwithstanding, Muslims have a general understanding of the essential message of the Qurʾān. They know that they have been created by an Omnipotent, Powerful, Wise, and Merciful Creator, that they have been allotted a certain time on earth during which they are asked to remain conscious of their Creator and live a life of piety and high morals, and that all their deeds will come to an end at death. They know, too, that there will come a day when the entire preceding order of creation will be abolished, followed by Resurrection—the rebirth and gathering together of all humanity, the Day when all deeds will be weighed—and Allah Most High will pass judgment, leading to everlasting life in Paradise (*janna*) or Hell (*jahannam*).

However, this knowledge of the essential teachings of the Qurʾān does not suffice, for believers also need to have at least a basic understanding of what is lawful (*halāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*) and specific rules (*ahkām*) pertaining to the observance of obligatory rites—in order to perform their daily prayers, fast the month of Ramadan, pay the *zakāt*, and perform the Hajj pilgrimage if they have the means. All of these are derived from the Qurʾān and the Sunna of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. While detailed knowledge of the linguistic intricacies of the Qurʾān and the nuances of creed is not necessary for all believers, a certain level of practical knowledge is; and this is routinely passed on from generation to generation. Today, however, the rapid destruction of traditional modes of transmission of such knowledge, the emergence of modern lifestyles, the inability of a large proportion of contemporary educated Muslims to directly access primary sources, and other factors have brought about exceptional circumstances. Aware of a widening chasm in their understanding of the Qurʾān, most educated Muslims attempt to read it at some stage in their lives, but lacking knowledge of Qurʾānic Arabic they typically resort to translated renditions. Serious seekers may go beyond a basic reading and consult translated commentaries, dictionaries, and various books introducing the Qurʾān. While reading a translation of the Qurʾān may provide a general idea of certain meanings of its verses, such a reading is both intellectually and spiritually fraught because the text read is necessarily mediated and conditioned by the epoch, location, and spiritual and intellectual standpoint of the translator. Moreover, these readers’ linguistic limitations are intensified by a lack of sufficient training to read the Qurʾān—a Book which does not conform to the textual patterns

most familiar to those tutored through a Western-style educational system. The distinctively ultra-rationalist disposition of such education creates a number of barriers to understanding a text that operates at the supra-rational plane and calls for the simultaneous participation of inner resources and faculties including the heart (*qalb*), the intellect guided by revelation (*‘aql*), and the soul (*nafs*).

Numerous new translations of classical Islamic texts on the Qurʾān have been published in recent decades. This material is certainly helpful, but one cannot benefit from the wealth of classical Islamic scholarship on the Qurʾān without proper training in reading it. When one encounters a dozen different (and at times apparently mutually contradictory) opinions on a single topic in al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/923) monumental exegesis *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta’wīl āy al-Qurʾān*, or finds seven different sayings of the Prophet in reference to one verse in Ibn Kathīr’s *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-‘azīm*, only the requisite training in exegetical and ḥadīth methodology and scholarship will keep one from being confounded. *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān* provides a unique resource to help illuminate the path back both to the Qurʾān as well as traditional sources on the Qurʾān, as explained in the following pages.

The Qurʾān and Non-Muslims

If it has become difficult for many Muslims to access the Book that is so central to their lives, this is even more true for interested non-Muslims. The number of non-Muslims who have actually opened one of the many available renditions of the Qurʾān into Western languages has increased immensely in recent years. The rapid shrinking of the world in so many aspects of life has created a “global neighborhood” in which there is a broadening interest in the Qurʾān, especially since the early 1970s, when the Muslim world started to develop a certain postcolonial prominence. This interest has grown rapidly since the dawn of the twenty-first century. Despite these new factors, and despite the publication of numerous new works on the Qurʾān, non-Muslim readers often experience a sense of alienation in their first encounter with it. After reading a few pages, a majority of them find it difficult to continue, for they encounter a text unlike any they have ever read. Even in the best translations, the imagery of the Qurʾān remains foreign to them, not to speak of its *totum simul* (simultaneous totality) that condenses every element of the Qurʾān’s overall message to any given passage. The result can be incomprehension and confusion. This has led some non-Muslim readers to pass irreverent conclusions about the Qurʾān, while others have found its unfathomable depths deeply stirring.

Such readers do not find most books about the Qurʾān written by non-Muslim writers helpful in their quest, for most of them are replete with an Orientalism that is often more invested in establishing its own canon than explicating the message of a Book in which their authors do not believe. Most Muslim scholarship on the Qurʾān, on the other hand, remains inaccessible to non-Muslims as well as to many modern Muslims for reasons of style, basic premises, language, format, and even content. This is spiritually painful for believers, in that millions of human beings pass through their earthly lives without ever truly encountering the Words of their Creator as well-preserved in this Book. It is tragic in a broader sense as well, because it reinforces a sharp division between the fourth of humanity that believes in this Book and the rest who do not.

There are, no doubt, individuals in the West who have overcome such difficulties. Some of these exceptional men and women have left behind inspiring testaments of their spiritual journeys and their encounters with the Qurʾān; these are useful starting points for those sincerely attempting to understand a Book that refers to itself as *guidance for all humanity* (Q 2:185). *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān* seeks to further address the needs of such interested and engaged readers, just as it does a Muslim audience and academic Qurʾānic studies.

The Qurʾān and the Academic World

Academic scholars face yet another dilemma when approaching the Qurʾān. Their professional obligations require they maintain an agnostic detachment from their object of study; yet in this case the object—a highly reflexive text—insists that one settle the fundamental issue of its authorship prior to any further engagement, by either accepting or rejecting the Qurʾānic claim to be the actual Word of God. A corollary imperative concerns the Prophetic status of Muḥammad, son of ‘Abd Allāh, upon him blessings and peace, the unlettered man from Makka whom Allah Most High chose as His final Messenger to humanity and to whom He sent His final Revelation. If such scholars reject the Prophetic claim, they find themselves in the punitive position of questioning the veracity of the Prophet, known to his contemporaries—believers and disbelievers alike—as al-Amīn, “the Trustworthy”. They also find themselves trapped in the mold cast by the

polemical writers who laid the foundation of non-Muslim works on the Qurʾān, and whose early Latin corpus established the parameters of such discourse through the European Renaissance.

This legacy to contemporary academic discourse on the Qurʾān is recognized by perceptive non-Muslim scholars, yielding also the admission that no conclusive solutions exist. This lineage, integral to the study of Islam in the West, includes centuries of accumulated and often detailed scrutiny of source material, study of valuable manuscript texts, and insights of keen minds; it also brings to bear the framework, premises, and biases of previous generations. In the case of the Qurʾān, this genealogy reaches back to the polemical works of pre-modern Christian writers—a pioneering tradition, which yielded early missionary and Orientalist works and in time reinvented itself as the “scientific Orientalism” of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Contemporary academic scholarship has sought to excise the residual traces of the missionary approaches to the Qurʾān, but rests largely on the putatively ground-breaking work of nineteenth-century Orientalism, which imparted a veneer of objectivity to the polemical tradition without rejecting its basic premises and which shared its fundamental belief that the text of the Qurʾān is humanly composed.

From a Muslim perspective, however, such non-Muslim studies tend to lack credibility. It may be argued that one can set aside the question of the authorship of the Qurʾān—bracket it away from consideration—and yet produce critical and objective studies, but the issue between belief and disbelief is too crucial for most believers to be able to take at face value the claims to objectivity of a non-believing academic, however learned. This is not to negate the possible interest of non-Muslim works by and for those who believe the Qurʾān to be either a forgery or a historically composed text, or who remain uncommitted to its authorship. Rather, it is simply to underscore the radically different premises and critical principles that motivate and sustain two very different approaches to the Qurʾān, however internally variegated each may be. One approach takes it to be a revealed Scripture, the Criterion (*al-furqān*) of truth and falsehood, a transforming Book whose study is bound with spiritual benefits and rewards in this and the next world; the other may be motivated by anthropological, historical, literary, or other academic interests, but finally refuses to accept the Book on its own terms or respond to the imperatives it expresses. *And He is the One Who has let free the two seas, one palatable and sweet, and the other salty and bitter; and He has set a barrier and a complete partition between them* (Q 25:53).

The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān (IEQ)

Sources

IEQ has been conceived as the first English-language reference work encapsulating fourteen hundred years of Muslim scholarship on the Qurʾān, as an authoritative contribution to that same tradition, and as a source introducing a contemporary readership to centuries of reflective scholarly engagement with the Qurʾān. *IEQ* shares with its sources a committed scholarly approach. It is spiritually informed by the awesome encounter with the very Word of the Creator, and it securely rests on well-documented scholarship extending back to primary sources.

The tradition from which *IEQ* draws its inspiration—as well as its source material—goes back to the time when the Qurʾān was being revealed to the “Unlettered Prophet” (*al-Nabī al-ummī*, cf. Q 7:157), first in the harsh valley of Makka, his place of birth, and later in and around the oasis “between the two lava hills” that became the home of the nascent Muslim community when in June 622 the Prophet migrated to Yathrib (soon to be renamed Madinat al-Nabī, *lit.* “the City of the Prophet”). Given the extraordinary amount of information we have about that era, we can trace the early exegetical tradition back even to the time of Revelation, in the light of prophecy, within the community that first heard the Qurʾān from the very tongue of the Prophet himself: his Companions, Allah be well-pleased with them all. Those who first heard the Qurʾān—“the best of my community,” as described by the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace—were the keenest seekers of knowledge, wisdom, and purification, with their gaze fixed on the Divine promise of an everlasting life in His Mercy. They witnessed the descent of the Divine Word, were familiar with the occasions of its revelation, and were masters of the Arabic language. Yet their hearts quivered when asked to explain this unearthly text that had transformed their lives. Ibn Kathīr relates a tradition according to which Abū Bakr, Allah be well-pleased with him, was asked to interpret words of a certain verse (Q 80:31: *wa fākihātan wa abbā*). He replied: “Which sky would shade me and which earth would have space for me, were I to say something regarding the Book of Allah of which I had no knowledge?”

This reverential attitude toward the Book was typical not only of the Companions, whose lives had been dramatically transformed by the Book, but also of subsequent generations—men and women who built a monumental tradition of scholarship that while steadily advancing returned always to the primary sources. To be sure, this tradition was directed toward the production and transmission of knowledge, and was located within the social, political, and historical conditions and idioms of its various contexts; but at the same time it was sustained by an abiding concern with self-purification (*tazkiya*) in the very process of learning. Students flocked to scholars, often traveling for weeks and months to arrive at centers of learning where they found masters of exegesis and Hadith sitting in mosques, in madrasas, and even in the shade of trees, relating and expounding what they had learned from their own teachers.

During its formative period, the Islamic exegetical tradition not only produced the earliest commentaries we now have, such as that of the Successor Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. ca.104/722), but also developed its critical apparatus. Keenly aware of the limitations and possibilities inherent in the emerging epistemological and methodological framework, the scholars of the first two centuries developed robust methods of authenticating and hierarchically ordering the knowledge transmitted. Guided by uncompromising fidelity to critical standards, they recognized that it might not be possible to determine all the meanings of a certain verse or the intent of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, when speaking to a certain Companion. This was understood as a condition of the human encounter with Divine or Prophetic speech, rather than being a sign of its futility. The techniques of assessment and evaluation informed a broader matrix of interpretive procedures used to reconcile, contextualize, and specify or restrict variant reports or opinions.

These early scholars lived and worked in a social milieu that was in rapid flux; even the geographical boundaries were quickly changing. One year after the death of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, southern Iraq had become part of the Muslim state (633); two years later, Damascus was in Muslim control; the following year, the Byzantines were defeated at the River Yarmuk; in 638, Jerusalem was conquered; and in 639, Egypt, then part of the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople, fell to an army led by the Companion ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (30^{BH}-63/592-682). By 640, the whole of Persia had been conquered. In 710, a small battalion of four hundred landed at the southernmost tip of the Iberian Peninsula, and the next year Ṭāriq b. Ziyād’s 7,000 soldiers routed almost 28,000 warriors of the Visigoth King Roderic. Two years later, all Spain was conquered but for a strip of territory to the northwest of the Iberian peninsula. By 712, Muslims had established permanent states in Sind and around Samarkand. Within a century of the Hijra, Muslims had extended their empire from China to France. By the end of the third Islamic century, the Muslim polity stretched westward from Madina to Bukhara (present-day Uzbekistan) and Kashgar, eastward to Toledo (Spain), and southward to Aden (Yemen). This rapid expansion of the Caliphate brought this tradition of scholarship not only material resources but also ardent seekers of learning.

It was the passionate desire of these seekers and scholars to preserve every word of the Prophet and their deep resolve to emulate his life, upon him blessings and peace, which sustained the arduous journeys of men like Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra b. Bardizbah al-Bukhārī (194-256/810-870). Al-Bukhārī, let us recall, had gone to Makka in 210/825 from his native Bukhara at the age of sixteen, together with his brother and widowed mother. When he embarked upon his journey for knowledge (*al-riḥla fī ṭalab al-‘ilm*), he had already studied with the Hadith masters of Mā warā’ al-nahr (Transoxania), the region between the rivers Jayḥūn and Sayḥūn (Amu Darya and Syr Darya respectively), corresponding approximately to contemporary Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and southwest Kazakhstan. His teachers included ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Musnadī (d. 229/843), whose cognomen indicates his diligence in scrutiny of chains of hadith narrations, as well as the well-travelled Muḥammad b. Salām al-Bikandī (d. 225 or 227/839 or 841). The latter had heard hadiths from Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (107-198/725-814), who had in turn received hadiths from Mālik b. Anas (93-179/712-795), whose Hadith collection *al-Muwatta’* (“The Well-Trodden Path”)—“the soundest book on earth after the Qur’ān,” as described by al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820)—contains eighty Prophetic traditions through the short chain of narrators that al-Bukhārī would classify as “the soundest of all chains” (*aṣaḥḥ al-asānīd*): “Mālik from [the Follower] Nāfi’, from [the Companion] Ibn ‘Umar” (Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh* 1:62; al-Zarkashī, *al-Nukat ‘alā muqaddima Ibn al-Ṣalāh* 1:140; al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-rāwī* 1:79, 96).

During the course of his travels, al-Bukhārī would hear more than 700,000 traditions, from which he selected approximately 7,500 for his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection, amounting to 2,513 distinct hadiths narrated by 1,744 narrators, the former being the count of Ibn Ḥajar (773-852/1371-1449), as mentioned by al-Suyūṭī (849-911/1445-1505) in his *Tadrib al-rāwī*, and the latter that of Abū Walid al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) in his *al-Ta‘dīl wal-tajrīb li-man kharraj ‘anh al-Bukhārī fī-l-Ṣaḥīḥ*. It was in

Makka that he heard from ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219/834), his teacher in the blessed city, the opening hadith of his collection. Al-Ḥumaydī would narrate hadiths to a gathering of scholars and students in a quiet section of the Ḥaram Mosque, and that is most likely where al-Bukhārī heard him say: “Sufyān narrated to us, saying: Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī narrated to us, saying: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Taymī told me that he heard ‘Alqama b. Waqqāṣ al-Laythī say: I heard ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Allah be pleased with him, say while he was on the pulpit: I heard the Messenger of Allah say: ‘Truly deeds are [judged] by intentions, and each man shall receive according to his intention; so, whoever migrates for the sake of this world or to wed a woman, his migration is for that unto which he migrated.’”

Two things immediately became obligatory for such a seeker of knowledge: to know with certainty that the report he or she received was, in fact, true; and, if so, to examine his or her own actions and intentions to gauge whether they conformed to the ethical and spiritual substrate of this knowledge. The former rested, among other factors, on the veracity and moral standing of the narrators in its chain of transmission; the latter depended on the correct perception and interpretation of the report as well as on the requisite spiritual and intellectual resources needed to conduct such self-examination. The former imperative was a communal obligation (*farḍ kifāya*), meaning that the verifying labor of some in this regard sufficed for all (in time giving rise to the science of *‘ilm al-rijāl*, a uniquely Islamic discipline that insisted on the epistemological relevance of ethical character). The second imperative was more immediate to the individual, for it pertained to the Day when secrets shall be put on trial (Q 86:9), when no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another (Q 6:164), and when each will be recompensed for what he or she intended. The historical shape and quality of Islamic scholarly tradition emerged from the interaction of these two imperatives, as evident in the famous case of Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111), who fled his prestigious post at the Niẓāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad when he realized his work there was eroding certain of his moral qualities.

Al-Bukhārī personally ascertained that the hadith concerning intentions he heard from al-Ḥumaydī was based on an unbroken chain of transmitters between him and ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Allah be well-pleased with him. In this quest, al-Bukhārī and others before and after him were following the footsteps of the Companions, whose own concern for verification of the Prophetic sayings is exemplified by the report of a trip Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. ca.77/696), Allah be well-pleased with him, specifically made to verify one Prophetic hadith. Jābir had been about eighteen when he first met the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. He had gone with his father and seventy-one or seventy-two other residents of Yathrib to the second Pledge of ‘Aqaba (621 CE)—one year before the Hijra of the Prophet to Jābir’s city of birth, where his grandfather ‘Amr and his father (one of the martyrs of Uḥud) were chiefs of the clan of Banū Ḥarām. His passion for preserving each and every saying of the Prophet was such that he could not rest knowing that the Companion ‘Abd Allāh b. Unays (d. 54/673), then living in Syria, narrated a hadith which he had not heard. “I bought a camel,” related Jābir, Allah be well-pleased with him,

and rode it hard for a month until I reached Syria and went to [the house of] ‘Abd Allāh b. Unays. I told the doorman to tell [‘Abd Allāh] that Jābir was at the door. The doorman returned and asked, “Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh?” “Yes,” I replied. He went back and told him, and ‘Abd Allāh came out and embraced me. I said, “A hadith about requital (*qiṣās*) reached me, narrated on your authority, which I had not heard from the Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace—and I feared lest one of us might die before I heard it [from you].” So, he said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say: ‘Allah will gather His slaves’—or he said ‘mankind’—‘naked’ (*‘urātan*), uncircumcised (*ghurlan*), and *buhman*.’ We asked, ‘What is [meant by] *buhman*?’ He replied: ‘Having nothing with them. They will be called by a voice that is heard from afar just as it is heard from close at hand, saying, “I am the King. I recompense. None of the people of Paradise will enter Paradise, and none of the people of Hell will enter Hell, if anyone is seeking them for an injustice committed, until I have taken requital from him—even if it be [only] a slap on the face.” We said, ‘How can this be, while we will come to Allah naked, uncircumcised, without any possessions [with which to pay recompense]?’ He replied, “[It will be taken] from the good and evil deeds [acquired by each].”

While the description of this scholarly tradition may seem to some an idealization of a distant past, a nostalgic fabrication, or at best a futile recall of something long expired, it is a living tradition that continues to nurture hearts and minds in centers of learning often not found on academic maps and is the bedrock of the faith community (*umma*) now suffering one of the most turbulent periods in its history. Nor is this to say that the Islamic disciplines from which *IEQ* draws its source material are monolithic or homogeneous—far from it! They rest on a uniquely configured discursive dynamic that filters, corrects, discards, authenticates, preserves, and transmits such knowledge to subsequent generations. This

tradition has produced tens of thousands of works of importance and lasting value, some of which now survive only in the form of remnants embedded, quoted, or cited in later texts. *IEQ* taps into this vast body of traditional knowledge, encyclopedically integrates this material, and presents it to the reader in a lucid contemporary language and style.

Authenticity and authoritativeness are central concerns of the Islamic sciences, which engage various citational practices to gather and sift a profusion of texts. For instance, drawing on Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim’s (d. 224/838) *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* written in Baghdad some five hundred years earlier, the master-exegete Ibn Kathīr—born in Basra in 700/1300 and taken to Damascus at the age of six after his father’s death, where he lived and wrote until he died in 774/1373—recorded that the chain of narrators of the above-mentioned saying of Abū Bakr was “broken”. He decided to include it in his exegesis, nonetheless, because it was also reported, with a slightly different word order, through another chain of transmission. Such methodological rigor is neither incidental nor unique to Ibn Kathīr. Rather, it is a key element in Islamic scholarly tradition, for its practitioners recognize how their work carries a dual responsibility, affecting subsequent generations as well as their own otherworldly fate. As the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said: “Do not attribute falsely to me; whoever does so shall take his seat in the Fire.”

Raison d’être

The men and women who built and continue to nurture the scholarly tradition upon which *IEQ* is based—and, we sincerely hope, to which it will itself belong—have, as the ultimate *raison d’être* of their toiling, a sublime goal: Divine pleasure. They considered their work a continuation of their prayer, in much the same way as a spiritually mature merchant, leaving the mosque to sell vegetables in the bazaar, would consider it a continuation of his remembrance of the Provider of provisions. Many of them were professional scholars, and were of course not immune from financial need or (in some cases) personal ambition. But the tradition they helped shape insists on the immediacy of ultimate concerns: *O Man, what has beguiled you from your Gracious Lord, Who created you, then fashioned, then proportioned you?* (Q 82:6-7). Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 185/801) declaimed: “My Lord, I love this world only that I might remember You in it, and I love the Hereafter only because I may see You there. Every moment that passes by while my tongue is not quickened with Your remembrance is accursed. My Lord, do not bring upon me these two things for I will not be able to bear them: burning in Hell and separation from You.” Knowledge and its existential realization in nobility of character are thus equally vital to the Islamic tradition of learning. The Qur’ān warns against betraying or profaning the trust of sacred knowledge, likening those given knowledge but not acting upon it to asses bearing tomes (Q 62:5). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, sought refuge from useless knowledge: “O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowledge which does not benefit, from a supplication that is not answered, from a heart without awe [of You], and from a soul that is not content.”

Only recently has this tradition of “engaged scholarship” begun to enter Western languages. This phenomenon is borne out of a certain historic imperative. Several years ago, a former student of the distinguished Canadian orientalist Wilfred Cantwell Smith related the advice he had received from his teacher on presenting the first draft of his dissertation: “It is very good,” Smith commented, “but take a generous supply of ‘perhaps’, ‘maybe’, ‘probably’, and other qualifiers, and sprinkle them across the manuscript.” The young Muslim men and women from former colonies arriving in Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Boston, Montreal, and other centers of Western academia dutifully submitted: the weight of the past few centuries had made it impossible for them to stand on the strength of their own tradition, which developed no such agnosticism—especially in works dealing with the Qur’ān, which proclaims, *This is the Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the Godway* (Q 2:2). They were not in a position to argue that this type of committed scholarship is not necessarily inferior to the putative objectivity being taught, or cite as proof works borne out of that tradition which had not lost their quality or luster over the centuries.

That generation of aspiring Muslim academics from former colonies bearing the unshakable weight of history has almost passed away. Most of them served at Western academic institutions without, as a rule, making a dent in the methodological and ideological framework upon which the academic study of religion in general and Islam in particular is based. Today, however, the academic discourse on the Qur’ān in Western languages is no longer monopolized by those who do not affirm its Divine origin. Those burdened by the weight of colonial history are increasingly being replaced by a new generation of Muslim academics discovering the wondrous fountains of fresh water in their own tradition. In addition, for the first time in history, a significant number of learned and eloquent Westerners—who have found in Islam the answer to their spiritual quest—are contributing original works on Islam and the Qur’ān in their own languages. Such

texts are playing a very significant role in the formation of a new body of works which seems destined to supplant the often apologetic Muslim writings of the early to mid-twentieth century.

IEQ seeks to shape and contribute to this emergent tradition, to open up new vistas of academic studies of the Qurʾān in Western languages through a paradigmatic reconfiguration, and (as was mentioned earlier) to serve the needs of three definable audiences. These are: Muslims interested in a deeper, source-based understanding of the Book which is the ultimate foundation of their beliefs and practices; non-Muslims seriously seeking to understand the message of the Qurʾān; and academic scholars interested in Muslim understandings of their Scripture. Specialists in Qurʾānic studies will find in *IEQ* a much-needed representative reference work; those working in the general field of Islamic studies will find bibliographic references to hundreds of classical works that are otherwise scattered over a vast body of sometimes inaccessible texts; and general researchers without the requisite linguistic skills will find a unique window to the formidable corpus of classical sources upon which *IEQ* is based.

The word *Integrated* in the title of the present work indicates a conceptual strategy as well as elements of its encyclopedic method. Although its approximately six hundred entries are presented alphabetically, the overall structure of this seven-volume encyclopedia is based on an integration of all themes, persons, things, places, and events mentioned in the Qurʾān. This selection highlights the internal coherence of the message of the Qurʾān, which, as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209) observed in his voluminous exegesis *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (“Keys of the Unseen”), revolves around three axial themes: the Unicity of Allah Most High (*tawḥīd*), Messengership or Prophethood (*risāla, nubuwwa*), and Resurrection (*maʿād*). Each entry is comprised of material integrated from various Islamic disciplines (Qurʾān exegesis, Hadith sciences, linguistic sciences, historiography). Finally, references to other lemmata at the end of each entry as well as in-line cross-references signal various levels of thematic integration.

Selectivity

Faced with the immense volume of source material and the practical limitations of producing a manageable encyclopedic text, *IEQ* needed to restrict its own scope to certain domains of Islamic tradition in order to be generally representative of one of its well-definable strands. This restriction is especially necessary given that *IEQ* seeks to locate itself within—not outside or above—its subject matter. Considering the differing hermeneutical principles of Sunni and Shīʿī exegetical traditions, the editors decided to base *IEQ* entirely on the former. Where credal or legal questions variegate Sunni commentary traditions, various schools are considered, although the Ashʿarī-Māturīdī and four extant legal schools respectively have greater representation. For previously mentioned reasons, *IEQ* does not draw on non-Muslim works on the Qurʾān or Islam. Every effort has been made to employ the earliest sources available, and to trace material and ideas back to their first appearance.

Spiritual Etiquettes

As *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān* conforms to certain established generic encyclopedic conventions (presenting individual entries with concision and breadth, lemmata organized in encyclopedic fashion) yet without stepping outside the academic norms of the tradition it surveys, some reflections on method are in order. *IEQ* draws on the conventions and textual forms both of Western and classical Islamic encyclopedias. The Western encyclopedia, as a genre developed from older dictionary forms and inaugurated (for instance) by Diderot and D’Alembert’s 1751-1772 *Encyclopédie* and the 1768-1771 *Britannica*, proceeded under an Enlightenment mandate to systematically analyze all human knowledge as a bequest to future generations. In the process, such encyclopedias subjected their entries to a single, universal rationality inflected in their authors’ authoritative voices as “specialists”. Corresponding encyclopedic works in the Islamic tradition, on the other hand, while relying on the authors’ voices to mediate between the source material and the reader, made comprehensive use of sources from several different genres, included representative multiple variant narrations, and let the sources speak louder than the author. One perceives this spiritual humility in the works of such masters as al-Ṭabarī, who subtly employed the word *qāla* (“it is said”) for a report which in his estimation was not as sound as one he had reported a few lines before with *qāla* (“he said”).

While adopting certain aspects of the Western encyclopedic tradition, *IEQ* seeks to maintain a distinct tone and orientation regarding the nature of the content as well as its presentation. One facet of this is reflected in the authors’ intention to let the source material speak on its own terms. In presenting a broad spectrum of representative scholarship with full documentation, the aim is to give a sense of the “texture” of traditional commentary on the topic of the entry. The

authors' roles have been to conceive each topic in an encyclopedic manner, organize, summarize sources, and present them in an accessible manner. This approach may not avoid all the pitfalls of subjectivity inherent in such works, but it helps allow classical voices to speak for themselves and with each other. It seeks to avoid arrogating interpretive authority for itself, instead respecting the dynamic of an ongoing interpretive tradition.

IEQ maintains the etiquettes of Islamic tradition, including the conventional formulas of glorification and salutation when mentioning the names of Allah Most High, the Prophets, the Companions, and scholars. All proper names are transliterated from the Arabic forms in which they appear in the Qurʾān, Hadith, and Islamic sources. *IEQ* generally follows the way Islamic scholarship normatively proceeds in order of priority: first recording material collated from the Qurʾān, then from Prophetic traditions, then from the Companions, and then from later authorities. Finally, although the rest of the entries are ordered alphabetically, in conformity with hierarchical order the first volume begins with the entry on the Supreme Name, “Allah,” followed by “Aḥmad,” the second of the two Qurʾānic proper names of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace.

While *IEQ* is firmly anchored in traditional Islamic scholarship and belongs to the emerging body of Muslim works on the Qurʾān originally composed in Western languages, we hope that it will also contribute to broader academic discourse on Islam as it brings to the forefront new source material, rare bibliographic references, and resources for further research. Instead of polemically engaging the centuries-old biases and missionary or colonial heritage of non-Muslim works, *IEQ* has sought to offer a positive contribution for future discourse between the two distinct traditions of learned works on the Qurʾān—a contribution that may help bring some light to a world suffering from spiritual darkness of an unprecedented order. We sincerely hope *IEQ* will contribute to a better understanding of the message of the luminous Qurʾān—a Book which, as described by ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Allah be well-pleased with him, “is a light whose radiance cannot be extinguished, a lamp whose flame does not die, an ocean whose depth cannot be fathomed, a path that does not lead astray, a blaze whose brilliance does not darken, a criterion whose evidence cannot be suppressed, an elucidation whose cornerstones cannot be demolished... Allah has made it the quencher of the thirst of the learned, a springtime for the hearts of jurists, a destination for the path of the righteous, a cure after which there is no malady, a light not followed by darkness, and a rope whose knots are firm” (Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musnad* 1:251 §8376; Ḥākim, *Mustadrak* 1:741 §2040; al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-īmān* 3:333 §1786).

Wa-Ilāh al-Mustaʿān, wa mā tawfīqī illā bi-Ilāh.

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Wuddistān

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