BOOK REVIEWS

The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān (IEQ). Volume 1: Allah, Ahmad, A—Beautiful Names of Allah. General Editor: Muzaffar Iqbal. Sherwood Park, AB, Canada: Center for Islamic Sciences, 2013. xxx + 378 pp. ISBN 978-1-926620-00-8. ISBN for seven volume set: 978-1-926620-06-0 [printed and bound in Kuala Lumpur by Al-Qalam Publishing] RM200

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The reputable historian of Islamic science Muzaffar Iqbal initially conceived this project in 2007, and the realisation of this first volume of a projected seven covering over six hundred entries is a welcome event. In his Introduction to this volume Iqbal emphasises the need for contemporary Muslims to reconnect with the Arabic sources of their faith, given that “only 20 percent of all Muslims today understand the language of the primary sources of their tradition”, whereas until fairly recent times a much larger proportion of literate Muslims had a working knowledge of Arabic. Cultural schizophrenia induced by colonial projects and modern mass education have “exiled most Muslims from their spiritual and intellectual traditions, primarily by severing their links to the language of revelation and traditional scholarship” (p. xi). *IEQ* is intended to be a unique resource to rectify this rupture by seeking to reconnect modern educated Muslims with the central source of their faith and practice – the Qur'an as the actual Word of God, and traditional scholarship treating it – through a deeper source-based understanding of this text. It also seeks to serve the needs of non-Muslims interested in understanding the message of the Qur'an, as well as of academic scholars interested in the range of Muslim understandings of their revealed Book.

The *IEQ* thereby sets itself a double program signalled in its title by *Integrated*: to counter books about the Qur'an written by non-Muslims “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;” and to provide meaningful access for both Muslim and non-Muslim readers to the wealth of Muslim scholarship about the Qur'an. Iqbal highlights “the radically different premises and critical principles that motivate and sustain two very different approaches to the Qur'an”. He affirms that *IEQ* intends to be “the first English-language reference work encapsulating fourteen hundred years of Muslim scholarship on the Qur'an, as an authoritative contribution to that same tradition, and as a source introducing a contemporary readership to centuries of reflective scholarly engagement with the Qur'an; ...*IEQ* taps into this vast

body of traditional knowledge, encyclopaedically integrates this material, and presents it to the reader in a lucid contemporary language and style” (p. xiv–xvii). It aims both to mediate and add to Islam’s intellectual tradition of faith-committed “engaged scholarship” but in the English language.

Iqbal cogently observes that a new generation of Muslim academics no longer burdened by the weight of colonial history, joined by a significant number of learned Westerners, are making important contributions on Islam and the Qur’an in their own languages. This fresh discourse of engaged scholarship is displacing the outmoded apologetic Muslim writings of the 20th century. The structure of this encyclopaedia offers “an integration of all themes, persons, places, and events mentioned in the Qur’an”, with each entry comprising “material integrated from various Islamic disciplines” ranging from exegesis, Hadith, linguistics and history (p. xviii). This is a praiseworthy aim, for English has now become a major Islamic language by means of which many Muslims understand their faith. *IEQ* seeks to present “new source material, rare bibliographic references, and resources for further research” and “to offer a positive contribution for future discourse between the two traditions of learned works on the Qur’an” (p. xix).

Nevertheless pragmatic and dogmatic considerations imposed limits on the scope of *IEQ* with the editors consciously restricting its contents to the majoritarian Sunni tradition and omitting the Shi‘ah tradition, and giving greater representation to mainstream Ash‘ari–Maturidi creedal positions and the four extant legal schools within Sunni Islam. Neither does *IEQ* employ non-Muslim studies on the Qur’an or Islam, while “every effort has been made to employ the earliest sources available, and to trace material and ideas back to their first appearance” (p. xviii). A further noteworthy feature of *IEQ* is its conscious integration of Western encyclopaedic conventions and documentation, with Islamic scholarly convention of letting source material speak on its own terms thereby giving “a sense of the ‘texture’ of traditional commentary on the topic of the entry”. This respect for the etiquette of traditional scholarship extends to formulas of glorification and salutation after mention of Allah Most High, Prophets, and the Companions; and to consciously relying upon the consensus of Sunni scholars. Iqbal recognises that such an approach “may not avoid all the pitfalls of subjectivity inherent in such works”, yet it “seeks to avoid arrogating interpretive authority for itself, instead respecting the dynamic of an ongoing interpretive tradition” (p. xix).

Volume one contains forty-seven articles produced by nine authors. In keeping with classical Muslim scholarly convention, the two first entries are out of alphabetic order: ‘Allah, Most High’ (pp. 3–33) and ‘Ahmad, upon him blessings and peace’ (pp. 33–37). Under letter A come thirty-eight entries from ‘Ability’ to ‘Āzar’; and for letter B seven entries from ‘Bābil’ to ‘Beautiful Names of

Allah'. The contribution of three main Editors dominates: Gibril Fouad Haddad wrote fifteen entries, and Muzaffar Iqbal wrote eleven and co-authored ten more with Naseer Ahmed—for a total of thirty-six out of the forty-seven entries. The remaining eleven entries are by six other authors. We may hope for continuing masterly contributions by Gibril Haddad, whose perspicacious intimacy with a vast range of Sunni sources and consummate skill in weaving them into dense webs as a master craftsman overwhelms the attentive reader. This volume is worth acquiring for Haddad's articles alone, remarkable blends of erudition and instructive accessibility, including his entries on 'Abrogation', 'Abstinence', 'Angels', 'Animals', 'Badr', and 'Beautiful Names of Allah'. Among the other contributors mention should be made of the entry 'Avarice and Greed' by Fatimah Ahmadshah (pp. 281b–288a), and 'Alliance and Treaty' by Muhammad Mushtaq.

The fresh discourse of "engaged scholarship" *IEQ* hopes to invigorate is clearly evident in Haddad's excellent entry on 'Angels' (pp.170b–183b) where he provides a critique of 20th century Muslim modernists (M. 'Abduh, R. Riḍā, Sayyid A. Khan, M. Ḥusayan Haykal, M. Asad or M. Arkoun) who promoted Islam as a science-friendly rational ideology devoid of supernatural elements, especially miracles which they simultaneously dismiss and over-interpret, yielding a position mid-way between Orientalism and a material *bāṭinism*. Haddad comments (p.181): "Their interpretations show ignorance of the Islamic criteria of verification together with a propensity for speculation, wielding educated vocables as long as they can eliminate the 'irrational' agency of *ghayb*." Thus the modernists interpreted the Prophet's ascent to heaven as mythic imagery or figurisation of divine truths, inherently replicable by science (this reviewer has heard certain naïve Muslims speak of the Prophet as the "first astronaut" in history). Or they operated a deconstruction yielding 'divertive interpretation': that Angels have objective reality as external embodiments described by the Qur'an and Sunnah, but reduced to metaphoric status as 'disembodied spirits' or 'forces', or as 'powers within man himself'. Haddad prefers to comprehend them thus: "Angels—upon them peace—are magnificent supernal creatures that implement the Divine will, 'spirits subsisting in subtle bodies of light, able to take on various forms by Divine permission...'"

M. Iqbal acquits himself competently in his entries, noteworthy being 'Adam', 'Al-Ansār' and 'Arteries and Veins'. The pious penchant for reliance on Sunni "scholarly consensus" is evidenced e.g. in his entry 'Abū Bakr, Allah be well-pleased with him' (pp.75b–89a) where he gives priority to Abū Bakr's children Asmā' and 'Abd Allāh from his wife Qutayla bint 'Abd al-'Uzza, over his children 'Ā'isha and 'Abd al-Raḥmān from Umm Rūmān (p.76b). Actually 'Abd al-Raḥmān was the eldest son, and 'Ā'isha older than the commonly held view of nine years upon her marriage to the Prophet(S). Iqbal omits mentioning that in the

pilgrimage of year 9/631 it was ‘Alī who proclaimed the ‘verse of dissociation’ not Abū Bakr (p. 80b); he cites the hadith about Hīrā’ (from Bukhārī and Muslim) which alludes to Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān (p. 76b), itself a blatantly pro-‘Uthmānid invention; and gives naïve credence to Abū Bakr’s improbable role in deciding the burial place of the Prophet (p. 82a).

The question arises whether the Editors can sustain their massive participation in the contents of *IEQ* throughout the remaining six volumes, or will they succeed in soliciting contributions from a wider range of qualified scholars? *IEQ* provides an instructive example of a new paradigm for Muslim intellectual discourse which unapologetically privileges the best of classical Islamic tradition—at least the Sunni textual legacy. Perhaps it may have been the preference of *IEQ*’s funders which imposed this limitation to majoritarian interpretive thought. One might ask if this limitation conforms to the editors’ declared intent “to avoid arrogating interpretive authority for itself”.

***An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century.* Aminah Beverly McCloud, Scott W. Hibbard, and Laith Saud (Eds.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Paperback, pp. xviii+328. ISBN: 978-1-4051-9360-3. USD36.41**

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Since John L. Esposito edited *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999) there has not appeared a comprehensive reference book covering Islamic history with regional studies from the classical to contemporary eras and throwing light on contemporary challenges. This team-edited volume *An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century* provides an overview of the Islamic tradition for Western readers which captures its diversity, interpretive debates, and regional differences. It begins with the social and political realities informing 21st century Islamic practice, and examines varying interpretations and debates over hotly debated issues such as the phenomenon of militancy, Islamophobia, and the teaching of Islam in the West. The central approach is that the “image of Islam (particularly in the West) is very different from the lived reality of over a billion adherents around the globe” (p.4). An accessible introduction to Islam, *An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century* announces itself as a western-oriented contemporary product.

Consisting of fifteen chapters divided into four parts and a conclusion, Part I gives an overview of the basic structures and debates within Islam; Islam in the modern context is examined in Part II; regional overviews in Part III – Africa, South Asia, Soviet Republic, Indonesia & Malaysia, Latin America & Caribbean;