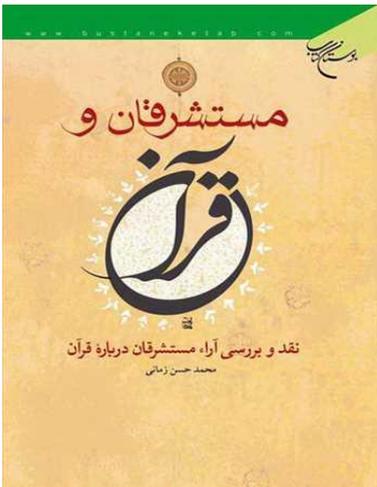




Book Review



Dr. Muḥammad-Ḥasan Zamānī, *Mustashriqān va Qur'ān: Naqd va barrasī-yi Ārā'-i Mustashriqān darbārih-yi Qur'ān* [The Orientalists and the Quran: A Critique and Study of the Opinions of Orientalists about the Quran], 8th ed., Qum: Būstān-i Kitāb, 1400 Sh/ 2021. 600 pp. [in Persian]



The first chapter concerns the Quranic activities of the Orientalists. It begins by referring to the translations of the Quran and its publication in the West and East. Then, the author refers to lexical and thematic lexicography and the compilation of the Leiden Encyclopedia of the Quran and Islam, and some of their topics. He names some other significant encyclopedias of the West and some of their activities, such as the establishment of *Bayt al-Ḥikmat*, correction, and revival of

hand-written manuscripts on various readings (*qarā'at-hā*), and their printing. Then, he makes a historical survey of opposition to the challenge (*taḥaddī*) of the Quran and introduces the most prominent Orientalists who had works on the Quran, such as Jules Labum, Theodor Noldeke, Ignaz Goldziher, Regis Blachere, Artor Jeffri, Yūsuf Darrih Ḥaddād, Andrew Rippin, and so on.

In the second chapter, the focus is on the source and origin of the Quran. After providing a general critique of Orientalism, the author delves into the perspectives of Western scholars and Orientalists regarding the Quran's source. These perspectives include: 1. Revelatory; 2. Divine but non-revelatory; 3. The theory of genius; 4. The Quran's citations from the Torah and earlier Divine scriptures; 5. The culture of the era. Additionally, the author analyzes Maqṣūd Firāsāt-Khāh's theory of natural revelation, which is based on principles, such as the absence of a personal God with attributes, the revelation of God in nature, the continuous and exclusive



nature of revelation with its different levels, and the view that the Quran is not the truth revealed to the Prophet, but rather the Arabic version of that truth, tailored to fit the cultural context of the era. The author argues that this theory is flawed for several reasons, including its rejection of a personal God and its view of the Quran as a human creation that the prophet adapted to fit the culture of his time. The author contends that the Quran actually contains a comprehensive plan for achieving happiness both in this world and the hereafter.

The author discusses the features of religious experience, as delineated by philosophers like Friedrich Schleiermacher, which include being connected to religious matters, having a psychological aspect, resulting in a certainty imbued with emotions like love and fear, not being obtained through rationality and intellect, and being uniquely personal and non-transferable to others. The author critiques this theory because it asserts that belief in God is unnecessary and that a transcendent experience alone suffices. He argues that such an experience is sensory rather than a form of knowledge, and thus could be fallible. On the other hand, the author maintains that revelation is infallible. He responds to the orientalist's theory of the Quran's influence from the culture of the era by asserting that the theory aims to portray the Quran and Islam as non-divine and man-made, depict the Quranic rulings as relevant only to fourteen centuries ago and, therefore, ineffective, and present the Quran as part of the previous Divine books, rather than the revelatory book it claims to be, which completes and corrects the former ones.

The third chapter concerns the history of the collection of the Quran. In this chapter, some orientalist's view about distortion in the Quran is examined and critiqued by the author who offers reasons such as referring to the Quranic verses, the great number of memorizers of the Quran, unification of the Quranic manuscripts during the caliphate of 'Uthmān, the recording of the Quranic verses after their revelation, the constant recitation of the Quran by the Muslims, and so on, to oppose the wrong claim of distortion. The author refers to Blachere's claim that the Shia



believe in distortion in the Quran. Quoting some prominent Shi'i scholars' views on the preservation of the Quran from distortion, the author points to the unreal nature of such accusations and the lack of clarity in the wording of some hadiths regarding distortion.

The author refers to Goldziher's perspective on the variations in readings (*qirā'āt*), which Goldziher attributes to the primitive nature of Arabic script during the early Islamic era and the absence of diacritics and punctuation. Goldziher suggests that the primary reason for these discrepancies lies in the personal preferences, opinions, and rational arguments of the reciters (*qurrā'*). In response to Goldziher's viewpoint, the author cites Ibn Jazarī's assertion that a sound reading must meet three criteria: 1. Adherence to the principles of Arabic literature; 2. Conformity to one of the Uthmanic codices; and 3. Transmission through a reliable chain of narration from the companions and the Prophet (s). Furthermore, the author suggests that differences in the dialects of the Arab tribes may be the main factor contributing to the variations in readings.

In the fourth chapter, the focus is on the literature and structure of the Quran. The author addresses doubts raised by Blachere, categorizing them into four groups: 1. The dry and tedious nature of Quranic verses; 2. Repetition of stories; 3. Lack of thematic consistency among verses; 4. Reflection of the common expressions of French scholars. The author responds to these doubts and cites several reasons for the literary merits of the Quran that have deeply influenced many hearts: 1. The acknowledgment of the Quran's remarkable beauty by opponents such as Walīd b. Mughayrah, the acceptance of Islam by Christians who were moved to tears and embraced Islam after hearing the Quran, and the respect and high esteem for the Quran by Najashi, the Christian king of Habashah; 2. The Quran possesses the necessary attributes to captivate, including variety in topics, application of literary features such as metaphor (*isti'āriḥ*), simile (*tashbīḥ*), metonymy (*kināyih*), and brevity (*ījāz*), and the musical nature of its verses, which feature long, medium, and short rhymes (*saj*); 3. The repetition of stories in the Quran is attributed to reasons such as the gradual revelation of the Quran, the educational nature



of the stories, and their multi-functional role as moral lessons (*'ibrah*), which convey certain teachings; 4. The neglect of some Orientalists regarding the distinction between the spoken and written systems, and the importance of adhering to the criteria of the oral tradition, including brevity of speech and the formal application of different types of expression, as well as similar and dissimilar repetitions.

In the part called “Consistency and lack of contradiction in the Quran,” the author refers briefly to the history of raising doubts against the Quran and to some books written in response to doubts. Then, he examines and responds to some of the doubts raised by Yūsuf Darrah Ḥaddād. The author categorizes Wellhausen’s claims: 1. The Quran is not revealed to the Prophet; 2. The Prophet was not a philosopher or a wise person with mastery over philosophical or theological issues; 3. There is a philosophical contradiction between God’s attribute of power and justice; 4. There is no order and balance concerning these two Divine attributes in the Quran. The author responds to the second claim by stating that some Western scholars wrote books on the Prophet’s personality, indicating his greatness. Additionally, the comprehensive nature of Quranic teachings, including topics such as the philosophy of the creation of the world, the introduction of God and His attributes, and presenting a complete program for personal and social life, provides evidence that the Prophet (s) was the wisest philosopher of all time. Furthermore, other divine books, such as the Bible, have referred to power and justice as two attributes of God with no contradiction between them. Absolute power entails absolute justice, and vice versa. Many Quranic verses speak about the justice or power of God, which are consistent and have no contradiction. Finally, the author points out the possibility that by power, Wellhausen may mean determination (*qadar*). Even so, the school of *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) has responded to this doubt through the doctrine of “the matter lay between the two” (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*), emphasizing that God has willed that man’s good or bad deeds be done by his own volition, not by force.



The author examines the article “Abraham” in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, analyzing Snouck Hurgronje’s thesis and the doubts it raises. The doubts are categorized into five main points: 1. Initially, the prophet relied on Jewish support and held a positive stance towards them. However, in Medina, he was disappointed with them and consequently treated them harshly; 2. The prophet presented Abraham as a Jewish prophet in Mecca but contradicted this in Medina; 3. To establish a distinct identity for the Arabs in Medina, the prophet introduced Ismael as the father of the Arabs; 4. In Medinan verses, Abraham is depicted as a prophet of the Arabs, while in Meccan verses, the Prophet was sent to the Arabs who never had a former prophet; 5. The prophet claimed that Abraham had built the Ka‘bah to sanctify it in Medinan verses.

In response to these doubts, the author asserts that the prophet’s stance in both Mecca and Medina was consistent. In both places, Moses (a) is introduced as a revered prophet of God. The Prophet (s) reproached the Jews for disobeying their own prophet and later prophets, as well as the Prophet of Islam, for not implementing the commands of Torah, and for distorting and concealing the truths of this divine book. In Mecca, the prophet (s) did not attempt to link his religion solely to Judaism; instead, he sought to portray Islam as a continuation of all previous divine religions. By referring to the religion of Abraham (a) as Hanif, the Prophet not only presented Abraham’s religion as distinct from what the Jews claimed, but also rejected the Jewish assertion of being the true heirs of Abraham’s religion. There is no evidence that, during his time in Mecca, the Prophet (s) presented Abraham (a) as a Jewish prophet in order to gain their support. The ancestral relation of the Arabs is not only mentioned in the Quran, but also in the Torah. In addition to the Quran, Ismael (a) is mentioned in the Torah and is not a fabricated figure by the prophet. The name of Ismael is also mentioned in verse 48 of *Sūra Ṣād*, which is a Meccan sura. The polytheistic Arabs were indeed deprived of prophets for several generations before the Prophet (s), but this does not mean they had no prophets prior to Adam (a). The author argues that many of the doubts



raised by the Orientalists originate from not considering metaphorical (*mutashābih*) verses in light of the definitive (*muḥkam*) ones.

The fifth chapter opens with a discussion of various Orientalists' perspectives on the comprehensive nature of Quranic teachings. The first section of the chapter delves into analysis and rebuttal of certain criticisms, such as Margolioth's assertion that Islamic teachings are one-sided, focusing solely on divine commands and overlooking diverse fields of study and human conditions, unlike the Western legal system, which benefits from such diversity due to its empirical nature. The author underscores the divine nature of Islamic teachings, highlighting their positive aspects, including their role in promoting the salvation of mankind and the cultivation of human potential. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the Quran covers primary and secondary principles governing diverse aspects of life, from personal to social matters, and is adaptable to different times and conditions. The author, then, critiques the perspectives of writers like Louis Massignon, who simplifies Islam to Hallaj's mysticism, and Caussin de Perceval, who portrays Islam solely as a political ideology.

In the third section, the author delves into the topic of predestination and free will, as discussed by Izutsu. Izutsu struggled to reconcile two sets of verses in the Quran that address human volition and Divine Will, presenting the concept of "a logical paradox" as a solution. The author, by citing various Quranic verses, demonstrates that divine misguidance is not a divine act against human will; rather, it is a consequence of individuals choosing not to follow divine guidance. This concept is an inherent part of Divine Customs (*Sunan-i Ilāhī*) and can be referred to as "forsakenness" (*khidhlān*). Essentially, those who follow guidance receive more guidance and illumination, while those who persist in wrongdoing and choose the wrong path gradually lose divine guidance and illumination, being left to their own devices.

In the fourth section, certain doubts by the Orientalists, especially Dr. Shaḥrūr, about hijab and inheritance have been analysed and responded to. By referring to the Quran, hadiths, occasions of revelation, and Arabic



lexicons, the author refers to the extent needed for true hijab, which is to cover the body except for the face and hands until the wrists, and criticises Dr. Shaḥrūr's unscholarly remarks. He, also, states that hijab is not an obstacle for the woman's spiritual growth and her activity in society. The rules of inheritance in Islam, as the author points out, are not unjust by allocating to women half of what men receive because of the heavy financial responsibilities of men such as providing for the family and even for his elderly parents when needed, and paying *nafaqah* (expenses) or *mihriyeh* (dowry) to his wife.

In the final section of this chapter, the author investigates Fr. Buhl's statements in his article in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* and highlights some of the inaccuracies in the Bible. By citing the remarks of various scholars, the author demonstrates that the prophet's name was indeed mentioned in the Bible, but it was altered and misinterpreted to not refer to the Prophet of Islam. Furthermore, the author discusses various forms of alterations in the Bible as discussed in the Quran.

The final chapter addresses the critique of the Leiden *Encyclopedia of the Quran*. The author initially highlights some positive aspects of the Encyclopedia, such as the fair and impartial treatment in certain articles, the involvement of Muslim scholars as contributors, and the defense of the Quran against biased skepticism. However, the author also points out some shortcomings, including a focus on lexical explanations rather than the teachings, limited attention to Shia sources and perspectives, excessive reliance on Western writers, and shortcomings in the scholarship of the contributors. In the section on "bias" (*gharad-varzī*), the author identifies instances of bias among orientalists, such as denying consensus opinions within the Islamic community, implicatively accusing the Shia of the story of the lie (*Ifk*), using differences in manuscripts to discredit the Quran without providing historical justifications, and exaggerating the weaknesses of Shia works and attributing them to all Shia. The author then proceeds to criticize and respond to these biases and doubts.

In the concluding section, the author notes that many orientalists, as well as Jewish or Christian scholars, have approached the Quran with a



critical and problem-oriented perspective. The author outlines their doubts, issues, and accusations into the following categories: 1. The origin of the Quranic verses; 2. The history of the compilation and transcription of the Quran; 3. The literary and structural aspects of the Quranic verses and sūras; 4. The teachings and content of the Quran. Subsequently, the author provides a brief overview of the book's content in relation to the aforementioned categories.

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