

arising out of this root is systematically organized in the section dealing with its exegetical explanations, which includes classical and contemporary reflections on phrases such as *khalaqa lakum* (*He created for you*) and *khalaqa kulla shayʿ* (*He created everything*), as well as concepts such as the creation of human beings and aspects of creation which the Qurʾān uses as proofs for Oneness of the Creator (*Tawhīd*).

In many cases, material from ḥadīth literature and other relevant fields, such as the science of “occasions of revelation” (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) is used to elucidate points. The entry on the root *kh-m-r*, for instance, follows the general schema outlined above, lists the four Qurʾānic words derived from this root (*al-khamr*, *khamran*, *khamrin*, *khumuri-hinna*) and then organizes the material by the binary conceptual division of the words, one element of which deals with intoxication and intoxicants and the other with women covering their bodies (*cf.* Q 24:31). Many ḥadīths from both the Sunnī and Shīʿa collections are cited in the course of discussion on intricate legal matters.

Al-Muʿjam is an example of painstaking scholarship in the grand tradition of Islamic intellectual and spiritual discourse. It is a rare work in our contemporary era obsessed with short circuiting and quick results. It is a product of decades of reflection and study. While it is clearly a ready and convenient source to a wealth of classical and contemporary material on the linguistic and exegetical aspects of the Qurʾān, its usefulness is limited to those scholars who know Arabic and who therefore already have direct access to the Arabic-language sources from which the *Muʿjam* draws its material. The work, however, has the benefit of a conceptual organization designed to facilitate further research and scholarship. One can only hope for its eventual translation into other languages, including those of Western academia, that it might open further pathways into the text revered by Muslims since its revelation and likened by the luminaries of Islamic tradition to an ocean without shore.



Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (eds.).

Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. HC, 2 vols., ISBN: 978 90 04 17191 6 (set).

Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: 1700—Present. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. HC, 2 vols., ISBN: 978 90 04 17192 3 (set).

These two works in Brill’s Series in Church History (edited by Wim Janse), each consisting of two volumes, are in part the result of a conference, “Interpreting

Nature and Scripture: History of a Dialogue,” held at Redeemer University College in 2005. All four companion volumes are chronologically arranged, all have introductory essays, and all are heavily leaning toward Christianity; in fact, one fails to understand why the editors and/or publisher decided to mislead readers by using the phrase “Abrahamic Religions” in the title of these volumes consisting of thirty-nine chapters in total while only two deal with Islam and one with Judaism. Likewise, the claim that “while the history of interpretation of Scripture is currently undergoing a revival, historians of exegesis have so far overlooked its interaction with another major cultural force, namely natural philosophy and the natural sciences” (p. 1:3) is puzzling given the rich and continuous harvest of literature on the subject.

Notwithstanding these claims, the four volumes bring together a vast range of well-organized material, though most of it deals with the Christian tradition. Chronological, rather than thematic, arrangement of the material is both useful and problematic; it is useful insofar as it enables the reader to approach the subject in a linear historical perspective and recognize the development of a certain tradition, but it is self-limiting as it does not deal with the theme of these volumes in any coherent conceptual scheme. This manner of organization also provides more flexibility to the editors to include even material that has very little to do with the theme of these volumes, as is the case with chapter eight of Volume 1, “Science and Theodicy in Qur’ān 2:6/7”. The verse on which this chapter is based reads: *And for the unbelievers, alike it is to them whether thou hast warned them or has not warned them, they do not believe. God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering, and there awaits them a mighty chastisement.* There is little in this chapter that is directly connected with “Nature and Scripture”, the theme of the work, except for a meager discussion by two exegetes. The second chapter on Islam, “The Exegesis of Science in Twentieth-Century Arabic Interpretations of the Qur’ān” (2: 491-523), on the other hand, is a comprehensive and insightful survey of the rise of the scientific exegesis.

The strength of this work lies in its historical perspective on Christian thought. Almost all chapters are written by academic scholars who are familiar with their areas of specialization and the extensive bibliographic references are certainly helpful.

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