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Introduction To The Qur'an (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys)



Synopsis

Surveying the life, aims, character and inspiration of Muhammad, this classic introduction explains the history, form and chronology of the Qur'an, and gives the views of Muslim and Occidental scholars.

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Customer Reviews

this is not a translation of the Quran. It is a manual for professors. It does not tell you Bell's translation.

Richard Bell originally wrote this book in the late 1930s. His student, W. Montgomery Watt, in 1970, decided to "revise" Bell's book into this current edition, but Watt stated "the core of the book is still essentially Bell's work...I have undertaken no special research in the preparation of this revision...tried to arrange the material more logically." Also, Watt produced a "novel feature is the Index to the Quran" in this revision. Chapter subjects are: Muhammad's career; Muhammad's prophetic experience; The writing down of the Quran; The authenticity and completeness of the Quran; The external form of the Quran; (the mysterious letters); Features of Quranic style (rhymes, strophes, didactic forms); The shaping of the Quran (the theory of abrogation, revision, alteration; Bell's hypotheses); The chronology of the Quran (European & Islamic views of dating); the names of

the revealed message; The doctrines of the Quran; Muslim scholarship (interpretation and exegesis); Occidental scholarship; Table for converting verse-numbers; Table of sura with chronology; Index to the Quran; Index to this book. One of the Muslim criticisms of any westerner in 'studying' the Quran is our 'free play' in openly questioning and critiquing the Quran (or any book) - both Bell and Watt do that here: they make you 'think' about what Muhammad (or Allah) was trying to 'reveal' to those who had "corrupted their books" and strayed from the Straight Path. They analyze MANY topics in the Koran, including: the prophets, Jesus, Jews, abrogation, angels, creation, death, demons, jihad - just about everything of relevance. Both Bell and Watt taught Arabic at Edinburgh University. A classic.

Richard Bell's approach is not well understood in the West, despite Watt's appraisal of his theories. The Bell take in the dating of the Muhammadan revelations is worth considering for a Hamilton.

This is an extremely well written clear and readable introduction to the Muslim Holy Book - its composition and history. Having said that, it does feel a need for further updating especially after Wansbrough and Luxenberg and the need to move away from unsatisfactory deference to Muslim views regarding its history. Surely, the publication of a critical text of the koran draws near. Bell does not provide a cogent theory for the Origin of the Qur'an more than the odd glimpse here and there - he largely accepts that its history is intertwined with Muhammad. Similarly, there is hardly anything in terms of discussing the language of the Qur'an, its variety, Muhammad's variety in the linguistic milieu. Watt's revision now itself needs revising. It is futile asking people like M A S Abdul Haleem to take up the job, whose sugard translation disqualifies him straight off the bat.

An excellent introduction to western scholarship on the subject. It's useful to read this together with Fazlur Rahman's "Major Themes in the Qur'an", which is in many respects a Muslim response to Watt and Bell. Interestingly, the excellent work that Bell and Watt do in locating the Qur'an within the context of Muhammad's life actually tends to refute the work of more radical scholars such as John Wansbrough and Patricia Crone, who claim that the Qur'an was produced in the second or third century of Islam.

Very good intro text to the Qur'an. Watt does an excellent job of revising and updating Bell's original book. Watt unearths the jewels from Bell's writings and makes them acceptable to the more inclusinary scholarship in vogue today. The book becomes readable to Muslims. Takes a well

rounded critical view of Muslim sources but does not reject them completely. Highly recommended.

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