

“both authors utilized theological content derived from the New Testament to communicate their position on doctrines like Christ’s preexistence, divinity, Incarnation, death and resurrection, but they did so using language derived from the Qur’ān” (p. 101). In chapter four, Bridger notes the continued witness of this Arab Christian tradition through the work of the contemporary (and controversial) Syrian Christian author Mazhar al-Mallūhī and the publishing house Dār al-Kalīma. Bridger analyzes al-Mallūhī’s *Qirāʾa sūfiyya li-Injīl Yūhannā* (A Sufi Reading of the Gospel of John [Beirut, 2004]) as a positive example of the apologetic method he proposes. Finally, Bridger concludes his argument in chapter five by exploring the theological points of culture and language as a vehicle for the expression of the Gospel. It is here that Bridger clearly undermines Schlorff’s argument about Islamic culture. “God views all cultures and every language as inherently redeemable and worthy of embodying *and* articulating the message of redemption in Christ” (p. 135, italics in original). Thus, argues Bridger, the Quran is a valid “point of contact” for apologetic opportunities to evangelize among Muslims without fear of validating their own views of the sacredness of the Quran.

An interesting dynamic throughout Bridger’s *Christian Exegesis* is the underlying assumption of the author, and many other evangelical Christians of similar piety, that the Bible is verbally inspired (p. 155). That is, every word in the Bible, either in its current form or some other form (in the original autographs, for example), is God-given and the final arbiter of faith and life. Often called “verbal plenary inspiration,” this view articulates that God aurally revealed the written words of Scripture. Thus, it should be taken a priori as God’s direct message, which it is humanity’s responsibility to understand and follow. True comprehension of the Word of God does not need to be mediated by explorations into historico-critical methods that place the biblical texts within specific human cultures or contexts. In other words, the Bible is inerrant. This is a different scriptural theology from that espoused by Christians who understand the Bible to be “inspired” by God (see 2 Timothy 3:16–17), where God has used human beings and cultures from which theological truths can be exegeted. For Bridger, and other evangelicals who have a similar inerrant view of the Bible, the role of the evangelical Christian is to undermine the “*mode, form and content* of revelation” (p. 156, italics in original), which Muslims hold is defined by the Quran. What is interesting about this debate and present argument is that, in many ways, this belief in the verbally plenary inspiration of the Bible is similar in nature to the classical Islamic view of the inimitability (*iʿjāz*) of the Quran, in which the Quran is the direct speech of God revealed to Muḥammad *verbatim*. It is, in and of itself, a miracle unlike anything else. Ironically, evangelical Christians and orthodox Muslims share the same view about the way that God reveals. There is, then, a comparative theology of scripture that simply offers competing messages which become irreconcilable simply by virtue of each other’s insistence on the “mode” and “form” of the text, as opposed to the “content.” Perhaps evangelical Christians with such a high view of the Bible share more in common with orthodox Muslims than they realize.

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Philosophical Perspectives on Modern Qurʾānic Exegesis: Key Paradigms and Concepts. By MASSIMO CAMPANINI. Themes in Qurʾānic Studies Series. Sheffield and Bristol: EQUINOX, 2016. Pp. x + 154. \$29.95, £19.99 (paper).

The book under review is a condensation of the two enduring research interests—Quranic Studies and philosophy in the Muslim world—of the Italian scholar of Islam Massimo Campanini, with the purpose of presenting the Quran as a book of philosophy. While a relatively slim volume, the book’s coverage ranges wide, with occasional close readings of select samples from the Quran as actual exercises in philosophically informed exegesis and discourse analysis. To manage this ambitious venture, the book has been organized into two parts, geared toward explicating his understanding of philosophical engagement with scripture as a phenomenological hermeneutics.

Entitled “The Problems of Modern Hermeneutics of the Qurʾān,” part one (made up of eleven chapters) offers a diachronic and synchronic excursion into the tradition of Quran commentary. After positioning hermeneutics as interpretation in a Nietzschean sense, Campanini adds the caveat that the resulting “Perspectivism” is one of “pluralism, not relativism” (p. 6). The underlying ambition of the proposed combination of analytical and “continental” philosophies revolving around language is to open up “a whole world of chances and potentialities” (p. 8). Echoing the influence of Gianni Vattimo’s “weak thought” and the latter’s reinterpretation of incarnation in a way that radically deviates from conventional Christology, Campanini introduces the notion of the Quran as “event.” With a nod to Kenneth Cragg and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, this notion is used as a propaedeutics to his phenomenological hermeneutics, which has the purpose of contrasting the historical-philological investigations of Christoph Luxenberg, Andrew Rippin, and John Wansbrough with an appreciation for Islamic soteriology. To that end, Campanini also brings in the Greek notion of ἀλήθεια, or “disclosure of truth.” To provide a philosophical underpinning for intra-Quranic allusions to “event,” such as *kashf* and *furqān*, Campanini introduces a set of terms derived from Heidegger’s philosophical system, such as *Ereignis* and *Lichtung*.

Campanini’s interest in salvation is also reflected in his engagement with Islamic scriptural exegesis and symbolic interpretation (chaps. three and four), literary and scientific hermeneutics (chaps. six and eight), and the challenges of Quran translation (chap. nine). But in doing so, the author makes some explicit choices. While appreciative of both *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl*, Campanini admits no interest in spiritualism and existentialism, remaining firmly focussed on a text-based hermeneutics, invoking figures as different as al-Ghazālī, Ustādh Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭāhā, and Mohammed Arkoun, while dismissing Ibn al-ʿArabī and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Similarly, his investigations of symbolism in the Quran are structural-thematic in orientation and informed by semiotics, for which Campanini takes his cues from the Egyptian literary scholar Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd rather than the French philosopher and orientalist Henri Corbin, while also including meditations on relevant terms (*āya*, *mathl*, *ramz*) found in the Quran itself.

Qualifying scientific hermeneutics as a “curious” (p. 84) outcome of the exegetical practice, Campanini discerns three approaches, which he associates with different figures from the classical era of Islamic learning: al-Ghazālī’s advocacy of “perfect concordance and harmony” (p. 84) between Quran and science; al-Shāṭibī’s resolute dismissal of such a relation; and Ibn Rushd’s attempt to find a middle way. The chapter on literary hermeneutics deals with contributions by scholars such as Amīn al-Khūlī and his disciple Muḥammad Khalafallāh, as well as the latter’s wife Bint al-Shāṭī? (pseudonym of ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān). As examples of structural-thematic analysis, Campanini provides extensive discussions of the Joseph story in the Quran and the notion of *tawakkul* as “its theoretical nucleus” (p. 58) and the centrality of eschatology and theodicy to *sūrat al-Kahf*. The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Bilqīs in the Quran) and the figure of Zulayka in *sūrat Yūsuf* are offered as examples of women “as masters of their own destinies” (p. 71).

These exercises are not only presented in contradistinction to the works of revisionist historians like Wansbrough and Luxenberg, which are elsewhere dismissed as “bizarre” (p. 69). They also hint at the discussions in chapters five (“Being and Language”) and seven (“Structure and Historicity”), where Campanini inserts himself most explicitly in the first part of the book. In that sense, I find “Literary Hermeneutics” (chap. six), to an extent also “Scientific Hermeneutics” (chap. eight), and “The Translation of the Qurʾān as Hermeneutical Exercise” (chap. nine) awkwardly positioned. To my mind, sequencing chapters five, seven, and ten toward the end of part one seems more sensible.

In “Being and Language,” Campanini puts the phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer in conversation with both classical and present-day Muslim thinkers. Drawing on the contemporary Moroccan philosopher Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābrī and his relentless advocacy of an Andalusian resurgence, Campanini foregrounds the fellow Cordobans Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Rushd as prime examples of rigorous rational thinking grounded in text analysis (p. 45):

As we can see Ibn Hazm appears to anticipate the pacific co-existence of religion and reason *via* the linguistic mediation of a wholly meaningful lexicon: the same as that later posited by Ibn Rushd in *Faṣl al-maqāl* [*sic*]. Both Ibn Hazm and Ibn Rushd elaborated their theories on the basis of linguistic coherence.

The centrality of language runs like a red thread through Islamic philosophical thinking about the Quran from Ibn Rushd to Naṣr Ḥamid Abū Zayd. Its most important consequence is that it “excludes the possibility that the contents of the Qurʾān have a metaphysical existence tantamount to the existence of Platonic ideas.” Therefore, “the manifold ways in which our languages describe reality allow a ‘disclosure’ of God on many levels of meaning: symbolic, linguistic and ontic.” Instead of thinking about God as Being, it offers the possibility of an interpretation as “becoming”; the simultaneous disclosure of God on linguistic, ontic, and symbolic levels. This “telos of human activity and social and political engagement” (p. 52) is then further unpacked in part two, “The Qurʾān and Phenomenology” (made up of three chapters).

Such rigorous engagement with language also characterizes “Structure and Historicity” (chap. seven), in which Campanini connects the title words with thematic and structural latitudinal and longitudinal chronological interpretations, respectively (p. 73). He asserts that preoccupations with the historical sequence of Quranic revelation must be subordinated to transversal structural-thematic analyses, which better demonstrate the “internal coherence and self-referentiality of the Qurʾānic language” (p. 74). To make his case for a synchronic rather than diachronic study of the Quran, Campanini invokes not only Western structuralists, such as Saussure and Piaget, but also the phenomenological bracketing of God as Author by the Egyptian philosopher Ḥasan Ḥanafī and his student Abū Zayd’s advocacy of a shift from text analysis to discourse critique, the work of Fazlur Rahman, and the writings of the Sudanese jurist and follower of Ṭāhā, Abdullahi An-Naʿim.

Together, chapters five and seven provide the building blocks for Campanini’s lifelong project of developing a phenomenological hermeneutics of the Quran. Further articulated in part two, it proposes a systematic argument for the contention that “*truth is intention, telos, asymptotic direction*” (p. 106, original italics). To this end, philosophical phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger is considered superior to the phenomenology of religion grounded in mysticism, as propagated by Annemarie Schimmel and Toshihiko Izutsu, and other Perennialists. According to Campanini, this is not only reflected in the phenomenology of Ḥasan Ḥanafī, with whom he has engaged since the beginning of his academic career, but also in the writings of Arkoun, Ṭāhā, and the Shiʿī scholar Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr. Resonating with his earlier professed avoidance of spiritualism and existentialism, that assessment is sharpened into outright aversion for Perennialism masquerading as philosophy.

In the penultimate chapter, Campanini follows a circuitous route similar to that of Paul Ricoeur: passing through the narrow gate of structuralism, semantics, and linguistic analysis in order to arrive at a phenomenological hermeneutics that makes possible an ontology without the danger of succumbing to pantheism—a real risk to those relying on Ibn al-ʿArabī’s theosophy. In the final substantive chapter, “A Phenomenological Path in the Qurʾān,” the detour is provided by an excursion into Ghazālīan theology for the purpose of transposing Heidegger’s ontological jargon into an Islamic context. This produces a vocabulary to grasp God as both presence (*Deus revelatus*), manifested in the reality of entities, and absence because God’s quiddity “cannot be assigned to the categories of enticity,” and is best considered “a *telos*, a goal to be attained” (p. 129). To Campanini’s mind, the radical monotheism exemplified in the notion of *tawḥīd* gives Islam the philosophical potential to articulate that absence through the absolute transcendence of God, while the conceptualization of God as *ḥaqq* remains present as *telos* and truth.

In symmetry with the last substantive chapter of part one, entitled “Hermeneutics and Praxis,” the conclusion of part two sketches the transformation of hermeneutics into praxis. For this, Campanini points to the dynamic understanding of God as activity. With its origins in Augustinian thought, this has inspired Italian philosophers, such as Gianni Vattimo, to articulate the weakening of metaphysics found in Nietzsche and Heidegger by using the term *penseiro debole*, “weak thought.” It signals a move in philosophical concern from ontology to praxis, and a concomitant shift in the preoccupation of philosophers from metaphysics to ethics and politics. Campanini presents the work of Ḥasan Ḥanafī as the prime example of progressive Islamic thinking, in which metaphysics is weakened and theology transformed into anthropology. He estimates that Ḥanafī has “succeeded in constructing—on a phenomenological basis—a philosophy that re-reads in a highly original way both Islam’s authentic role as a religion and ideology” (p. 139) and offers an ethics that philosophers and intellectuals have a

duty to disseminate knowledge of and help translate into practical value. It has led Campanini to regard Hanafi as a kind of mediator between the late Husserl's attention for *Lebenswelt* and Muslim projects as diverse as the revolutionary philosophy of Ali Shariati and Abū Zayd's discourse critique.

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The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes. By NASRIN ASKARI. Studies in Persian Cultural History, vol. 9. Leiden: BRILL, 2016. Pp. xi + 398. \$189, €136.

In the book under review, Nasrin Askari explores readings of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* that highlight "its characteristics as a book of ethico-political wisdom and advice for kings and courtly élites" (p. 2). She proposes that Firdawsī intended the myths and legends of the *Shāhnāma* to be understood as vehicles for the conveyance, through metaphor and symbol, of important ethical principles and political concepts. Concentrating on the reception of Firdawsī's text among near-contemporary and later medieval Persian writers, Askari argues convincingly that in combining moral instruction with political advice, the *Shāhnāma* functioned in numerous cases as a "mirror for princes," a category that she treats in an appropriately broad sense.

To explore this proposition, Askari concentrates on the section of the *Shāhnāma* devoted to Ardashīr, the founding monarch of the Sasanian dynasty. Consisting of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and substantial appendices, the volume provides an analysis of the Ardashīrian materials in the *Shāhnāma*, and traces the appearance of similar materials in later Persian-language didactic writings. Askari's focus on the figure of Ardashīr is particularly pertinent, since, as she explains, the section devoted to this monarch is commonly taken to mark the movement in the *Shāhnāma* from the mythological and legendary eras to the fully historical period, yet Firdawsī's Ardashīrian corpus combines both legendary and "historical" narratives. The sequence accordingly provides Askari with excellent materials to illustrate her contention that Firdawsī had little interest in recording "history," at least as modern historians understand it, and that he intended instead to promote ethical political conduct. Acknowledging but avoiding extensive discussion of "interpolations" and textual "authenticity," Askari establishes criteria for her assessment of the verses that constituted Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Using the edition of J. Khāliqī-Muṭṭāq, she cites her texts in the original Persian and provides, for the most part, her own translations.

Chapter one assembles the information available on the sponsorship of the *Shāhnāma*, assesses the anecdotes concerning its immediate reception, and cites the responses of later medieval writers to Firdawsī and his opus. Doubting the reliability of reports of Sultan Maḥmūd's reputedly unenthusiastic response to Firdawsī's work, Askari finds that these sometimes quite different accounts reflect the purposes of individual authors. Noting the political aspirations likely to underlie the 'Abd al-Razzāq family's involvement in the production of other books of kings, Askari finds evidence in the preface (the sole surviving portion) of the prose Abū Maṣūri *Shāhnāma*—completed in 346/957, nearly a half century before that of Firdawsī—of the text's intended instructional value. Next, Askari surveys later Persian authors' references to, imitations of, borrowings from, and commentaries on Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Drawing on a wide range of writings—biographies, the comments of copyists, studies of rhetoric, later epics, anthologies, mirrors for princes, and historiographical works—she demonstrates the largely ethical appreciation of the *Shāhnāma* in the centuries following its appearance, and its continuing currency as a book of wisdom. Particularly persuasive in this regard is her discussion of the genre of *ikhtiyārāt-i Shāhnāma*, topically organized collections of "selections from the *Shāhnāma*," and of post-*Shāhnāma* epics, such as the *Zafarnāma* of Mustawfī (d. 750/1349).

In chapter two, Askari turns to the Ardashīr cycle in the *Shāhnāma*, which she divides into two parts. The first part, preceded by a prologue, deals with Ardashīr's birth and early life, his military campaigns and attainment of the *farr* (divine right to rule) that established his legitimacy, and his protection of the