

REMEMBRANCE: ANDREW RIPPIN (1950–2016)

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On Tuesday, November 29, 2016, Andrew Rippin passed away at his home in Victoria, British Columbia.¹ Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria since 2013—where he was formerly Professor of History and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities—Andrew (or Andy as he was known to some) was an esteemed colleague, revered mentor, and scholarly inspiration to many members of the IQSA community.

Entering the fields of Qurʾānic and Islamic Studies in the 1980s, Andrew was an astonishingly prolific scholar, helping to shape these fields for almost four decades.² He was author or editor of two dozen well-known textbooks, anthologies, and thematic volumes; some eighty journal articles and book chapters; and literally hundreds of encyclopedia entries and reviews. For scholars of the Qurʾān, Andrew was perhaps best known for his profound impact on the study of *tafsīr* in particular. His numerous surveys and introductory works allow the aspiring student of the Qurʾān and its interpretation to both grasp the immensity of the field and appreciate its transformation over the decades since he published his earliest attempt to take stock of the state of the field some thirty-five years ago.³

1. A shorter version of this obituary notice was published online on the IQSA website on December 1, 2016 (<https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2016/12/01/ripar/>).

2. On the influence Andrew has had on the study of the Qurʾān in the Islamic world, see Majid Daneshgar, “Western Non-Muslim Qurʾānic Studies in Muslim Academic Contexts: On Rippin’s Works from the Middle East to the Malay-Indonesian World,” in Majid Daneshgar and Walid Saleh (eds.), *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin* (TSQ 11; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 367–385.

3. “The Present Status of *Tafsīr* Studies,” *MW* 7 (1982): 224–238. Just a few years after receiving his doctorate, Andrew was already exerting a significant impact on the field: in 1985 he organized an important conference at the University of Calgary featuring a host of scholars who were—or would become—titans of the study of Qurʾān and *tafsīr*. Andrew edited the proceedings from that conference and published them as *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); forty years on, the volume remains indispensable, as its reprinting by Gorgias Press in 2012 indicates.

Seeking to apprehend the full range of subjects covered in Andrew's publications, one is struck by the sheer breadth of his interests and expertise. Already in the articles published during his first decade of activity in the field of Qur'ānic Studies, Andrew touches on a number of subjects that would be of continuing interest to him throughout his career. These include the complex relationship between doctrine, grammar, and lexicography in the formation of the *tafsīr* tradition; the intertwining of Qur'ān and *tafsīr* with Jewish and Christian scriptural, parascriptural, and exegetical cultures; the origins of Muslim attempts to impose hermeneutic frameworks linked to the biography of Muḥammad and accounts of the process of revelation such as *naskh* and *asbāb al-nuzūl* upon the Qur'ān; the benefits that bringing epigraphic and archaeological data to bear in the interpretation of the Qur'ān might potentially yield; and the construction of authority figures in the received tradition—most notably 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687)—to demarcate certain strands of exegesis as ancient in pedigree and thus of greater legitimacy than others.⁴

Today, *Tafsīr* Studies has clearly emerged as a vibrant field of inquiry. That we can now recognize it as such is in no small part due to Andrew's tireless efforts in this regard. Andrew long advocated for scholars to take the Qur'ān seriously as a primary text that reflects its late antique origins—and so to not be slavishly dependent upon classical Muslim commentary to discern its meaning—while at the same time recognizing the value of *tafsīr* and other branches of the *ʿulūm al-Qur'ān* as significant in their own right. That is, he emphasized the necessity of striking a balance between reading the Qur'ān on its own terms and understanding the importance of how Muslims have made sense of the Qur'ān as scripture over the last 1,400 years of Islamic

4. See, e.g.: "Al-Zuhrī, *Naskh al-Qur'ān* and the Problem of Early *Tafsīr* Texts," *BSOAS* 47 (1984): 22–43; "Sa'adya Gaon and Genesis 22: Aspects of Jewish-Muslim Interaction and Polemic," in William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks (eds.), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions: Papers Presented at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies, Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 33–46; "The Function of *asbāb al-nuzūl* in Qur'ānic Exegesis," *BSOAS* 51 (1988): 1–20; "RĤMNN and the Ḥanīfs," in Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (eds.), *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 153–168; "*Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* and Criteria for Dating Early *Tafsīr* Texts," *JSAI* 18 (1994): 38–83. My own research on the lost *tafsīr* of al-Kalbī and the corpus of traditions attributed to Wahb b. Munabbih would have been impossible to conceive without Andrew's pioneering work: Michael E. Pregill, "Methodologies for the Dating of Exegetical Works and Traditions: Can the Lost *Tafsīr* of Kalbī be Recovered from *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* (also known as *al-Wādīh*)?" in Karen Bauer (ed.), *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis (2nd/8th–9th/15th c.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2013), 393–453; "*Isrā'īlyyyāt*, Myth, and Pseudepigraphy: Wahb b. Munabbih and the Early Islamic Versions of the Fall of Adam and Eve," *JSAI* 34 (2008): 215–284.

history, appreciating the way exegesis functions as an arena in which Muslim beliefs, behavioral norms, and values are expressed and shaped.

In promoting this agenda in his scholarship, Andrew sought to advance the approach of John Wansbrough (d. 2002) in a particularly constructive (as well as generally more accessible) way. However, unlike many revisionists, Andrew drew on the insights and implications of Wansbrough's work for understanding both the Qur'ān and the traditional sources on the origins of Islam without devaluing Muslim tradition or diminishing its claims. He shared this approach with a number of Wansbrough's students, including Patricia Crone, G. R. Hawting, and Norman Calder. As Emran El-Badawi puts it in his obituary notice for Andrew:

Andrew shared the skepticism of his mentor ... about the narrative structures of Qur'anic exegesis and prophetic traditions. This skepticism, however, did not cause Andrew to dismiss these corpora outright, but rather to deepen his exploration of classical Islamic tradition as a whole.⁵

This approach stands in stark contrast to an historical-critical approach to the Qur'ān that discards traditional exegesis as an impediment to getting at the 'original' meaning of the text.

It is thus no exaggeration to say that both the revival of interest in the study of the Qur'ān over the last decade and the flourishing of the study of *tafsīr* in the same period have both been greatly encouraged by Andrew's broad and empathetic approach, and well as by his many specific contributions in publishing, teaching, and mentorship.

In 2016, shortly before his death, Andrew was honored with a Festschrift edited by Majid Daneshgar and Walid Saleh: *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), featuring chapters by almost twenty prominent contemporary scholars of Islam as well as two vivid personal tributes by Jane McAuliffe and Claude Gilliot.⁶ The richness and

5. Emran El-Badawi, "In Memoriam: Andrew Rippin, 1950–2016," *RMES* 51 (2017): 155–157. As a young scholar, Andrew received his Ph.D. under Charles Adams at McGill in 1981 but sought out Wansbrough's mentorship as well, and his attempts to translate Wansbrough's ideas for a broader audience are still noteworthy for their clarity and concision. See his "Literary Analysis of *Qur'ān*, *Tafsīr*, and *Sīra*: the Methodologies of John Wansbrough," in Richard C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 151–163, 227–232, and compare his carefully annotated edition of one of Wansbrough's classic works: John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, with foreword, translations, and expanded notes by Andrew Rippin (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004 [1977]).

6. Jane McAuliffe's piece is particularly valuable for placing much of Andrew's

sophistication of this volume is testimony to the massive impact Andrew had on the field, though the short biographical notes and comprehensive bibliography one may find there mostly capture his contribution to the field in quantitative terms. The true depth of his impact is almost unfathomable, judging from the hundreds of students, colleagues, and friends he influenced over the decades, and who will remember Andrew as the very model of thorough and exacting—yet humane and engaged—scholarship.

We recall with particular gratitude that Andrew was instrumental in the foundation of the International Qur'anic Studies Association and made many significant contributions to the formation of the society in its initial years. He served as the inaugural president in 2014,⁷ and advised the society's leadership on numerous matters, as well as advocating on behalf of the organization and its mission in that critical early period. Shortly before Andrew's death, the IQSA Board of Directors announced the creation of the Andrew Rippin Best Paper Prize, to be awarded each year to an outstanding paper delivered at the Annual Meeting by a graduate student or early career scholar. The inaugural prize was awarded in 2017 to Jawad Qureshi for his paper from the 2016 Annual Meeting, "Ring Composition, Virtues, and Qur'anic Prophetology in Surat Yusuf (Q 12)," which is published here in this volume in revised form. Subsequently, in 2018 the second prize was awarded to Johanne Christiansen for her paper "'And Their Prayer at the House is Nothing but a Whistling and a Clapping of Hands' (Q 8:35): Negotiating Processions in the Qur'an." We thank the donors and supporters of our organization who made establishing the Andrew Rippin Best Paper Prize—only a small token of Andrew's enduring scholarly legacy—possible.

work in context, given her own titanic contributions to the field and numerous collaborations with Andrew over the years; see "A Concluding Appreciation," in Daneshgar and Saleh (eds.), *op. cit.*, 386–395.

7. At the Annual Meeting in San Diego that year, Andrew gave the response to the keynote address by Angelika Neuwirth (delivered in absentia by Nicolai Sinai); both papers can be downloaded at <https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/publications/papers/>.