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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Gwynne, Rosalind Ward. *Logic, Rhetoric, and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'ān: God's Arguments.* London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. 251 pp. ISBN 0415324769.

Inspired by the great Muslim theologian, philosopher, and mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Gwynne's *Logic, Rhetoric, and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments* provides a valuable new lens through which the Qur'an can be read and understood. Analyzing the Qur'an's arguments is essentially ignored by the earliest exegetes, but Gwynne claims this is because, "reasoning and argument are so integral to the content of the Qur'an and so inseparable from its structure that they in many ways shaped the very consciousness of Qur'anic scholars" (203). While her work and method are informed greatly by traditional Qur'anic commentary (*tafsir*), Gwynne diverges from the usual task of Qur'anic commentary in that her analysis focuses on the form of arguments and commands rather than the content and its subsequent interpretation. Gwynne proposes schemata based in formal logic that can be used to reveal valid arguments, both explicit and implicit, within the text of the Qur'an. Gwynne argues for "the existence in the Qur'an of full arguments with premises and conclusions, antecedents and consequents, constructions *a fortiori*, commands supported by justification, conclusions produced by rule-based reasoning, comparisons, contrasts, and many other patterns."

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A formal argument requires premises from which the conclusion must be derived. For Gwynne claims that the arguments found within the Qur'an necessarily proceed from the Covenant between God and humanity. The validation of this premise is found within the Qur'an itself and need not refer to anything other than God's word. To this end, Gwynne provides a comprehensive survey of verses where divine signs and the existence of precedent can be seen to substantiate God's commands. Demonstrating this form, Gwynne considers Qur'an 96:1–5 as an argument where God identifies himself and then testifies to his own authority by noting expressions of his omnipotence; that God created humanity and provided them with knowledge. God's command to Muhammad to "Recite!" is validated by his divine power.

After establishing the Covenant, divine sign, and precedent as the premises on which all Qur'anic arguments are based, Gwynne devotes the bulk of her work to analyzing the many different forms of argument in the Qur'an. Quoting specific verses in each instance, rule-based and legal reasoning are examined first and appear as the primary foci due to their prominence in the history of Qur'anic and Islamic scholarship. Categorical, conditional, and disjunctive arguments in the Qur'an are also brought to light by Gwynne's comprehensive exegesis. She also briefly explores the debate techniques utilized by theologians like Najm al-Din al-Tufi and al-Ghazali.

Gwynne's treatment of the material is systematically accomplished with simultaneous reference to Qur'anic verses and schemata that originate in formal logic. Her method effectively shows the Qur'an's argumentative forms with meticulous detail. Additionally, Gwynne's process of analysis provides interpretations of the Qur'an that are both logical and grounded in *Sunna*, even though these are achieved by means arguably outside of tradition. The complexity inherent in some of Gwynne's concepts may make certain sections generally inaccessible to readers lacking an introduction to formal logic. This problem might prevent certain students and scholars from applying Gwynne's work to their

reading of the Qur'an. However, this difficulty is at least partly overcome by the inclusion of detailed notes, a general index, and an index of Qur'anic verses. The latter of these is perhaps the most significant and useful because the verse index provides a supplementary interpretation to be utilized in any study related to the Qur'an.

Gwynne's work is important to the field of Qur'anic studies in general for its insistence that innovative avenues of Qur'anic studies can be extremely profitable. Her focus on form rather than content, as well as numerous references to works by McAuliffe, Wansbrough, and Neuwirth, is evidence of a new trend in scholarship that focuses on the effect of the Qur'an on the consciousness of Muslims. Indeed, Gwynne's claim that the arguments of the Qur'an were internalized by Muslims surely echoes Neuwirth's findings related to *suras* as liturgical devices and Sells's claim regarding the significance and power of a *sura's* vocalization. Perhaps Gwynne's greatest success is to render the verses (and arguments) of the Qur'an more accessible to scholars and students on an academic level, while retaining the Revelation's applicability to Muslim traditions and beliefs both at the social and individual levels. Additionally, Gwynne's work helps to establish the value of new directions for Qur'anic studies and even goes as far as providing a short section devoted to suggestions for future studies.

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Leonard, Karen Isaksen. *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research*. New York, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003. 199 pp. ISBN 0871545306.

With her assessment of the state of research on America's Muslims, Karen Isaksen Leonard has offered scholars a timely and much-needed resource. Leonard's extended bibliographic essay traces the inroads academics from across many disciplines have made into this subject. Highlighting recent studies of the last twen-

ty-five years—without neglecting older, seminal works such as C. Eric Lincoln's *The Black Muslims in America* (1961)—she also points to areas in need of future research. Shortcomings are inevitable in sweeping reviews of scholarship on a burgeoning and interdisciplinary field such as this. Undoubtedly, certain topics receive scant attention or go unnoticed. Authors sacrifice substantive depth in favor of representative breadth. A concentration on methodology and theoretical concerns eclipses larger conceptions of the actual topic at hand. However, Leonard's final product, while not entirely free of these pitfalls, is unique. With few exceptions, this is a balanced piece. It is also a knowledgeable introduction to the history of Muslim Americans in general with a finer interpretive analysis into certain topics—such as gender and race—than one would expect from a bibliographic review.

Leonard divides her book into three parts. Part I is a valuable historical overview of Islam in America, an examination of "the ways in which national origin, language, sectarian affiliation, race, class, and gender have structured Muslim communities." Leonard illustrates the interaction between indigenous (namely, African American) and immigrant Muslim Americans and the subsequent development of what Leonard calls "ethno-racial" communities. She then reviews the political mobilization and organization of American Muslims and their increasing involvement in national affairs of state. Lastly, Leonard underscores certain issues she thinks require more attention; specifically, those relating to African American Islamic movements, smaller immigrant (sectarian or national-origin) communities, and, lastly, "unmosqued," secular, and invisible Muslims.

Part II leaves behind the historical overview of Islam in America and commences a topical review of contemporary research findings on various issues and themes. Leonard investigates the matter of diverse identities and affiliations among American Muslims. The heavy focus here and throughout the book on identity—an important subject, to be sure—is not surprising given Leonard's training as an anthropologist and her previous work on ethnic identities among

South Asian Americans. Surveying the physical landscape of Islam in America, Leonard locates the play of these aforementioned identities in their domestic and public settings. Her consideration of space, place, and built environments here—drawing on the scholarship of Barbara Daly Metcalf and others—is not only appreciated, but also insightful. Leonard then moves on to an inspection of the specifically religious practices and discourses evident in American Islam that pertain to notions of law and authority.

Included in Part II is a perceptive discussion of the "Americanization" phenomenon by which Muslim Americans participate by varying degrees in projects of integration and accommodation. Leonard supplies readers with a look at the scholarly debate between cosmopolitanism and pluralist multiculturalism (seen, for example, in the work of David Hollinger and Diana Eck, respectively) as well as debates between modernizers and their opponents within Muslim circles. Last of all, in Part III Leonard offers suggestions for further research agendas, underscoring the need for continuing interaction between Islamic studies and religious studies scholars and increased attention to post-9/11 issues.

As expected, although this is an invaluable resource for scholars or even general audiences interested in Muslims in America, a few conspicuous weaknesses are present. For one, while Leonard published *Muslims in the United States* just a few years ago, several surveys and works of scholarship have come out since 2003 that serve to make her book seem somewhat dated. On the one hand, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey contradicts some of the earlier statistics and findings upon which Leonard relies (especially regarding population demographics and political affinities). On the other hand, several significant articles and books published in recent years have effectively reshaped the configuration and direction of the field. Thus Leonard's review is less helpful regarding developments in post-9/11 issues. For one example, she does not examine the effects of political and military involvement in West Asia on relations between differing Muslim groups in the U.S. or between

Muslim and non-Muslim Americans. For another example, she does not mention the effects of the recent Iranian revolutions on already-strained Sunni-Shi'a relations.

In addition, Leonard downplays the importance of cross-disciplinary and cross-Atlantic studies. She also neglects the kinds of conclusions and connections we can draw from studies of immigration and immigrant communities, as well as regionally based studies. A need exists for greater integration of American and European scholarship on Muslims and Leonard's review does not help to remedy this. Lastly, Leonard leaves out any discussion on perceptions of Islam and Muslims in America's cultural and intellectual history—a phenomenon with which scholars must still reckon—choosing rather to focus on "self-identified" Muslims. Yet outsider perceptions affect the American Islamic community, and thereby remain pertinent to her overall agenda. Though much of the published findings on this sub-discipline (such as Marr's *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* and Nance's *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790–1935*) came out after 2003, Leonard omits Allison's *The Crescent Obscured* (1995) and even Edward Said's requisite *Orientalism* (1978). Still, in the final estimate these are minor nitpicks of a book that researchers interested in the subject of Islam and Muslims in America will do well to read. Founded on solid research and composed in a clear and engaging style, Leonard's review deserves a wide readership for years to come.

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Payne, Richard K., ed. *Path of No Path: Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism Honoring Roger Corless.* Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of Buddhist Studies / Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2009. 290 pp. ISBN 1886439419.

Roger Corless was an eminent scholar in the field of Buddhist studies, and in *Path of No Path: Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism Honoring Roger*

Corless, other leading scholars—colleagues, friends, and students—contribute their academic work to the memory of Corless. This is the first of three volumes in a series dedicated to Corless; the remaining volumes will posthumously feature some of his new and earlier work. Richard K. Payne, the book's editor, has managed to gather a collection of essays by various authors that resonate with Corless' assorted research interests. In addition to Pure Land Buddhism, the essays also deal with a number of topics including American Buddhism, esotericism, and pluralism. The book's ten chapters offer valuable new research to the field of Pure Land Buddhism and beyond, and scholars within the field will certainly benefit from them.

The book's three broad sections—practice, transmission, and interpretation—are a bit constraining at times. Moreover, the division suggests that scholarly religious studies work should follow the same prescribed design (practicing and receiving transmission before being able to interpret). I will only address a couple of the articles in detail.

In the practice section, Charles D. Orzech delivers an interesting essay in which he illustrates how South Asian esoteric rituals may have been adapted into Tang China. Orzech claims that the *Wuliangshou rulai guanxing gongyang yigui* (T.930) was based on earlier esoteric templates from South Asia, and that the text was adapted to include Pure Land elements that could be integrated easily into Chinese Buddhist practice. This is irregular in Orzech's view because the *Wuliangshou yigui* preserved the "non-esoteric soteriology" of Pure Land belief within an esoteric practice (44). In his conclusion Orzech discusses the ways in which esoteric and Pure Land practices correspond, a topic very familiar to Roger Corless.

Richard K. Payne's essay in the transmission section will likely invoke the most reaction and commentary. Payne calls out Huston Smith in the essay, and includes a stinging (though well-formulated) critique of Smith's 2004 introduction to Buddhism. Payne derides Smith's (mis)representations of Buddhism,

demonstrating that they are nothing more than "Smith's own theology" which suffers from perennialism and an anti-modern bias (155). Moreover, Smith's depictions of Buddhism are couched in a Protestant discourse that privilege his own beliefs over more accurate interpretations of Buddhist doctrines and practices. It is clear that Payne views Smith as a real danger and wants to undermine his status, going as far as to reveal Smith's apparent plagiarism in his recent works. Although it is certain that many scholars will applaud Payne's exposition, at times his critique can be extended beyond Smith, including other authors in the book. Payne criticizes Smith's connection of Pure Land belief to Christian concepts including soteriology, grace, and faith. Yet, some of the other authors in this volume (especially those in the interpretation and practice sections) are also guilty.

In the interpretation section, Kenneth K. Tanaka tries to reconcile a literal understanding of the Pure Land belief with a figurative understanding. Tanaka believes contemporary Shin Buddhists have a figurative understanding, whereas Shinran, their founder, never fully renounced a literal belief. To settle this issue, Tanaka offers an approach that reincorporates the literal understanding of Pure Land as a way to "see the ordinary differently" (235). In the following applications of this theory, Tanaka demonstrates that, like Shinran, a literal understanding of the Pure Land can aid a deeper figurative belief.

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