

challenges to the textual basis of this traditional narrative. One can only speculate that it was a rejection of the 'Orientalist' approach to early Islamic history which led Çinar to abandon any kind of critical historical investigation. It is one thing to ignore previous scholarship because it does not correspond with one's worldview, but another thing altogether to abandon the basic rules of academic practice. The only way in which this publication can serve interested readers is as an anthology offering insights into the way some ninth-century Arabic authors presented the religious landscape of pre- and early Islamic Arabia. Readers interested in recent scholarly discussions concerning this subject will find broad outlines and bibliographical references in Robert Hoyland's book and the other titles listed above.

*Anna Ayşe Akasoy*  
*Oriental Institute, University of Oxford*  
 E-mail: [anna.akasoy@orinst.ox.ac.uk](mailto:anna.akasoy@orinst.ox.ac.uk)  
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*The Moral World of the Qur'ān*

By M. A. DRAZ, translated by DANIELLE ROBINSON and REBECCA MASTERTON (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 396 pp. Price HB £49.50. EAN 978-1860644221.

The chief merit of this substantial work consists in illustrating convincingly and lucidly what Muslims believe about the Qur'ān: that as a book of guidance *par excellence* it appeals to both mind and heart, and that it lays down a unified ethical system anchored in eternally valid and life-enriching moral principles and rules. In so doing, it also underscores 'the Western scholars' [...] absolute silence on the Qur'ānic ethics' and 'shows them its true face' (pp. 1–2). Published originally in French and entitled *La morale du Koran* (1951), the book embodies the fruits of the author's doctoral work at the Sorbonne University. Mohammed Abdullah Draz (1894–1958), an Egyptian scholar and Professor of Islamic Studies at al-Azhar, is a distinguished Qur'ān scholar. His earlier notable contributions in English to Qur'ānic studies are *Introduction to the Qur'an* (London I.B. Tauris, 2001) and *The Quran: An Eternal Challenge* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2001). Both these works proceed from and demonstrate the belief that the Qur'ān is a miraculous, inimitable work that could only be authored by God. The latter, with particular reference to Qur'ānic style, gathers together the merits which may be found only in a divine revelation.

Almost the same premise underlies the work under review: that the Qur'ānic ethical code is perfect both in theory and in practice. It largely succeeds in relating coherently and at some length the principles and rules of the Qur'ānic ethical system. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the Qur'ānic ethics 'conserved and consolidated the legacy of the ancients' and extended it 'by adding completely new and progressive chapters which have led to the perfection of ethics' (p. 4). The book draws attention to these outstanding characteristics of the

Qur'ānic ethics: 'The framework it builds is thus both fixed and flexible. Because of its clarity, the tenor of each rule erects a kind of barrier against disorder and anarchical fancy, but through its indetermination, it allows individuals to choose the form by which they must adapt their ideal to the conditions of existence and conciliate their present duty with all other requirements of morality [...] This is how Quranic legislation managed to attain a threefold perfection [...] softness within firmness, progress within stability, and nuance within unity' (p. 5). This brings to mind another striking feature of Qur'ānic legislation—one that is not highlighted in the present work—the blending of law and morality. Almost all the relevant Qur'ānic passages, especially the ones on forging social and marital relations, are rounded off with some touching, poignant moral exhortation. Take as illustrative the following directive (*al-Baqara*, 2. 231) on how to treat divorced women: 'And so, when you divorce women and they reach the end of their waiting term, then either retain them *in a fair manner* or let them go *in a fair manner*. And do not retain them to their hurt or by way of transgression; whoever will do that will indeed wrong himself. Do not take the signs of God in jest and remember God's favour upon you'. More telling is this passage (*al-Nisā'*, 4. 9), which should evoke among even the hard-hearted both a sense of compassion and justice for orphans and of fear, as the readers/listeners are placed in the same predicament: 'Let those [disposing of an estate] have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own, if they had left a hapless family behind [...]'

Draz has presented the Qur'ānic ethical theory under the broad headings of: Obligation (pp. 13–65); Responsibility (pp. 67–116); Sanction (pp. 117–74); Intention and Inclinations (pp. 175–243), and Effort (pp. 245–83). This elucidation of the Qur'ānic stance on these ethico-philosophical concepts and categories, is enriched by comparative assessment of the views of some classical and modern thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Bergson, Fauconnet, Frédéric Rauh. At the end of this extensive discussion, Draz concludes: '[The Qur'ān] has provided us with all the elements [...] in which it conceives morality. What is the origin of the ethical rule? In which conditions does it apply? What are the consequences which influence our attitude to it? What is the ruling principle which should inspire our behaviour? Through which means are we to obtain virtue?' (p. 285) Another insightful conclusion drawn by him is that the Qur'ān helps to 'reconcile the freedom of the individual with the discipline of his will [...] individual freedom [while] seeking higher and higher degrees, is to be practised in harmony with the various demands of a moral life' (pp. 288–9).

No less rewarding and perceptive is the second part of Draz's work, 'Practical Ethics: Extracts from the Quran' (pp. 295–347). This is an intelligent, careful selection of Qur'ānic passages that instruct man in a variety of ways in personal, family, social, state and religious ethics. In both its wide coverage of relevant material and its logical, coherent and reader-friendly presentation, this selection surpasses the several existing works of this kind. Draz's selection largely succeeds in presenting a comprehensive overview of Qur'ānic morals and manners which embrace the entire gamut of human activities, relationships, rights and duties.

Quite fittingly, in the book's conclusion (pp. 345–7) Draz spells out the virtues, as outlined in the Qur'ān, that should characterize Muslims' conduct in both their individual and collective lives.

The copious entries in the 'Notes and References' section underscore the scholarly credentials of the work. The absence of a bibliography is simply inexplicable. The book's translators must be complimented for the quality of their work—in particular for the high standard of their translations of numerous Qur'ānic passages.

*Abdur Raheem Kidwai*  
*Aligarh Muslim University*  
 Email: [sualim\\_05@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sualim_05@yahoo.co.in)  
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*Allah ist das Licht von Himmel und Erde: Der Lichtvers Sura 24 an-Nur vers 35*

By AYŞE BAŞOL-GÜRDAL (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2008), 156 pp. Price PB €39.00. EAN 978–3879973576.

This short book, originally a doctoral thesis successfully submitted to Göttingen University, is a discussion by the author of the Qur'ān's famous 'Light Verse in the context of the revelation and Muslim theological interpretation' (subtitle). Currently, Dr. Başol-Gürdal is lecturing at the theological faculty of Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt.

With 24. 35 (fully cited three times, on pp. 12, 20, and 95 f.) her book focuses on one of the longer verses most frequently recited by Muslims during the ritual prayer (*al-ṣalāh*), besides the Throne Verse (2. 255) and verses 22–23 of *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (59), where many of God's 'most beautiful names' (*al-asmā al-ḥusnā*) are listed. In fact, the Light Verse amounts to the only (necessarily allegorical) self-description of God in the entire Qur'ān, given that the Prophet's near encounter with God during his ascent to heaven (*al-isrā*; *al-mir'āj*) merely served his legitimization as prophet, not the description of the divine.

To be sure, the book in its title and its translation of 24. 35 (p. 12) does not correctly quote the Light Verse which describes God as 'Light of the *Heavens* [plural] and the earth', reflecting the Muslim belief in seven, *sc.* several, heavens (17. 44; 23. 86). True, the Qur'an in 38 instances speaks of heaven in the singular. This is mainly true of some of the earliest short sūras (like 82, 84–86, 88 and 91), which have the character of conjurations. However, as in 24. 35 itself, the Qur'ān in no less than 62 other instances speaks of *heavens*, in the plural (67. 5 even refers to the 'lowest heaven').

The book's structure is clear: Chapter 1 is devoted to an analysis of what the single word *Allāh*, opening 24. 35, stands for. Chapter 2 deals exclusively with the second word of 24. 35, *i.e.* *nūr* (Light). Surveying the entire Qur'ān, the concept of *Light* is found 152 times in altogether 23 sūras. Only Chapter 3, the final one, deals with the understanding of 24. 35 proper by Muslim scholars