

Thematic Study of the Qur'an, an Analysis of the Works of the 21st Century in the Western Academia

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ABSTRACT

Tafsir is one of the earliest and most noble discipline among the traditional sciences. Within this genre, multiple methodologies, such as analytical, comparative and thematic, have been introduced to understand the word of Allah. Although the roots of Thematic study trace back to the traditional era, it has flourished remarkably in the past two centuries. Recent Muslim scholars such as Abdullah Draz, Muhammad Baqir al Sadr, and Muhammad Al Sharawi produced significant works discussing the Qur'an's themes in relation to contemporary issues, such as economics, human rights, and the environment. Hence, they managed to provide a holistic Qur'anic approach towards the recent problems.

The Western scholars, such as Jacques Jomier (d. 2008), Jane Demmen McAuliff, Andrew Rippin, Daniel A. Madigan, have shown a growing interest in thematic study of the Qur'an leading to the production of numerous influential books and articles. Hence, A drastic shift from historical study of the Qur'an to its textual and thematic study can be observed in the past and the present century. The present article aims to highlight this significant development in the study of the Qur'an in the West. Moreover, a critical analysis of some renowned works is offered along with the brief introduction. The author has selected four major western academic works (by non-Muslim scholars) of the present century that has gained scholars' attention from all over the globe in the genre of the Qur'anic studies.

This paper suggests that, although Western academia has made significant steps in refining its style and language, adopting a more respectful and academically nuanced tone, but due to various internal and external factors, this does not necessarily mean that the conclusions they present, align with those of the mainstream Muslim scholarship. The primary reasons, among many others, may be—though not in all cases—the influence of deeply rooted past ideas about the Qur'an and diversity of writers' backgrounds. The paper concludes that adopting a more objective and academic approach towards the Qur'an and its themes may help bridge the intellectual gap between the two worlds.

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Introduction:

The science of tafsīr (Qur'ānic exegesis) stands among the earliest and most esteemed disciplines in Islamic scholarship. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is universally regarded as the first interpreter of the Qur'ān, conveying its meanings not only through words but also through his actions and judgments. After his passing, his companions and subsequent generations undertook the task of explaining and disseminating the message of the Qur'ān, adapting their interpretations to the changing socio-cultural and intellectual contexts of their times.

The Qur'ān, as a timeless book of guidance, addresses all dimensions of human life. Over the centuries, scholars have sought to uncover its meanings and apply them to evolving circumstances. Early exegetes predominantly adopted an analytical approach, explaining each verse in sequence, often delving into issues of grammar, context, theology, law, and narrative details without necessarily grouping content thematically.

However, as intellectual traditions evolved and the need for issue-based understanding grew, the Muslim scholars began to develop diverse exegetical methodologies concerning the thematic study of the Quran.

It is a well-established fact that the history of Qur'ānic studies in the West initially emerged from polemical objectives aimed at challenging Islam and confronting Muslims. Over time, however, this approach gradually shifted, and the Qur'ān began to be studied out of genuine academic and scholarly interest.

The already available literature by the academia of West reflects a deep and sustained interest in Qur'ānic studies. In recent years, there has been a marked surge in academic works focusing on various aspects of the Qur'ān, including its history, manuscripts, literary styles, and more significantly the Qur'ānic themes. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to overlook western contributions to the field.

Research Question:

The paper aims to answer the following questions.

1. To what extent have developments in the thematic study of the Qur'ān within the Muslim world influenced Western academic scholarship on the Qur'ān?
2. In what ways do these Western works differ from other academic approaches within the broader field of Qur'ānic studies?

Research Methodology:

This research uses a combined approach; descriptive and critical-analytical. It is descriptive in that it seeks to outline the historical development and current trends of Qur'ānic studies, providing a concise overview of its development over time. Specifically, it aims to trace the evolution of Western Qur'ānic scholarship and to identify the key factors that have influenced its methodological shift. At the same time, the research is analytical, as it critically examines the available data, evaluates scholarly perspectives, and draws conclusions.

Literature Review:

In response to western academic works on the *Qur'ān*, several Muslim scholars have produced counter-narratives that challenge Western academic approaches to the Qur'ān. Noteworthy

among them are *The History of the Qur'ānic Text* by M. M. A'zami,¹ *The Sublime Qur'ān and Orientalism* by Muhammad Khalifa,² and *The Qur'ān and Orientalism* by Muhammad Mohar Ali. Numerous additional responses have been written in Urdu and Arabic, some of which adopt a clearly defensive tone, particularly in Arabic literature. Historical methodology has been a common tool used to refute Western critiques.

Among these responses, A'zami's work stands out as the most influential. It is widely regarded as academically rigorous and rooted in a scientific approach. By comparing the Qur'ān with earlier scriptures—especially the Old and New Testaments—A'zami argues for the textual integrity and historical reliability of the Qur'ān.

With regard to the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, only a few notable contributions stand out. Perhaps the most influential critique comes from Muzaffar Iqbal,³ who published two critical articles on the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (EQ). Iqbal fundamentally rejects the premise of the EQ, arguing that the notion of an “objective” and scientific study of the Qur'ān is inherently flawed, given that no scholar can claim true neutrality toward the Qur'ānic text.

Through exhaustive critique and statistical analysis, Iqbal asserts that the EQ lacks objectivity and pluralism. He cites specific examples from within the EQ to support his claims. According to him, many assertions about Muslim scholarly contributions are either inaccurate or misleading, contending that fundamental Qur'ānic themes are primarily addressed by non-Muslim scholars within the encyclopaedia.⁴ His disapproval was so strong that he initiated his own encyclopaedic project, the *Integrated Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, aiming to provide an alternative grounded in a more faithful representation of Islamic tradition.

Regarding the analysis of the “Companions”, most reviews offer only general overviews. These evaluations primarily focus on the structure and style of the works, often praising them as accessible, scholarly, and insightful. The present study aims to move beyond these general appraisals and offer a detailed analysis of the sections that address the themes and contents of the Qur'ān.

Introduction to Thematic Tafsīr:

Thematic tafsīr refers to a method of interpretation that focuses on specific topics or issues, gathering all related verses—often scattered across different chapters of the Qur'ān—and studying them collectively. Rather than interpreting verses in linear order, as in the traditional analytical approach, this method seeks to synthesize Qur'ānic perspectives on a single theme (e.g., justice, mercy, prophet hood, social ethics, or eschatology).

According to contemporary definitions, thematic tafsīr involves identifying a theme of interest and exploring Qur'ānic guidance concerning this specific theme. While doing so, the searcher's methodology focuses on three basic steps. Mainly he focuses to collect all relevant verses from across the Qur'ān. Secondly, the strategy is to analyse those verses systematically

1 Originally from India, he is Professor Emeritus at King Saud University. A best-known scholar for his critical works on the theories of the Western scholars' criticism of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

2 He is a renowned Egyptian scholar. He has a PhD degree in Electrical Engineering from Toronto University, Canada. Currently, he is a fellow of the American Institute of electrical & electronics engineers.

3 He is a Pakistani Canadian Muslim scholar known for his work on the subject of Islam and science, literature and Qur'ānic studies. He is the founding president of the Centre for Islam and Science. His most recent project is 'Integrated encyclopedia of the Qur'ān'.

4 Muzaffar Iqbal, "Western Academia and the Qur'an: Some Enduring Prejudices." *The Muslim World Book Review* Vol: 30, Issue: 1 (2009), P: 6-18.

and finally to draw conclusions about the Qur'ān's overall view on that topic.¹

Classical Roots of Thematic Tafsīr:

It is a well-established fact that the thematic study of the Qur'an was not formalized in the way it is today. However, many scholars assert that the foundations of thematic interpretation were already laid by the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Through both his verbal and non-verbal teachings, he emphasized and inculcated various Qur'anic themes, such as Tawheed (monotheism), prayer, and moral conduct. On several occasions, he would also link together different verses of the Qur'an to convey a comprehensive understanding of a particular theme, thereby offering a holistic picture of Qur'anic guidance on specific matters.

In upcoming centuries, few works are produced that can be mentioned in this regard. Early works that exhibit thematic elements include the work *Al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir* of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān d.150 AH (767 C.E) which categorized words and concepts that appear in different contexts in the Qur'ān and the book of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī' d.502 AH (1109CE) *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, which explores Qur'ānic vocabulary and the varying meanings of terms across contexts.

These works reflect an early awareness of thematic and lexical coherence in the Qur'an, though they do not amount to thematic *tafsīr* in the modern, systematic sense. Classical scholars typically analysed Qur'anic *vocabulary* in its immediate context without necessarily establishing connections or relationships between verses. One reason for this, at least in part, may be that their objective was not to present a holistic portrayal of the Qur'anic message concerning specific issues or problems. Instead, their focus often lay in linguistic and rhetorical analyses of Qur'anic terminologies.

Modern Flourishing of Thematic study in the Muslim world:

In the 19th and 20th centuries, thematic tafsīr flourished as scholars responded to modern challenges that required a topical understanding of the Qur'ān's guidance. Key figures in this revival include Hamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī² and his disciple Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī³ from Subcontinent, who developed a coherent, theme-based structure of the Qur'ān with a focus on nazm al Qur'ān⁴ Another significant scholar is Muhammad 'Abduh⁵ along with his disciple Rashīd Riḍā⁶ in Egypt, who emphasized reform and rationalism through thematic interpretation.

In recent decades, numerous other scholars across the Muslim world have contributed books, lectures, and articles on major Qur'ānic themes, often integrating contemporary issues such

1 Mustufa Muslim, *Al-Mubāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.), P: 17

2 Hamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī (1863-1930) is a scholar from India, known for his academic work about the nazm e Quran. The theory that the entire Quran revolves around a central theme is developed by him. He was of the view that each sura of the Quran has a central theme and its well-structured concerning its themes.

3 A prominent scholar of 20th century and disciple of Farahi who, like his mentor, devoted his major part of life to the study of the Quran.

4 Nazm al-Qur'an" (نظم القرآن) refers to the coherence, interconnectedness, and systematic arrangement of the Qur'an's verses and chapters. Imam -Zarkashī defines it as the organization of the words and the correctness of the meaning. See: *Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, Vol: 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah), P: 97.*

5 Muhammad 'Abduh (d.1905) was an Islamic scholar and grand Mufti in Egypt. He became famous for his revivalist ideas in Egypt. Moreover, he used to deliver lectures on Quranic Exegesis in Egypt. These lectures were later compiled by his student *Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā* Rashid in his Tafseer Al Manar.

6 Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) was a scholar and theologian. He developed and critiqued the thoughts of his teacher Muhammad 'Abduh.

as human rights, social justice, gender, and interfaith dialogue. Thematic study of the Qur'ān continues to expand across multiple platforms, including:

1. Comprehensive tafsīr works organized thematically.
2. Encyclopaedias focusing on key Qur'ānic themes and vocabulary.
3. General books that discuss multiple themes (e.g., ethics, law, society, theology).
4. Academic and journal articles addressing individual topics in detail.
5. YouTube lectures and digital content, which have made thematic study of the Qur'ān more accessible to wider audiences.

A Glimpse into the Qur'ānic Studies in the West:

The history of Islamic and Qur'ānic studies in the West clearly demonstrates that Western scholars have not only sought knowledge from classical Muslim sources but have also invested considerable time, intellectual energy, and scholarly expertise in producing their own works on Islam. Their efforts have borne significant fruit, resulting in a substantial body of literature, much of which remains preserved in Western libraries and academic institutions.

Western interest in the Qur'ān dates back, according to many scholars, to the medieval period. Initially, this engagement was largely driven by a polemical mind-set—a desire to "know the enemy" in the context of Christian-Muslim conflicts. During this era, Islam was frequently misrepresented, and the Qur'ān was often interpreted through a Christian theological lens. As the Dutch orientalist H.R. Reland (d.1718) aptly noted, "*No religion is more calumniated than Islam.*"¹

A pivotal moment in the Western study of the Qur'ān came in the twelfth century, with the first Latin translation of the text, commissioned by Peter the Venerable and completed by Robert of Ketton (d.1157). While this translation marked a significant shift—introducing a more systematic attempt to understand the Qur'ān—it was still not free from polemical undertones. Its title and preface often reflected a critical, if not hostile, perspective on Islam. Nevertheless, many modern scholars regard this translation as the inaugural step toward academic Qur'ānic studies in the West.²

In subsequent centuries, Western scholars adopted diverse methodologies and academic approaches in their study of the Qur'ān. The Enlightenment period, in particular, witnessed a transition from theological polemics to more philological, historical, and literary analyses. Both Jewish and Christian scholars contributed significantly to this body of work, producing a vast corpus of Qur'ānic commentary, translation, and critique.

Despite the biases that often coloured these early studies, this evolving scholarship laid the groundwork for the more balanced and rigorous approaches seen in contemporary Western academia. Today, Qur'ānic studies in the West is a thriving, multidisciplinary field that includes textual criticism, thematic analysis, literary structure, and intertextual studies—frequently conducted in dialogue with Muslim scholars and exegetical traditions.

Thematic Studies in Western Qur'ānic Scholarship:

It is a well-established fact that early Western scholarship on the Qur'ān primarily concentrated on its history, compilation, and possible sources, often sidelining the study of its

1 Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism, Lectures on Its Origin, Its Religious and Political Growth and Its Present State* (New York: G.P. Putnam's sons, 1937), P: 8.

2 Thomas Burman, *Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom; 1140- 1560* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press. 2007), P: 15.

thematic content. Many Muslim scholars have long pointed out this imbalance, highlighting the lack of serious engagement with the Qur'ān's internal structure, theological vision, and moral framework. The late Fazlur Rahman (d.1988) notably emphasized that thematic analysis of the Qur'ān was perhaps the least explored dimension in Western academic circles.

In his words “The earlier modern Western literature on the Qur'ān falls into three broad categories: (1) works that seek to trace the influence of Jewish or Christian ideas on the Qur'ān; (2) works that attempt to reconstruct the chronological order of the Qur'ān; and (3) works that aim at describing the content of the Qur'ān, either the whole or certain aspects. Though this last might be expected to receive the most attention, it has had the least”¹

Early Orientalist scholars rarely addressed the content or spiritual message of the Qur'ān. When they did, it was often in the service of tracing alleged influences or “sources” of Qur'ānic material. For instance, Abraham Geiger (d. 1874) analysed Qur'ānic narratives to identify parallels with Jewish scripture and tradition, suggesting a derivative nature. This approach was later adopted and expanded by scholars such as William Muir, Theodor Noldeke, Hartwig Hirschfeld, Richard Bell, and Charles Cutler Torrey. Similarly, among Christian scholars, Kenneth Cragg (d.2012) made significant efforts to associate the Qur'ān with written Christian sources presumed to be present in pre-Islamic Arabia.

However, after 1950, Western Qur'ānic studies witnessed a notable transformation. Scholars began to explore new directions, including thematic and structural analysis—approaches that had long been present in the Muslim exegetical tradition but were now being re-engaged with modern academic tools. This shift marked a growing appreciation for the Qur'ān as a coherent and theologically rich text, not merely a historical or philological artefact.

The thematic study of the Qur'ān, in particular, gained significant traction. Scholars began producing works that focused on key Qur'ānic concepts—such as justice, mercy, divine unity, and eschatology—moving beyond source criticism to engage more deeply with the Qur'ān's ethical and spiritual vision. In this context, Andrew Rippin observed the increasing interest of Western scholars in thematic approaches. He also cautioned that these contemporary efforts should be distinguished from earlier comparative attempts, particularly those of the nineteenth century, which tended to examine the Qur'ān alongside the Bible strictly at the narrative level, often without theological sensitivity.²

A closer look at recent scholarship reveals that authors have approached Qur'ānic themes using diverse perspectives, ranging from semantic and literary analysis to theological and ethical inquiry. Some studies concentrate on single themes (e.g., justice or mercy), while others aim to offer comprehensive overviews of the Qur'ān's principal messages.

Among the most pioneering works is that of Toshihiko Izutsu (d.1993), whose semantic analysis laid the foundation for thematic Qur'ānic studies in the modern West. His methodology centred on the relational meaning of key ethical terms, thereby unveiling the Qur'ān's moral and philosophical worldview. Another influential work is “*God of Justice: A Study on the Ethical Doctrine of the Qur'ān*”, which investigates the Qur'ānic vision of justice as a central divine attribute. Additionally, Jacques Jomier (d. 2008)'s “*The Great Themes of the Qur'ān*” offers an accessible yet profound reflection on the fundamental theological and

1 Fazlur Rahman, *The Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1994), xii.

2 Andrew Rippin, “Western Scholarship and the Qur'ān,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), P: 235-251.

moral concepts within the text.

These developments reflect a genuine shift in Western Qur'ānic scholarship—from external analysis to internal engagement with the text's structure, message, and coherence. What was once critiqued by Muslim scholars as a neglected area is now gaining recognition as a serious and expanding field of inquiry.

Thematic Study in 21st century Western Academia:

This paper seeks to introduce and explore some of the significant works of the 21st century, analysing their contributions to thematic studies of the Qur'ān, their methodological innovations, and their impact on both academic and interfaith understanding. The noticeable point is that some works are dedicated entirely to the thematic study of the Qur'ān, while others offer few entries in this regard.

The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān (EQ), considered as a landmark in the western Qur'ānic studies, is a first and foremost work in this regard that is dedicated entirely to the themes of the Qur'ān or related to the Qur'ān. It represents a monumental scholarly achievement in the field of Islamic and Qur'ānic studies.¹

Conceived as a response to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam (EI)*, the EQ is distinguished by its singular focus on the Qur'ān and its multifaceted interpretations, making it the first extensive, multi-volume reference work dedicated exclusively to the Qur'ān in English. Spanning five volumes and nearly 3,000 pages—along with an additional 860-page index—the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān (EQ) contains approximately 1,000 alphabetically arranged entries. Each entry focuses on themes, concepts, and figures that appear in or are related to the Qur'ānic text. This reflects the vast scope of the project and its ambition to serve as a definitive reference for both specialists and general readers interested in Qur'ānic themes, figures, terminology, and interpretive traditions. Beyond its collaborative nature, the EQ was designed to be both "academic" and "scientific" in tone and methodology.² This positions the EQ not merely as a reference tool, but as a catalyst for advancing academic growth in Qur'ānic studies.

Yet, despite the significance of this project within the genre of thematic Qur'anic studies, it exhibits certain weaknesses that make its scholarly reception debatable. Notably, the contribution of Muslim scholars appears to be marginal throughout the work. A close examination of the Qur'anic terminologies reveals that fundamental theological and doctrinal themes—such as those concerning God, Muhammad, the Sīra, Ḥadīth, and the Qur'ān itself—have largely been addressed by non-Muslim scholars. In contrast, Muslim contributors were often assigned topics of a more peripheral nature, such as 'Trips,' 'Sinai,' 'Ships,' and 'Barrier,' among others.

Had Muslim scholarship been more substantially involved; one might have expected their engagement with the central and essential themes of the Qur'an as well. This distribution of topics suggests a continuation of classical Western academic traditions that have historically dominated the study of Islam.

Numerous instances can be found in which the Qur'ān themes are addressed using vague, uncertain, or sceptical language. Expressions such as "*perhaps*," "*it is not clear*," "*it is highly*

1 Göran Larsson, "Some Recent Contributions to the Study of the Qur'ān," *Temenos*, Vol: 43, Issue: 1 (2007), P: 267–272.

2 *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006), vol: 1, P: xi

probable,” and *“it remains doubtful”* appear frequently.¹ The frequent use of such tentative language raises questions about the author’s confidence and may cast doubt on their academic competence and expertise. Furthermore, this approach can significantly influence the reader’s perception, leading them—often unconsciously—to view the Qur’ān and Islamic sources as inherently problematic or doubtful from the very outset.

Another prominent issue is the notion of "borrowing" from earlier religious traditions. A general review of the entries reveals that many contributors attempt to demonstrate that Qur’anic terms and concepts are derived from Christianity or Judaism. There appears to be no significant academic effort within this work to challenge or critically re-evaluate this assumption. The reliance on the borrowed-narrative approach reflects a persistent problem in western Islamic studies.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to challenge such stereotypes and re-examine foundational issues through rigorous and objective academic methodologies. Only by doing so can the field move beyond inherited biases and contribute to a more balanced and inclusive understanding of the Qur’ān.

The second important work in this regard is the *Blackwell companion to the Qur’ān*, ed written by Andrew. This book is the part of the companions dedicated to the study world religions. These companions are authored by the renowned and seasoned scholars of the field with a diversity of approaches. It aimed to offer a general orientation ending to a well-advanced understanding of the sacred text of the Qur’ān.²

The companion devotes its third part to the study of the major Qur’anic themes that characterizes this sacred book. Like other companions, this work dedicated its research to the foremost and fundamental concept of the Qur’ān i.e. God. As He has sent the prophets to guide the humanity, this chapter is followed by a series of entries introducing the key historical figures among the prophets more significantly, Moses, Ibrahim and Muhammad (SAW). A look in these themes reflects the connectivity of the contents and denotes a sound systematic planning by the editor. The notable point is that the authors list includes Muslim names as well. Hence, it would be highly appreciable to invite the Muslim scholars to explain the fundamental themes of the Qur'an.

The third significant and promising work is *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an 2007*. The 3rd part of it deals with the evolution of means used for the preservation of the Quran, from the time of its revelation till today. The part for focuses the questions related to the interpretations of the Qur’ān. In the last section, the reader is introduced with political and feminist interpretations of the Qur’ān

McAuliffe has brought together contributions from scholars affiliated with various prestigious universities and institutions to present their research. Notably, the book includes, in the second part, a chapter on the themes and topics of the Qur'an, authored by Daniel Madigan.

The chapter focuses to highlight the fundamental theme of the Qur’ān “God”. It would be inaccurate to speak of God as one theme of the Qur’ān according to the writer. Instead, he

1 *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Vol: 1, P: 182, Vol: 3, P: 183, Vol: 3, P: 318, Vol: 4, P: 35, Vol: 4, P: 93, Vol: 4, P: 399, Vol: 4, P: 409, Vol: 5, P: 437, Vol: 5, P: 438.

2 Andrew Rippin, *preface to The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), P: ix, x–xii,

writes, it is the central theme of the Qur'ān and each of the other themes revolve around it. Madigan examines the central theological and moral subjects of the Qur'ān, while also challenging simplistic or overly systematic readings of the text. He claims that the Qur'ān does not define its themes in a linear or doctrinal fashion but communicates them through rhetorical strategies such as repetition, metaphor, and narrative. The text weaves fundamental subjects like the oneness of God (tawhid), prophet hood, divine guidance, the Day of Judgment, and moral responsibility throughout in a way that requires the readers active participation.

Madigan emphasizes that the meanings emerge in relation to specific historical and communal contexts rather than being fixed or monolithic. He introduces the idea of “canons within the canon,” where different Muslim communities over time have emphasized particular themes, shaping diverse yet faithful interpretations. Overall, Madigan presents the Qur'ān as a living, dialogical text whose authority and relevance lie not in rigid definition, but in its ongoing interpretive engagement with readers.¹

The fourth and the last momentous work is “*The Routledge companion to the Qur'ān*”, 2022, is an influential work that has dedicated one of its portions to the Qur'ānic themes and concepts. It offers a comprehensive and thorough exploration of the Qur'an. The book brings together most prestigious scholars of the field of Islamic studies providing the readers a diversity of perspectives and approaches. Bringing diverse approaches to one volume, the work represents the vibrancy of the field of Qur'ānic studies in 21st century.²

It is quite manifest that the co-editors believed that the Qur'ān addressed to the entire humanity beyond any specific tribe and group. Hence, according to George Archer, the second co-editor, it should be the task of everyone to engage with it.³

Hence, it is explicit that the second part of this book deals with Qur'ānic themes and concepts. The section deals with the mention of few significant figures of the human history starting with an entry on the introduction of “God; the many named one in the Qur'ān”. This is followed by multiple articles on the thematic study of the prophets in the Qur'ān including the last prophet Muhammad (SAW). As said earlier, the task of the work was to present the themes and concepts with a variety of perspectives and approaches, this section includes writers from various backgrounds including Muslims and non-Muslims.

Conclusion:

A brief examination of Western works on the thematic study of the Qur'an tells notable development in the field. Over time, there has been a marked increase in interest in understanding the content and message of the Qur'an. This growing engagement has been further enriched by the contributions of Muslim scholars, whose participation has significantly influenced the comprehension and interpretation of the text among general readers. Hence, in many entries, a tendency towards the presentation of a fair and undistorted image of the Quran is observed. However, due to the diversity of perspectives and methodological approaches, the field reflects a wide range of opinions and interpretations of Qur'anic themes—many of which do not necessarily align with traditional or mainstream

1 Daniel A. Madigan, “Themes and Topics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), P: 183–208.

2 George Archer, Maria M. Dakake, and Daniel A. Madigan, “Preface,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. George Archer, Maria M. Dakake, and Daniel A. Madigan (London: Routledge, 2022), P: xxxiii

3 *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'ān*, P: xxxiv

Muslim scholarship.

Recommendations:

The use of authoritative language to establish arguments and draw conclusions is evident in the content of EQ entries. Authors often express a high degree of certainty in their claims, employing phrases such as “*there is no reason to doubt,*” “*there must be,*” or “*there is no reason to think otherwise.*” However, when addressing traditional Muslim narratives, these same entries frequently adopt a dismissive or overly critical tone. The traditional accounts are often described as *problematic, conflicting, or confusing* without sufficient nuance or engagement with the sources on their own terms.

A responsible academic approach requires allowing the sources to speak for themselves, rather than imposing preconceived conclusions. In some cases, it appears that the author's voice dominates the narrative, either by labelling the sources as inherently uncertain or by misrepresenting their content. This not only undermines the integrity of the analysis but also raises concerns about scholarly bias and the selective application of critical standards. Hence, it is suggested that a researcher ought to respect the dignity of their subject matter, particularly in religious studies, where beliefs and traditions are deeply held. The subject has the right to be represented truthfully and, at a minimum, in accordance with how its adherents themselves wish to be understood.

Secondly, it is observed that most of the basic Qur'ānic themes are discussed by the Western academician. Larsson counts it a basic pedagogical problem to neglect the Muslim opinion on the revelation.¹

Thirdly, it is pretty evident that the contributions of Muslim scholars have had a positive influence on Western academia in the field of Qur'ānic studies. In light of this, it is recommended that seminars and conferences be organized regularly to foster deeper engagement and mutual understanding. Facilitating healthy discussions and debates among scholars and researchers from diverse backgrounds can play a vital role in bridging existing gaps and promoting greater objectivity in the field.

¹ Larsson, Göran. “Some Recent Contributions to the Study of the Qur'ān.” *Temenos*, Vol: 43, Issue: 1 (2007), P: 267–272.

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