

Peperzak, and Jean-Luc Marion, for example, would have made for exciting dialogues with Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, and Vatican I's tradition. While each postmodern Catholic philosopher speaks about the end of the metanarrative and the missteps of ontotheology, each thinker also struggles to maintain the theological voice within the postmodern Continental perspective. By extension, this would have brought in the postmodern giants of Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Overall, one is left with the feeling after reading this collection that a "faith-commitment" is not deleterious to sound thinking; on the contrary, it is necessary for any philosophy or theology worthy of the name Catholic.

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THE BANQUET: A READING OF THE FIFTH SURA OF THE QUR'AN. By Michael Cuypers. Preface by Huhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi. Translated from the French by Patricia Kelly. Miami, FL: Convivium, 2009. Pp. 565. \$54.95.

How often have Western readers registered consternation in attempting to read the Qur'an? We are usually told that its style is more paraneitic than narrative, or offered ways to negotiate the canonical order of suras (chapters) so that purportedly earlier and shorter ones might be read first, to lead us more gently into the longer, later ones. (That is the way I initially helped students find their way, using German scholars for dating when the different suras were reckoned to have "come down.") One was also reminded that the holy book was meant to be recited—heard rather than read, like good poetry—and offered ways of calibrating specific revelations with events in the life of the Prophet and the community ("occasions of revelation") so as to reconstruct some kind of narrative to offer a context for the subjects mentioned. Yet something essential always seemed to be missing to guide our reading and comprehension of this baffling book, which Muslims take to be the very word of God.

Cuypers has supplied that missing element by finding a way to display "Semitic rhetoric," to unlock the inner structure of the verses (*ayât*) in relation to one another and encapsulated in an illuminating order. He accomplishes this for a long Medinan sura, Al-Ma'ida (The Banquet), in a dense exercise designed to lay bare the structures endemic to "semitic rhetoric," so that the meaning of verses will emerge from the ordering they actually display in relation to one another. If this sounds complex, it is even more so as C. patiently works out Chinese-box-like inclusions, yet in the exercise, such sophisticated structuring apparatus yields the fruit promised. The effort, it seems, is ours, for the "semitic rhetorical" structures laid bare prove quite natural to persons familiar with Arabic and the multiple "sandwich constructions" endemic to that language. C. explicitly

borrowed Roland Meynet's proposals for exposing the "semitic rhetoric" proper to Hebrew scriptural texts, which allows him to make frequent parallels with biblical texts, as well as to suggest some explicit borrowing.

C. concludes: "Despite appearances, we can say that the whole of 1–11 is solidly constructed, in a coherent manner, on condition that we make the effort to understand this coherence in terms of Semitic rhetoric, not according to Western criteria which come from Greek rhetoric" (121)—a challenge that C. fulfills by walking us through the requisite steps. In this way the entire book becomes an extended workout, designed to wean us from an accustomed Western narrative to a more tensive and exciting form. He put the method to a rigorous test by taking a late Medinan sura and showing how a text that contains so many apparently disparate elements—Jews, Christians, pilgrimage, dietary laws—can form a coherent whole. "All at once, Muhammad, in the Qur'an seems to be the completion of the two figures, Moses and Jesus, founders of the two rival religions of nascent Islam." Yet he adds, strategically, "These prefigurings are not identifies but analogies, implying both similarity and dissimilarity" (478). Moreover, such detailed presentation can then bring him to a conclusion quite opposed to the way "historical Orientalist criticism has dissected the Qur'an" (481).

Can rhetorical and intertextual analysis then tell us about the date of this sura's revelation? They can state only that "*in literary terms* the sura was written in such a way as to be held to be the final text of revelation" (482). The reading C. proposes here did not start from general considerations or preconceived ideologies, in whose light the Qur'an would then be read; rather, the reading is based on the hypothesis that the Qur'anic text, despite appearances, must have coherence. Given this working hypothesis, rhetorical analysis seemed to be the best instrument to decode this coherence, and suddenly to decipher a fragmented, atomized reading of the text in which each verse is taken on its own, out of context (487).

A paradoxical situation for intertextual exegesis of the Qur'an comes about. On the one hand, it gives unquestionably wider theological meaning, while remaining true to the Qur'anic faith, to texts which otherwise would only have a more limited anecdotal significance. . . . Intertextuality opens up this text to a reflection on the relationship between Christianity and the new Islamic religion, the Christian Easter's replacement by the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and, finally the Christian covenant's absorption into the original Islamic covenant. But on the other hand, a group of dogmatic positions have held back, and continue to hold back, this kind of exegesis. The (relatively late) dogma of the uncreated Qur'an . . . seems to make any comparison with other texts, even inspired texts, useless (480).

Let anyone wishing to open up the Qur'an to both scholarly scrutiny and personal appropriation undertake these exercises.