All in all, the book is a good contribution to the Muslim study of Christianity. The writer could have benefited from the many works of Muslim scholars both in the earlier period of Muslim civilization and the more recent ones. This at least is the impression I formed after going through the bibliography of the book.

Isa Muhammad Maishanu


The author, born in 1958 to the imām of Travnik in Central Bosnia, a political scientist as well as Islamologue, is presently teaching at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Sarajevo University. A prolific writer, he has published among other works a two-volume translation of the Qurʾān into Bosnian along with commentary. He has also served from 1994–1996, under President Alija Izetbegovic, as Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The work, which brings together some 20 essays written between 1992 and 1999 and a *khutbah* delivered in New York, focuses on two different themes: (i) the fate of Bosnia and (ii) Qurʾānic hermeneutics.

In dealing with his victimized country, Karić displays not only bitterness and murky humour, but also melancholy and subtle, mystical poetics. Thus he refers to Bosniaks as “Muslim Europeans” and, ironically, to Serbs as “orthodox sons of Abraham”. He describes how the Balkan Muslims recently lived the time of their holocaust, Belgrade’s agenda being “to eradicate non-Serb elements”. Given the outrageous European passivity towards the massacres enacted by Serbs such as in Serbrenica, the author cannot help assuming “that someone very powerful has given Serbia a 200-year mandate to slaughter and exile Muslim Europeans” (p. 60). How else can one explain that “the entire modern history of Bosnia was but intermissions between genocides and ethnic purges”, the only crime of Bosnian Muslims being their Islam (pp. 89, 110).
Karić’s suspicion is even directed against a Big Brother editorial policy of *Encyclopedia Britannica* which virtually denies the existence of ethnic Bosniaks, calling them “Muslims”, i.e. Slavs converted to Islam, whereas Serbs are referred to without pointing them out as Slavs converted to Christianity (p. 66). Typically, the *Encyclopedia* also describes the Serbian aggression as a “civil” war, thereby insinuating equal guilt on the part of the victimisers and the victimised. Another instance of partiality and bias: Bosnian mosques are called “Turkish” thereby insinuating that they had foreign roots (p. 68 ff.).

In Graz (Austria), I once heard Karić restate his major message: in Europe one cannot distinguish between indigenous and imported religions. Europe, as “Asia’s spiritual subsidiary”, is also the “Continent of Islam” (p. 78). In its multi-religious pluralism Bosnia indeed reminds one of Muslim Spain. May Allah forbid that it should suffer the fate of Muslim Spain.

Karić’s discussion of different aspects of the Qur’an and its translations into Bosnian are characterized by his affinity to Sufism, in line with Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in the past and Martin Lings, Frithjof Schuon, Rene Guenon, and Sayyed Hosein Nasr in our own time. This corresponds to the strong Mevlevi, Qādirī, Naqshbandi and Halvati traditions of Balkan Islam. Thus, Karić sees the Qur’an as the cosmos which speaks and the cosmos as silent Qur’an. He is also not opposed to supplementary normative interpretation of the Qur’an, but rather tends to speculate about its trans-historical, esoteric meanings. This is typified by his playing with the transposition of the *masdar* F-R-Q into R-F-Q and F-Q-R (p. 147). Such an approach is not quite consistent with his assumption that the Qur’an is not made according to human logic (p. 139), an insight that rather ought to lead to a more exoteric and literal interpretation of the religious texts, possibly *a la* Ibn Ḥazm.

The author is, however, quite modern in claiming that there is no final translation of the Qur’an, that the earlier translations of the Qur’an could possibly not exhaust all its meanings for Allah is equally merciful to peoples of all times. Thus the Qur’an is like a river drinking from which is legitimate, regardless of the point from which one chooses to do so (p. 239). In a chapter on the “multi-interpretability of the Qur’an”, Karić shows that the turbulences in the Muslim world during the last two centuries are neatly reflected in its treatment as a socialist, capitalist, scientific, psychoanalytical, evolutionist or revolutionary text in the interpretative writings on the Qur’an (p. 211).

This brings to mind the era when the Islamic East was penetrated by Greek philosophy. However, in contrast to today’s globalization, Hellenism was not transported by the armament of a nuclear power. Nor was the Qur’an
ever used before, as now by “Islamists”, as a concrete political text instead of a legal source (pp. 217, 229).

Essay collections run the risk of being repetitive. This is the case here too but only with a grandmother story about the desert as an endless labyrinth; it appears both on p. 19 and p. 134.

Murad Wilfried Hofmann


The multiple ways that Muslims around the world make use of the World Wide Web had been a neglected area of inquiry, with the exception of several short studies by scholars such as Jon Anderson and Bruce Lawrence, until the recent publication of the pioneering work Virtually Islamic by Gary Bunt. While Virtually Islamic only begins a project that its author quite rightly expects will be a topic of increasing interest and importance, in this work Bunt establishes epistemological foundations that will serve as a useful framework for both contemporary discussion and future inquiry on Islam and the Internet.

Bunt sets out to provide a broad survey of the landscape of Islamic sites on the Web, what he conceptually defines as “Cyber Islamic Environments”. He seeks to explore the degree to which these sites represent different sections of the Muslim community or ummah, and the degree to which the Internet might help to create a new unified sense of umma in virtual space. Endeavoring to chart the impact of Digital Islam on the lives of Muslims around the world, Bunt makes use of personal interviews and e-mail survey forms to solicit diverse Muslim opinions. He opts to bypass technical discussions of hardware, software and HTML code in order to foreground the human dimension of the subject and the potential real-world influence of virtual presentations of Islam on both Muslims and non-Muslims.

In the first chapter, Bunt seeks to define his terms and clarify the scope of his inquiry. He draws upon recent Internet theory for concepts such as