

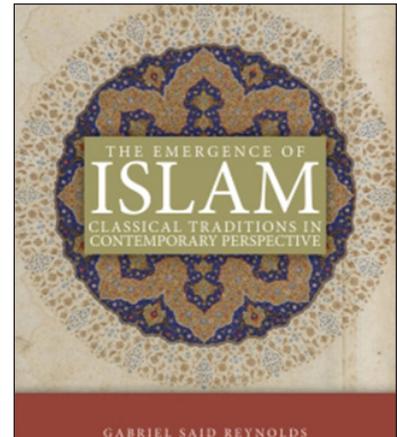
Piper's appeal to the idea of two wills in God, which is central to his argument, has been embraced by some Southern Baptists, such as Tom Schreiner and Bruce Ware,⁴ but rejected by others, such as David Allen, Steve Lemke, Bruce Little, and Ken Keathley.⁵ Piper commits the error D. A. Carson specifically warned against in his dissertation, pointing to a hidden will to negate God's revealed will.⁶

For readers who seek to reconcile unconditional election to salvation with God's desire to save all people, Piper's brief treatment provides an argument which may prove satisfying to the already convinced. But readers looking for an unambiguous answer of "yes" to the question in the title of the book are advised to look elsewhere.

– Adam Harwood, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA*

The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective. By Gabriel Said Reynolds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. 208 pages + glossary and index. Softcover, \$35.

In this concise volume, Gabriel Said Reynolds introduces readers to the variegated conversation on the work of the prophet of Islam, his context and the community which emerged. The author brings a vast array of personal study and academic tools to his task. Through the book he addresses the broad spectrum of those who answer the questions about Islamic origins. Reynolds seeks to compare two methodologies without completely rejecting either. The traditional Muslim method is largely drawn from late medieval Islamic sources and the other



⁴Piper's appeal to two wills in God appears in these volumes edited by Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will* (Baker, 1995) and *Still Sovereign* (Baker, 2000). See also Ware's appeal to two wills in God in his article "Divine Election to Salvation," in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville: B&H, 2006).

⁵David L. Allen, "The Atonement: Limited or Universal?" in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical and Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. Allen and Lemke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 92; Steve W. Lemke, "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace," in *Whosoever Will*, 145; Bruce A. Little, "Evil and God's Sovereignty," in *Whosoever Will*, 293–4; Kenneth Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 52–58. Keathley, 58–62, affirms a different, non-Reformed version of the two-wills paradigm, which he calls antecedent/consequent wills. He writes, "God desires the salvation of all, although He requires the response of faith on the part of the hearer. This antecedent/consequent wills approach sees no conflict between the two wills of God. God antecedently wills all to be saved. But for those who refuse to repent and believe, He consequently wills that they should be condemned" (58).

⁶D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 214, in Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 55.

is based on material drawn directly from the Qur'an itself and dating from the seventh century. The author seeks to present both of these narratives objectively, although it is clear that he finds the latter method to be more credible (ix-x). However, Reynolds contends that his readers and non-Muslims must understand the Islamic community's devotion to the former narrative just as surely as all right-thinking people need to evaluate both stories in light of known facts.

Reynolds seeks to answer two questions. First, what can be known about the context of the birth and emergence of Islam and how can sources be evaluated and trusted? Second, how do devout Muslims view Islamic origins, and how is this understanding integrated into contemporary religious practice? He explores the first question in two parts. In Part one, he considers traditional Islamic understandings of early Islamic history. In Part two, he addresses critical understandings drawn from the Qur'an itself of Islamic beginnings. In Part three, which is also his research conclusion, he explores the second question. Each section of the book is introduced and summarized by the author. Also, each chapter concludes with study questions focused on central elements of the chapter.

The author, while demonstrating a broad awareness of Islamic sources, consistently cites the most conservative sources. While the documentation is fairly sparse beyond the Qur'an, it is very helpful and consistent with the author's thesis. Throughout the book, the author provides strategic side-bars, biographical summaries, charts, and illustrations to help his readers explore the argument of the book. He provides a useful index and a concise glossary so that even the beginning student can follow his thinking and enter into the debate. The bibliography and list for further reading extends the readers' access to the author's sources.

Part one (chs. 1-3) presents, with some critique, the traditional story of the founding of Islam and the first five leaders (Muhammad and the four rightly guided Khalifs). The author recognizes that most in the Muslim world accept this narrative as factual, regardless of conflicts with other facts and internal evidence of the Qur'an itself. The problems identified by Reynolds concerning the traditional view include: the lack of non-Islamic historical support for the pagan religious role described in the traditional narrative, non-Islamic historical evidence for the presence of Christianity among Arab tribes from the fifth century, Qur'anic content centered around the christological debate contemporary in the region, and the sparse reference to pagan issues in the Qur'an in comparison with the interaction with Christian doctrinal discussions.

One of strengths of this section is Reynolds' familiarity with a broad range of Sunni and Shi'ite writing on the subject. This allows him to present the broad-stroke agreement across the Islamic world on the questions of the setting and context for the work of Muhammad and the birth of Muslim community. From this position, Muhammad was raised in a pagan setting in which the teaching of the biblical God was virtually absent.

The traditional story is built from medieval sources (Qur'anic commentaries, biographies of Muhammad and collections of hadith) which provide a context for the text of the Qur'an,

whereas in Part two the enquiry into the origins of Islam and story of Muhammad and the Khalifs is conducted within the pages of the Qur'an. Part two of the book provides a synthesis of modern non-Muslim scholarship with Muslims of the "Qur'anic" tradition. The heart of Reynolds' work is presented in chapters 4-7 of Part two. His contention that medieval sources for the traditional account of the emergence of Islam were composed to close gaps and answer questions created by the Qur'anic text rather than historic reports is drawn from the central thesis of authors such as Abraham Geiger and John Wansbrough. While not going as far as the modern Oriental school in developing conclusions, the author employs their method to support his view that the text of the Qur'an itself is the most secure source for a narrative of the emergence of Islam. Moving behind the medieval authors and their attempt to validate the founders of Islam, Reynolds seeks to construct a narrative of the emergence of Islam based on the Qur'an.

Chapter four lays open the Qur'an to the view of non-Arabic speakers in a unique fashion. The sweep and scope of this book of Islamic revelation is revealed through examining several facets and themes of the Qur'an. The content of the book presents a context of theological and christological debate around the emerging Islamic community. Chapter five compares the Bible and the Qur'an. The conversation between Christian literature and the Qur'anic text is discussed at length. The frequent allusions and commonly held stories demonstrate an oral presence of the Bible in the land of the Arabs before the emergence of Islam. In chapter six, the author asks the implied questions which lie behind all of the preceding. "What if that biography was itself written by early Muslim scholars as a way of explaining the Qur'an?" (136). Reynolds is not fully asserting conclusions but asking questions and proposing courses of study. In so doing, he points out several problems in the traditional story of Islam. He examines each of these and seeks unifying conclusions. In chapter seven, Reynolds seeks to establish the actual context for the birth of the Qur'an. The absence of Arabic scriptures for both biblical testaments and the presence of Christian and Jewish worship in other languages is presented to the reader to help understand the Qur'anic emphasis on the Arabic nature of the Qur'an. Arabs as descendants of Abraham needed their own revelation especially in the presence of the disabling quarrels within Christianity of the day.

Part three addresses the internal Islamic conflict between tradition and approaches which place greater emphasis on the Qur'anic text in evolving Islamic religious expression. He explores the conflict of ideals and moralities demonstrated in various schools of Islamic thinkers and writers in the twentieth century. Surprisingly, these disparate strands find the Qur'an as their source and Muhammad as their exemplar. Reynolds reserves hope for the reform of Islam based in the method of the Qur'anists.

Reynolds's work gives Western readers a lucid explanation for the emergence of Islam within a context which is documented externally while respecting the ongoing debate among practicing Muslims. It provides popular and academic readers an introduction to this important field of Islamic study.

- *Michael H. Edens, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA*