

Notes on the Semantic Range of “Deliverance” in the Quran

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This article argues against the indiscriminate reading of Christian discursive categories into the Quran, taking the term “salvation” as its case in point. Rather than “salvation,” the word “deliverance” more adequately accounts for the complexity inherent in four closely related Arabic root structures employed throughout the Quran.

I. INTRODUCTION

In *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion* Timothy Knepper argues for a wide-ranging and globally inclusive approach to a sub-discipline of philosophy that has largely been confined to, and defined by, Anglo-American and Continental philosophical traditions on the one hand and Christian philosophical theology on the other.¹ Knepper’s central contention is that “philosophy of religion” is far too constrained in its scope and focus, and thereby is unable to truly tackle the complexity inherent in the philosophy and religion nexus. Since there is not just one religion (i.e., Christianity) or one religious tradition (i.e., the Judeo-Christian tradition), a much broader approach to the relationship between philosophy and religion is in order—that is, an approach that accounts for the theological worldviews and respective philosophical problems of other religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, etc. At minimum, bringing in other traditions would not only enrich the discussion but would also reframe the problem-sets that have historically defined philosophy of religion in largely Christian terms (the so-called problem of evil is a case in point).

Knepper’s observations vis-à-vis philosophy of religion are, of course, symptomatic of a wider problem that still informs many modern academic studies of religion—the inability to extricate non-Christian religious traditions from Christian religious categories and lines of inquiry. With respect to Islamic studies in particular, this translates into the assumption of Christian or Christian-inspired terminology to account for an array of problems that have cognates with Christianity but are unique to Islam. Let us take, for example, the notion of “revelation.” Although this term is used with respect to the Quran, it necessarily imposes certain limitations upon the Quran’s self-perception; after all, the word *tanzīl* (Q 17:106, *passim*) does not literally mean “revelation” but “causing to descend,” “descending,” “going down,” “coming down,” etc. Something of a concrete vertical hierarchy is implied in this Arabic verbal noun, which is not necessarily present in the English word “revelation.”²

Another equally vexing case with respect to the Quran is that of “salvation,” which, as Walid Saleh notes, is “a fundamentally Christian term and concept.”³ Or, as Frederick Denny

I would like to thank Walid Saleh, Joseph Lumbard, and *JAOS*’s anonymous reviewer for their insightful remarks on this article.

1. T. D. Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion: Terminus and Telos* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

2. There are other Quranic terms that would come closer to what is normally taken to be “revelation” in English. An obvious example is derived from the Arabic root *w-h-y*, namely, the fourth form verb *awḥā* (see Q 3:44, *passim*; cf. Q 19:11). Perhaps less obvious is the verb *tajallā* (see Q 7:148), from the *j-l-w* root.

3. W. A. Saleh, “A Piecemeal Qur’ān: *Furqān* and Its Meaning in Classical Islam and Modern Qur’ānic Studies,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015): 31–71, at 36–37. Saleh makes this point in the context of perceptive remarks with respect to the word *furqān* and its alleged Syriac basis.

puts it, “Unlike Christianity, Islam does not possess a strong rhetoric of salvation, whether in the Quran or later.”⁴ What is normally understood to refer to “salvation” in the Quran is encompassed by a range of concepts, from God’s freeing his servants from harm in the life of this world, to his emancipating them from hell and granting them felicity in the afterlife. These two poles are accounted for by four Arabic root structures (in at least one of their inflected forms), namely, *n-j-w* (“to deliver, set free”), *h-y-ṣ* (“to flee, escape”), *r-w-ḥ* (“to comfort”), and *n-q-dh* (“to rescue”).

It is rather customary in modern scholarship to uncritically subsume these and related roots under the umbrella term “salvation.”⁵ Yet the English term “deliverance” has a scope that is more elastic, general, and far-ranging. This is best evidenced by the fact that, unlike “salvation,” one of the primary senses of “deliverance” is the notion of “setting free.”⁶ Thus, in the context of the Quran in particular, the term “deliverance” more readily denotes the sense that is shared by the aforementioned semantic fields of meaning, while also allowing the important nuances among them to stand on their own.⁷

II. MAJOR SEMANTIC FIELD

The most frequently employed Arabic root structure in the Quran to denote “deliverance” is *n-j-w*, which appears some eighty-four times.⁸ According to the classical Arabic lexicographers, this root carries with it the notion of separation of one thing from another, being saved from perdition, and, most importantly, “Freedom (*khalāṣ*) from fear (*makhāfa*), the opposite of which is safety (*salāma*).”⁹

The most commonly used verbal noun from the *n-j-w* root, namely, *najāt*, appears only once in the Quran (Q 40:41, for which, see below). A number of major Islamic works have this term in their titles, typically conveying the notion that the book in question will deliver its readers from ignorance in general and the incorrect means of obtaining the science that is the subject matter of that book in particular, e.g., the philosophical work *Kitāb al-Najāt* (The Book of Deliverance) by Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037)¹⁰ and the influential primer in Shāfi‘ī law, *Safīnat al-najāt* (The Ship of Deliverance), by Ibn Sumayr al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 1854).¹¹

4. F. M. Denny, “The Problem of Salvation in the Quran: Key Terms and Concepts,” in *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of Mohamed al-Nowaihi*, ed. A. H. Green (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1984), 196–210, at 197.

5. See “Salvation” (M. Borrmans), in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006); J. Robson, “Aspects of the Qurʾanic Doctrine of Salvation,” in *Man and His Salvation: Studies in Memory of S. G. F. Brandon*, ed. E. J. Sharpe and J. R. Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1973), 205–19. Cf. “Salut” (Kh. Azmoudeh), in *Dictionnaire du Coran*, ed. M. A. Amir-Moezzi (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007); C. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2015), 54–55.

6. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.vv.

7. My inquiry does not extend to the related but distinct Quranic notions of “success” (from *f-l-h*) and “victory” (from *f-w-z*). For his part, Denny argues that *falāḥ* corresponds to what we would normally mean by “salvation” in English. See Denny, “Problem of Salvation,” 206–8. Yet if, as Denny argued earlier (text at n. 4, above), “salvation” as a Christian concept is not key to the Quran, then it would follow that the key Quranic root *f-l-h* denoting “success” cannot be adduced as salvation’s Quranic equivalent. I believe the problem here stems from Denny’s unwillingness to relinquish the term “salvation” vis-à-vis the Quran, despite his intuition that “salvation” is problematic in a Quranic context. Borrmans (n. 5, above) employs the same line of argumentation with respect to *f-l-h* and *f-w-z*, effectively reading “salvation” into these root structures.

8. E. M. Badawi and M. A. Haleem (eds.), *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qurʾanic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), s.v.

9. Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, ed. ʿA. A. Farrāj et al. (Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1997), s.v.

10. Ed. M. Fakhry (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1985).

11. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.

There is one Quranic verse that speaks of deliverance in general, and this verse helps frame our understanding of the other senses in which the *n-j-w* root appears. The first and more general of these senses in some way links deliverance to the afterlife, whereas the second, which accounts for the overwhelming majority of cases, frames deliverance in the context of God’s saving his servants or setting them free from imminent danger, harm, and destruction in this life.

Deliverance in General

Perhaps the single most indicative verse concerning the Quranic perspective on the nature and function of deliverance is Q 10:103: “Then we deliver our messengers and those who believe. Thus is it incumbent upon us to deliver the believers.”¹² The first clause is generally understood to refer to God’s rescuing the previous messengers and their followers from those who were oppressing them. The second clause is informed by the first, since it specifically refers to Muḥammad and his Companions, who are promised deliverance from the Meccans “just as,” al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) notes, “he had delivered previous messengers and their followers from their persecutors.”¹³ Yet the verse in question can also be taken as a general statement to the effect that the divine response toward all those who believe and sincerely strive in the truth is one of deliverance, salvation, and freedom in both this life and the afterlife.¹⁴

Deliverance in the Afterlife

Five passages in the Quran link deliverance with some form of success in the afterlife. One of these is Q 39:61: “And God delivers those who are reverent by their triumph; evil will not befall them; nor will they grieve.” In this verse, “by their triumph” can be a reference to the righteous deeds of the reverent,¹⁵ to their being saved from the fire of hell,¹⁶ or to their “triumph of spiritual concerns over worldly ones.”¹⁷ The reference to neither evil nor grief befalling the reverent is seen as pertaining to their situation in the afterlife.¹⁸

The other four passages are (1) Q 11:116, where the ultimate deliverance of some of the righteous people belonging to previous generations is implied; (2) Q 19:72, which speaks of the deliverance of the reverent from hellfire and the wrongdoers being left in it; (3) Q 70:11–14, in which deliverance is connected to the rich Quranic notion of ransoming oneself in the afterlife;¹⁹ and (4) Q 40:41, where “a believing man from the house of Pharaoh who was concealing his faith” (Q 40:28) calls Pharaoh and his entourage to deliverance.²⁰ Here, *najāt* is directly juxtaposed with hell, which clearly implies that the deliverance in question is of a soteriological kind: “O my people! How is it that I call you unto deliverance while you call me unto the fire?”

12. Translations from the Quran, with slight modifications, are taken from S. H. Nasr et al. (eds.), *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015) (hereafter, *Study Quran*).

13. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, cited in my commentary on Q 10:103, in *Study Quran*, 563.

14. Cf. (on Q 10:103) Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī Burūsawī, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿA. Ḥ. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), s.v.; (on 21:88) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqqāʾiq al-tafsīr*, ms. British Museum, Or. 9433, s.v.

15. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, cited in J. E. B. Lumbard’s commentary on Q 39:61, in *Study Quran*, 1132.

16. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, cited in Lumbard’s commentary (previous note).

17. See Lumbard’s commentary (n. 15, above).

18. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, cited in Lumbard’s commentary (n. 15, above).

19. For which, see Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qurʾān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998), s.v. *f-d-y* (form 8 in particular).

20. For the identity of this man according to al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) and al-Ṭabarī, see Lumbard’s commentary on Q 40:28, in *Study Quran*, 1114–15.

Deliverance in This Life

There are essentially two instances in which deliverance as a worldly phenomenon figures in the Quran. The first is to be found in passages, numbering four in total, where deliverance is spoken of in relation to the general human condition.

(1) Q 6:63–64: “Say: Who delivers you from the darkness of land and sea, when you call upon him humbly and in secret, [saying]: If only he delivers us from this, we shall surely be among the thankful? Say: God delivers you from this and from every distress; yet you ascribe partners unto him!”

(2) Q 10:22–23: “He it is who carries you over land and sea, even when you are sailing in ships, till, when they sail with them upon a favorable wind, and rejoice therein, there comes upon them a violent gale, and the waves come at them from every side, and they think they shall be encompassed by them. They call upon God, devoting religion entirely to him: If Thou deliverest us from this, we shall surely be among the thankful! Then when he delivers them, behold, they behave tyrannically upon the earth without right.”²¹

(3) Q 17:67: “And whenever affliction befalls you at sea, forgotten are those whom you would call upon, save for him. Then when he has delivered you safely to land, you turn away. Man is ever ungrateful!”

(4) Q 29:65: “And when they board a ship, they call upon God, devoting religion entirely to him, but when he delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [unto him].”

In each of these verses, the deliverance of human beings is directly linked to God’s saving them from some form of calamity associated with water. In such situations, man normally asks for God’s help, promising that he will be grateful to him for his blessings (Q 6:63, 10:22) and will not associate partners with him (Q 10:22, 17:67, 29:65). But when God’s help arrives and man is returned to his normal state of comfort, he then reverts to his old ways: of ascribing partners to God (Q 6:64, 29:65), acting tyrannically upon the earth (Q 10:23), and being ungrateful for all that God has done (Q 17:67).

From another perspective, these verses can be said to depict the ordinary human state of being engulfed in the transient waters of life, with all that this entails by way of heedlessness of God. Even in cases when man tries to escape such a state of forgetfulness after imploring God for help, he is psychologically prone to revert to his former state of ignorance and ingratitude once he feels safe and assumes that he has been “delivered.” He thus remains trapped in the ocean of forgetfulness, engulfed by its billows and enmeshed in its layers of darkness.²²

The second instance in which deliverance as a worldly phenomenon figures in the Quran is with respect to the prophets who came before Muḥammad. Two key verses provide us with the general Quranic picture of God’s delivering the previous prophets from harm and danger in this world:

(1) Q 12:110: “Till, when the messengers despaired and thought that they were deemed liars, our help came unto them, and whosoever we willed was delivered. And our might shall not be turned back from the guilty people.”

(2) Q 21:9: “Then we fulfilled the promise unto them, and delivered them and whomsoever we willed, and we destroyed the prodigal.”

The remaining verses that speak of deliverance with respect to the previous prophets are all prophet-specific, the majority of instances concerning the life and mission of Moses and Noah respectively. In keeping with the Quran’s treatment of deliverance vis-à-vis the general

21. See also Q 31:32.

22. Cf. the pertinent observations made by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) in *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, cited in Lumbard’s commentary on Q 29:65, in *Study Quran*, 982.

human condition, which as we have seen involves deliverance from the perils of water, most of the instances of deliverance recounted in the stories of Moses and Noah likewise involve some body of water—Moses and the Israelites being delivered from Pharaoh and his hosts while they drown in the Red Sea, and Noah and his followers being delivered from their enemies by virtue of boarding the ark and leaving their enemies in a terrible torrent of rain that results in a catastrophic flood.

Several verses recount how God saved Moses and the Israelites from Pharaoh and his entourage, for example:

Q 2:49–50: “And [remember] when we delivered you from the House of Pharaoh, who inflicted a terrible punishment upon you, slaying your sons and sparing your women. And in that was a great trial from your Lord. And when we parted the sea for you, and delivered you, and drowned the House of Pharaoh as you looked on.”²³

The speaker-perspective in this act of recounting changes also alters—in several instances it is Moses himself who reminds the Israelites of God’s delivering them: “And [remember] when Moses said unto his people: Remember God’s blessing upon you, when he delivered you from the House of Pharaoh, who inflicted terrible punishment upon you, slaying your sons and sparing your women—and in that was a great trial from your Lord” (Q 14:6).

Other passages that connect Moses and deliverance include (1) Q 10:86, when the Israelites, after agreeing to follow him and trust in God, pray to God to deliver them “from disbelieving people,” that is, Pharaoh and his companions; (2) Q 28:21, where Moses, after having killed an Egyptian, prays to God to deliver him “from the wrongdoing people” (Q 28:21), which again refers to Pharaoh and his companions; and (3) Q 20:40, where God recounts to Moses how he delivered him to safety after having killed an Egyptian.²⁴ Two other passages speak of deliverance in the context of the story of Moses: (4) Q 7:165, the deliverance of the Israelites who remained faithful to the Sabbath is juxtaposed with those who broke it, and for which they were punished;²⁵ and (5) Q 10:92, where Pharaoh’s body is “delivered” or preserved by God from drowning so as to be an example of those who would come after him.

A typical kind of verse concerning the deliverance of Noah and those who believed in him is as follows: “Yet they denied him. So we delivered him and those who were with him in the ark, and we drowned those who denied our signs. Truly they were a blind people” (Q 7:64).²⁶ Elsewhere, in Q 21:76,²⁷ Noah’s deliverance is spoken of as a response to his petition to God, which parallels Q 28:21 with respect to Moses (see above).

There are some eighteen other Quranic verses in which deliverance is framed in prophet-specific contexts. These include (1) a number of instances in the story of Lot, where he and his family, with the exception of his wife, are delivered from the people of Sodom (Q 7:83; 21:71, 74; 27:57; 37:134–35; 54:34);²⁸ (2) a reference to Abraham, when he is delivered from the fire in which his people cast him (Q 29:24); (3) a passing mention at Q 12:42 in the story of Joseph with respect to the wine carrier whom Joseph “knew would be delivered”; (5) mention of Jonah, when he is saved “from grief” (Q 21:88), that is, when God delivered him from the whale’s belly; and (6) accounts of the deliverance of the Arabian prophets Hūd

23. See also Q 7:141, 20:80, 26:65, 37:115, and 44:30.

24. For the circumstances surrounding the incident between Moses and the Egyptian, see C. K. Dagli’s commentary on Q 28:15–20, in *Study Quran*, 950–51.

25. See the remarks of al-Rāzi and al-Ṭabarī cited in M. M. Dakake’s commentary on Q 7:163–65, in *Study Quran*, 463–64.

26. See also Q 10:73, 29:15, and 37:76; cf. Q 23:28.

27. See also Q 26:169–70.

28. Cf. Q 29:32 and 37:134–35.

(Q 7:72, 11:58), Šāliḥ (Q 11:66, 27:53, 41:18), and Shuʿayb (Q 7:89, 11:94), along with their respective communities who accepted their message.

There is only one Quranic verse that is understood to link deliverance with the life and mission of the Prophet Muḥammad, namely, Q 10:103. As has been seen, the overwhelming majority of cases when the *n-j-w* root is employed are with respect to the prophets who preceded him. It is well known that, in Muḥammad’s own lifetime, the revelations that spoke of the difficult trials and ultimate successes of the previous prophets served to strengthen him when he faced similar opposition from the people to whom he had been directly sent.²⁹ Thus, the deliverance of the previous prophets is framed in the Quran as containing important historical and archetypal lessons for the Prophet and his Companions. From this perspective, Muhammad and his Companions were in the process of being delivered even as the message of the Quran was being revealed. At the same time, the Prophet himself acts a source of deliverance for the believers, both in this world and in the afterlife, which explains why one of his traditional names is *al-munjī* or the “deliverer.”³⁰

III. MINOR SEMANTIC FIELDS

Three minor semantic fields are employed in the Quran to convey some shade of meaning of the term “deliverance” as defined above. The first of these is the *ḥ-y-ṣ* root, which denotes the notion of “fleeing” or “escaping.” In the Quran, this root only appears as an indefinite noun of place, namely, *maḥiṣ* (“refuge”). Literally, this word means a “place of refuge,” “place of fleeing,” “place of escape,” or even “way out.” By extension, it conveys the sense of there being a place in which one may seek or obtain deliverance, that is, a place to which one would wish to flee in the face of being in a negative place, situation, or circumstance.

In Q 4:121 the noun is used with respect to hell: “Such will have their refuge in hell, and will find no refuge therefrom,” whereas in Q 41:47–48 the refuge in question is an acknowledged place of escape in the afterlife, unattainable to those who ascribed partners unto God.³¹ Deliverance or “refuge” is sought in vain in Q 50:36 by those belonging to previous generations who were destroyed by God on account of their wrongdoings, and Q 42:35 relates the idea of having no refuge more generally to anyone who opposes the signs of God: “and so that those who dispute concerning our signs will know that they have no refuge.”

The second of these fields is the *r-w-ḥ* root that, in its infinitive form *rawḥ*, meaning “comfort,” appears three times in the Quran, twice in the construction *rawḥ Allāh* “God’s comfort.” Thus, in Q 12:87, in the context of Jacob encouraging his sons to return to Egypt to seek out and make amends with their brother Joseph, whom they had surmised dead on account of their own wrong actions toward him, Jacob tells them to “despair not of God’s comfort; truly none despairs of God’s comfort save the disbelieving people.” The comfort in question corresponds to a kind of deliverance in this world wherein the brothers will be set free or exonerated from their state of grief, guilt, and anxiety by virtue of God’s mercy (*raḥma*) toward them.³² This type of comfort, which relates to this life and is situated on the psychological and spiritual plane, is to be distinguished from the state of comfort mentioned in Q 56:89, which clearly identifies comfort with some form of ultimate deliverance in the

29. See, for example, Q 11:25–123. Cf. W. A. Saleh, “End of Hope: Sūras 10–15, Despair and a Way out of Mecca,” in *Qurʾānic Studies Today*, ed. A. Neuwirth and M. A. Sells (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 105–23.

30. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūlī, *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fi dhikr al-ṣalāt ʿalā al-nabī al-mukhtār*, ed. N. Keller (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2008), 19. Cf. Q 9:103.

31. See also Q 14:21.

32. Cf. Q 39:53.

afterlife. Therefore, the comfort in this verse is of a purely spiritual kind, speaking as it does of a final state of “comfort, bounty, and a garden of bliss” for that special rank of believers in the afterlife who are referred to as the *muqarrabūn* (“those brought nigh”) (Q 3:45; 56:11, 88; 83:21, 28).³³

It is with the specifically spiritual sense of comfort in mind that several works of Islamic mysticism have employed the term *rawḥ* in their titles. The foremost work in this regard is Aḥmad Sam‘ānī’s (d. 534/1111) masterpiece *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ* (The Comfort of Spirits), the first Persian commentary on the divine names and a particularly noteworthy text for its profound teachings and exceptional literary beauty.³⁴

The third minor semantic field employed in the Quran to convey a sense of “deliverance” is the *n-q-dh* root, which only appears in its verbal form and primarily carries with it the idea of being “rescued,” hence delivered from imminent threat or danger. Drawing on an active participle derived from this very root, the theologian and mystic Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) gave the popular account of his autobiography, which documents his intellectual crisis and path to self-discovery, the title *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl* (The Rescuer from Error).³⁵ Like the *n-j-w* major semantic field, the *n-q-dh* root relates the sense of being rescued and delivered from drowning: “And if we will, we drown them, such that they would have none to call upon and would not be rescued” (Q 36:43). And, as was the case with the *ḥ-y-ṣ* root, the verbal form of the *n-q-dh* root is featured in connection with punishment from hellfire (Q 39:19) and the hopelessness of deliverance in the afterlife for those who associate partners with God: “Shall I take gods apart from him? If the Compassionate desired harm for me, their intercession would avail me naught, nor would they rescue me” (Q 36:23).³⁶

IV. CONCLUSION

This article has focused on the theoretical problems inherent in the uncritical and indiscriminate employment of fundamentally Christian religious terminology vis-à-vis the Quran. Taking the particular example of the notion of “salvation,” it was argued that this term does not graft so easily onto the Quran, distorting as it does the Quran’s self-perception and its own nuanced presentation of what we want to call “salvation” in English.

The English term “deliverance,” on the other hand, offers a much better alternative. By examining four key Quranic Arabic roots that communicate “deliverance,” it was shown that what is at stake in the Quran is not the notion of being “saved” as such, but rather of being set free or rescued from harm in this life, and of emancipation from punishment and the attainment of felicity in the afterlife.

The insistence on the use of Christian discursive categories to study other religious traditions is often the result of an unconscious acceptance of these terms as “naturalized” parts of everyday discourse. Needless to say, this “tyranny” of naturalized terminology is something from which all scholars of religion should be on guard. While breaking away from such a stricture is not an easy task, those who are able to do so take a huge step toward a more global understanding of religion.

33. Cf. Q 4:172, 7:114, and 26:42.

34. Aḥmad Sam‘ānī, *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asmā’ al-malik al-fattāḥ*, ed. N. M. Hirawī (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī wa-Farhangī, 1989).

35. Ed. ‘A. Ḥ. Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1965). For a recent rereading of the aims and intentions of *al-Munqidh*, see K. Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 1–5.

36. Cf. Q 22:73.

