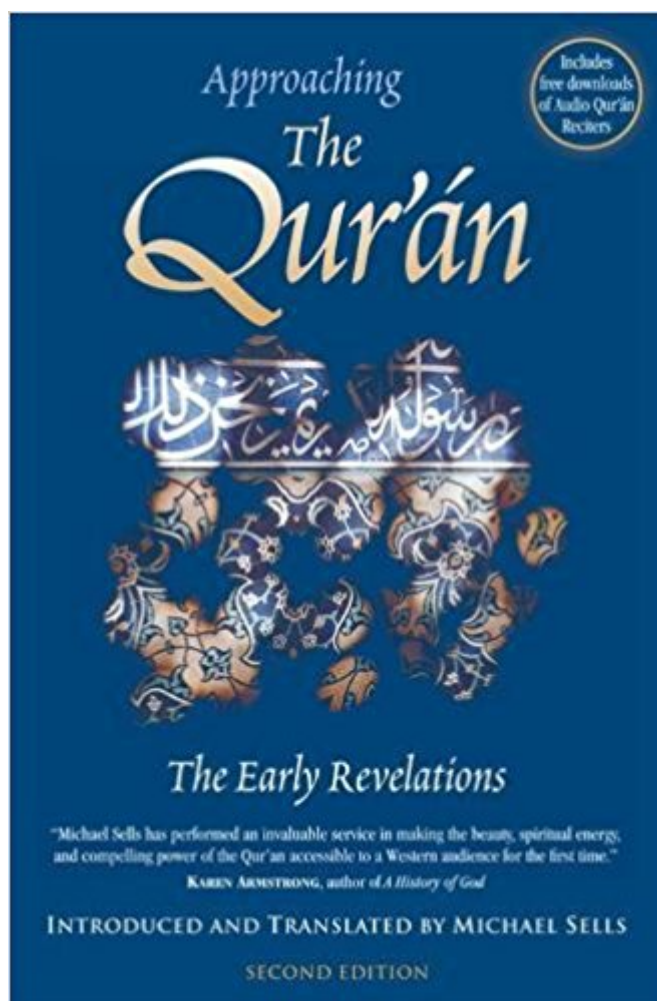


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# Approaching The Qur'an: The Early Revelations



## Synopsis

Approaching the Qur'ān is a major event in religious publishing. Professor Michael Sells has captured the complexity, power, and poetry of the early suras of the Qur'ān, the sacred scripture of Islam. In this second edition, Sells introduces important new translations of suras and a new preface that addresses the ongoing controversy over teaching about Islam and the Qur'an in American universities. Approaching the Qur'ān presents brilliant translations of the short, hymnic suras associated with the first revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. Most of these early revelations appear at the end of text and are commonly reached only by the most resolute reader of existing English translations. These suras contain some of the most powerful, prophetic and revelatory passages in religious history. They offer the vision of a meaningful and just life that anchors the religion of one-fifth of the world's inhabitants. Approaching the Qur'ān is enriched by inclusion of free downloadable audio recordings of Quranic reciters, allowing readers an opportunity to hear the Qur'ān in its original form. The book includes Sells' Introduction to the Qur'ān, commentaries of the suras, a glossary of technical terms, and chapters discussing the sound nature and gender aspects of the Arabic text.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Despite the rapid growth of Islam in this country, its precepts and scripture remain inaccessible to many readers. It is difficult, too, that many of its believers assert that the Qur'an cannot be translated. This groundbreaking work by Haverford College professor Sells goes a very long way to bridging the gap that separates the non-Islamic reader from the Qur'an; he translates and

extensively annotates a careful selection of the earliest "suras" (revelations), setting them in their cultural context. Further chapters discuss sound and gender in the meaning of the Qur'an, and the book includes an hour-long CD of extraordinary field recordings of male and female Qur'anic reciters. Highly recommended. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Michael Sells is to be congratulated for making a major contribution to religious literature with *Approaching the Qur'an*, the best version of Muslim scriptures available in English. This is an important and illuminating work, one that will be welcomed by scholars, students, believers, and all who seek to better understand Islam and its sacred scripture." -- Carl Ernst is professor of Islamic studies at the University of North Carolina and author of *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*

This is a great introduction to one of the most important holy books in existence. Few books and movements through history, except perhaps Christianity and Buddhism, can rival Islam in scope and success. The book has a great layout and can easily be read by non-muslims and muslims alike. Each verse is translated into English and followed by a discussion of its content. Where ambiguity exists multiple translations are presented. Overall a highly impressive work which provides a great starting point learning about Islam.

Phenomenol book. Where do I begin to write all that it revealed and all the thoughts it triggered. Let me begin by saying that Sells has written a masterpiece. If you read this book, no matter which language is your mother tongue-including Arabic-this book will reveal things about the Qur'an, which will amaze you, humble you, and make you submit to the glory of Allah/God. If you are a Muslim, then you should definitely read this book, and recommend it to others, especially your children. Surah Baqarah (chapter 2) of the Qur'an opens with the words, "This Divine Writ." The next few verses identify the tenets of faith, and how people respectively believe, pretend to believe or disbelieve. Then Allah emphatically states that if you dispute the Qur'an's Divine origin, then bring even one verse like it, if you cannot, then submit to the decree of God, and follow what is revealed in the Qur'an through Muhammad (pbuh). In other words, the (Qur'anic) discourse, is the miracle. This challenge, which has remained unmet, has never been seriously explored, until Sells wrote this book. As a non-Arabic speaking born-Muslim, I was aware of superiority of the language of the Qur'an, and the rhyming of the verses, however, to know something as a stated fact, and to live that experience, are two entirely different things. This book reveals the beauty of the Qur'an, to

an English speaking audience, showing how the language is untranslatable as well as unmatched. Even if you are not a believer, you can still see the beauty of the language, which belies a human author, as many attribute it to various men, including but not limited to Muhammad (pbuh). Somehow I had always thought that Arabs could read the Qur'an and follow everything contained therein, with ease. That is not the case, because had it been so, an Arab would have authored such a book. The fact is that a work such as this-which attempts to explore the beauty of God's own speech-could only come about as a culmination of study and knowledge, across many fields. The author traverses fields, such as Biblical text, Greek epics, ancient Arabian poetry, the etymology of words, linguistics across English and Arabic, knowledge of Islamic history, as well as accurate inferences about Islam's stance on prayer, communal life, materialism, including capitalism. This is precisely why only an American academic, could author such a work. Within the Muslim world, university academia is Zombie-land, and religious seminaries focus on rote learning of Qur'anic exegesis frozen in the thirteenth century. These diametrically opposed systems, function as each others nemesis. Hence, those who know religion, know nothing of science, poetry, art, linguistics, history or economics, and those who study the aforementioned fields, know nothing of religion. Each of these distinct groups, considers the other to be worthless. The seminary graduates, often propound the notion that the Qur'an alone is sufficient for study. They actively seek to defeat the schooling system, which teaches math, science, English, social studies at the school level. This notion is woven into the ideology of all radical movements, across the Muslim world, be it Pakistan, Egypt, Saudia Arabia or Yemen. The Arabs invented Chemistry, Algebra and the Arab numerals amongst countless other inventions, and it was done in the spirit of faith. Today, their spiritual and physical descendants, consider the sciences to be a western (read anti-faith) scourge. This book should be translated into Urdu, Malay, Indonesian, Persian and Arabic, and circulated across the Muslim world. It should be gifted to seminaries in the Islamic world, and Islamic centers in the west. Coming back to the book, I had to pause and ponder, many times. The book is an easy read, but it triggers so many thoughts and emotions. One thing I could not wrap my head around, was the author's obvious conviction, that this was Divine communication, so his forced connection,s to the Bible, or the Christian tradition, were puzzling. But then, that is what free will is all about. The book has one error, that it mentions the evil eye's Islamic understanding, as a superstitious practice, and states that it is countered through talismans and objects. This is not true, infact, talismans are considered heretical in Islam, and they are only worn by the ignorant. I have given the book five stars, because the author opened my eyes to the beauty of the Divine text. I read the e-book, and I did not receive an alternative method to listen to the recitations, as the CD enclosed with the book, is missing in the Kindle

version. I was hoping to receive some code or something, but I am bereft of these recitations, which the author has carefully chosen as the best of the best. I also wish the author had included Arabic text of verses, when discussing them, because even non-Arabic speaking Muslims read that better than they read English transliteration. But these two shortcomings still do not detract from the main thrust of the book.

I recently started reading the Koran (Qur'an) and felt that I would benefit greatly from some kind of commentary on the text, as well as historical and cultural background. But, as someone who has been studying the Bible for many years, I know that the search for "more" about a sacred text can be perilous; so many voices and views and versions! Also, I didn't want to commit myself to years of reading endless texts ... After reading reviews for Michael Sells' book "Approaching The Qur'an: The Early Revelations" I decided to take a chance on it and I am very pleased. This is just what I was looking for! Enough historical information to help me understand the culture that the Koran was birthed into; some explanation of the lyrical quality of the Arabic language and what gets lost in Koranic "translation

"Approaching the Qur'an" is a very well-written, engaging book that provides a superb, clearly-written introduction followed by attractively arranged Suras with excellent, concise commentaries that bring out the meanings of the texts. The later chapters on "Hearing the Qur'an" and "Sound, Spirit, and Gender," are very enlightening and help students to better understand and appreciate the Qur'an. He also includes a useful glossary. I have been using this book to supplement college courses that I teach on the Abrahamic faiths. Using this book provides context and background that helps students better understand the Qur'an. Highly recommended!

Thoughtful, concise introduction to some of the early revelations in the Quran. Whether you already know anything about the Quran or not (1 of each reading this), it brings enlightenment. And the introduction was such a pleasure to read! We only wish that Michael Sells could have expounded on more chapters of the Quran.

It doesn't come with a CD anymore, but with a code to download the audio files from a website. The book is pretty good, extremely enlightening to the meaning of a few verses of the Qur'an. However, it avoids the really controversial verses. It's good for an introduction. Now that the CD is not included, I'd recommend the ebook.

As a Lutheran pastor, I felt the need to know more about other faiths and their scriptures. It is always daunting to dig into a completely different religion and cultural perspective. I bought this book expecting it to be the Qur'an with commentary, but found something else all together. Sells explains the place of the Qur'an in Islam, how it is used, as well as basic concepts that are used through out the scripture. His interpretation of the Suras are beautiful and his explanations allowed me to fully appreciate the poetry of the Qur'an. While this is not the entire Qur'an, I finished this book with such a positive feeling toward this faith and their scripture.

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