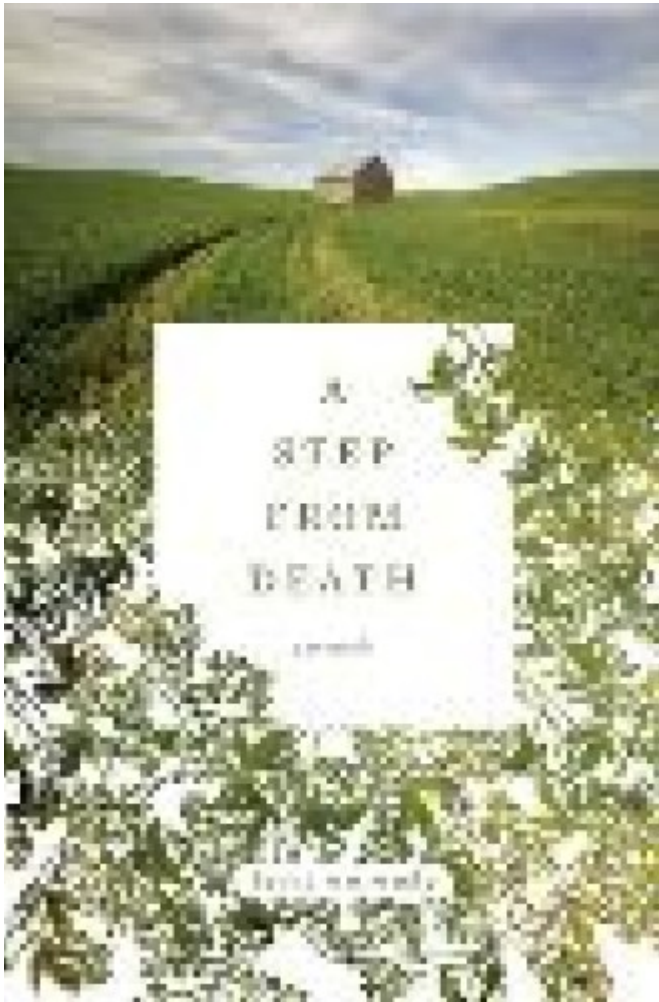


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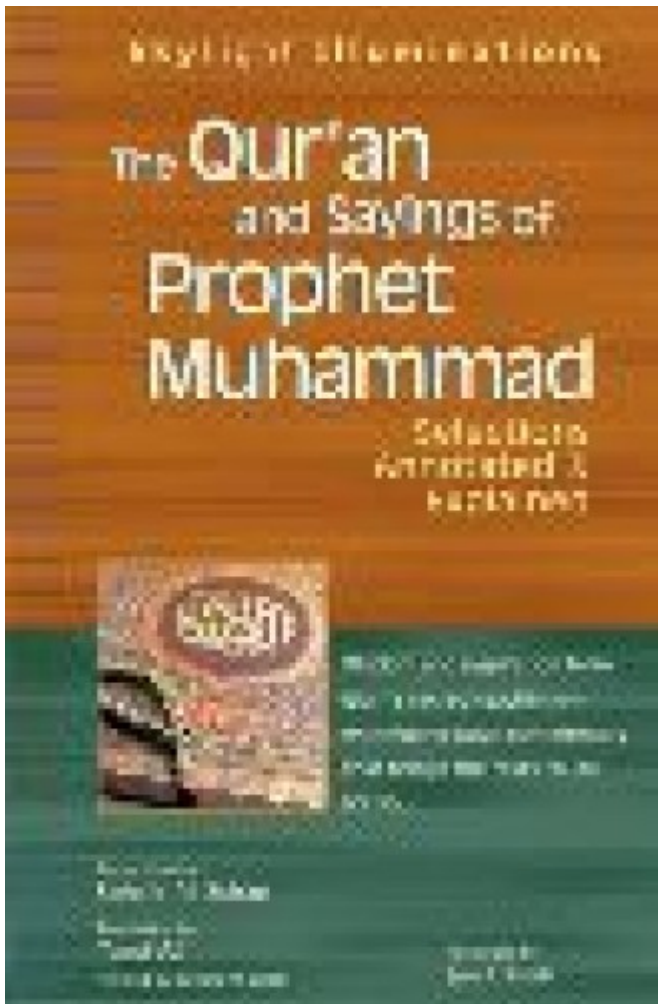
Books in the [July 1, 2008](#) issue

In Review



A Step from Death: A Memoir

Larry Woiwode
Counterpoint



The Qur'an and Sayings of Prophet Muhammad: Selections Annotated and Explained

Sohaib N. Sultan
Skylight Paths

Death is a recurring theme in this follow-up to Woiwode's earlier memoir, *What I Think I Did*: the death of his mother at an early age; a farming accident that nearly cost him his life; the death of his father and his coming to terms with the legacy his father left him; and the near death of his son Joseph, to whom much of this memoir is addressed. Woiwode ruminates about aging too: "The glory of youth is the fire of its passion. The glory of age is its ability to bank that fire." Woiwode weaves into his narrative reflections on his own writing life, anecdotes about other well-known authors who were his acquaintances, and warm regards for his editor William Maxwell, who also lost his mother as a young child. Glimpses of his faith also surface.

This is a good introduction for the uninitiated who find reading the Qur'an a daunting experience. Sultan (author of *The Koran for Dummies*) provides a helpful chapter on Islam's sacred scriptures and the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The rest of the book includes quotations from and annotations on the Qur'an as well as the Hadith, which are Muhammad's collected sayings. Organized topically, the 15 chapters of the collection cover such topics as contemplation, faith and reason; God and divine attributes; the purpose and responsibility of human life; spiritual practice and discipline; envisioning a just and moral society; peace, war and reconciliation; women and gender relations; and marriage and family life.