

The Qur'an:
An Introductory Essay
by Theodor Nöldeke

Edited by
N. A. Newman

**Interdisciplinary Biblical
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Preface

With the publication of his award-winning book *Die Geschichte des Qorans* in 1860, Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930) became the foremost German authority in the field of Near Eastern Studies.¹ In the above publication he not only advanced many theories which are still contemporary, but he also set the standard for chronological *sura* orderings which, scientifically speaking, remains unsurpassed. Arabic was only one of the languages Nöldeke learned, and his genius for Semitic languages can be illustrated from the fact that after mastering Hebrew, he began lecturing in Syriac after only three or four weeks of study.² In his long and industrious life, Nöldeke showed the measure of his scholastic stature by retaining the early-acquired recognition of his colleagues and students, which is in turn attested to by the length of his two-volume *Festschrift* published in 1906. One can hardly go through life without having an opinion on the subject of religion, much less so for anyone who had spent a lifetime working in the field of Middle Eastern Studies. Nöldeke, theologically a liberal, who was famous for his insight, once wrote:³

I have little feeling for regulated Semitic godliness, and yet I know how infinitely important this is for the world, and how much it needs to be studied.

A version of the work presented here was first published in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 16, pp. 597ff.⁴ under the heading "Mohammedanism III. The Koran."⁵ Nöldeke later improved the German text,⁶ and revised the translation of the work which was done by John Sutherland Black (1846-1923).⁷ The resulting texts were both published in the year 1892; the German original "Der Koran" formed the second part of *Orientalische Skizzen*, and the revised English translation formed the second part of *Sketches from Eastern History*. Though quite short in length, "The Koran" was written at a time when Nöldeke was in his prime, and thus includes what one of the best Western scholars of Islam deemed important for a concise introduction to the Qur'an.

Nöldeke's original text contained almost no non-Qur'anic references to his sources. This edition of his work has been expanded to include endnotes and, where necessary, comments concerning the references which were probably used by the author. A short conclusion and a bibliography have also been included in this edition. Spelling has been changed to conform to modern English-Islamic and American usage. References to Qur'an passages follow the Cairo system of verse division. Occasional errors in word order, which appear to stem from translation mistakes, rather than a change in English grammar, have been retained in order to avoid changing the original text.

1. C. H. Becker, *Islamstudien*, vol. 2, p. 514.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 521.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 518 — a quote from a letter of August 5, 1913.
4. Theodor Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, p. 21.
5. Theodor Nöldeke, *Orientalische Skizzen*, p. 22.
6. *Ibid.*, preface.
7. Theodor Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, title page.

THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an (Kor'an) is the foundation of Islam. It is the sacred book of more than a hundred millions of men, some of them nations of immemorial civilization, by all of whom it is regarded as the immediate word of God. And since the use of the Qur'an in public worship, in schools and otherwise, is much more extensive than, for example, the reading of the Bible in most Christian countries, it has truly been described as the most widely-read book in existence. This circumstance alone is sufficient to give it an urgent claim on our attention, whether it suit our taste and fall in with our religious and philosophical views or not. Besides, it is the work of Muhammad, and as such is fitted to afford a clue to the spiritual development of that most successful of all prophets and religious personalities.¹ It must be owned that the first perusal leaves on a European an impression of chaotic confusion, — not that the book is very extensive, for it is not quite so large as the New Testament. This impression can in some degree be modified only by the application of a critical analysis with the assistance of Arabian² tradition.

To the faith of the Muslims, as has been said, the Qur'an is the word of God, and such also is the claim which the book itself advances. For except in sura i. — which is a prayer for men — and some passages where Muhammad (vi. 104, 114; xxvii. 93; xlii. 8), or the angels (xix. 65; xxxvii. 164 sqq.), speak in the first person without the intervention of the usual imperative "say" (sing. or pl.), the speaker throughout is God, either in the first person singular, or more commonly the plural of majesty, "we." The same mode of address is familiar to us from the prophets of the Old Testament; the human personality disappears, in the moment of inspiration, behind the God by whom it is filled. But all the greatest Hebrew prophets fall back speedily upon the unassuming human "I"; while in the Qur'an the divine "I" is the stereotyped form of address. Muhammad, however, really felt himself to be the instrument of God; this consciousness was no doubt brighter at his first appearance than it afterwards became, but it never entirely forsook him. We might therefore readily pardon him for giving out, not only the results of imaginative and emotional excitement, but also many expositions or decrees which were the outcome of cool calculation, as the word of God, if he had only attained the pure moral attitude which in an Isaiah or a Jeremiah fills us with admiration after the lapse of ages.

The rationale of revelation is explained in the Qur'an itself as follows: In heaven is the original text ("the mother of the book," xliii. 3; "a concealed book," Iv. 77; "a well-guarded tablet," lxxxv. 22). By a process of "sending down" (*tanzil*), one piece after another was communicated to the Prophet. The mediator was an angel, who is called sometimes the "Spirit" (xxvi. 193), sometimes the holy Spirit (xvi. 104), and at a later time "Gabriel" (ii. 91).³ This angel dictates the revelation to the Prophet, who repeats it after him, and afterwards proclaims it to the world (lxxxvii. 6; etc.). It is plain that we have here a somewhat crude attempt of the Prophet to represent to himself the more or less unconscious process by which his ideas arose and gradually took shape in his mind. It is no wonder if in such confused imagery the details are not always self-consistent. When, for example, this heavenly archetype is said to be in the hands of an exalted "scribe" (lxxx. 13 sqq.), this seems a transition to a quite different set of ideas, namely, the books of fate, or the record of all human actions — conceptions which are actually found in the Qur'an. It is to be observed at all events, that Muhammad's transcendental idea of God, as a Being altogether above the world, excludes the thought of a direct intercourse between the prophet and God.

It is an explicit statement of the Qur'an that the sacred book was revealed ("sent down") by God, not all at once, but piecemeal and gradually (xxv. 34). This is evident from the actual composition of the book, and is confirmed by Muslim tradition. That is to say Muhammad issued his revelations in fly-leaves of greater or less extent. A single piece of this kind was called either, like the entire collection, *qur'an*, i.e., "reading," or rather "recitation"; or *kitab*, i.e., "writing"; or *sura*, which is the late-Hebrew *shura*, and means literally "series." The last became, in the lifetime of Muhammad, the regular designation of the individual sections as distinguished from the whole collection; and accordingly it is the name given to the separate chapters of the existing Qur'an. These chapters are of unequal length. Since many of the shorter ones are undoubtedly complete in themselves, it is natural to assume that the longer, which are sometimes very comprehensive, have arisen from the amalgamation of various originally distinct revelations. This supposition is favored by the numerous traditions which give us the circumstances under which this or that short piece, now incorporated in a larger section, was revealed; and also by the fact that the connection of thought in the present suras often seems to be interrupted. And in reality many pieces of the long suras have to be severed out as originally independent; even in the short ones parts are often found which cannot have been there at first. At the same time we must beware of taking

this sifting operation too far — as I now believe myself to have done in my earlier works, and as Sprenger in his great book on Muhammad also sometimes seems to do. That some suras were of considerable length from the first is seen, for example, from xii., which contains a short introduction, then the history of Joseph, and then a few concluding observations, and is therefore perfectly homogeneous. In like manner, xx., which is mainly occupied with the history of Moses, forms a complete whole. The same is true of xviii., which at first sight seems to fall into several pieces; the history of the seven sleepers, the grotesque narrative about Moses, and that about Alexander "the Horned," are all connected together and the same rhyme runs through the whole sura. Even in the separate narrations we may observe how readily the Qur'an passes from one subject to another, how little care is taken to express all the transitions of thought, and how frequent clauses are omitted, which are almost indispensable. We are not at liberty, therefore, in every case where the connection in the Qur'an is obscure, to say that it is really broken, and set it down as the clumsy patchwork of a later hand. Even in the old Arabic poetry such abrupt transitions are of very frequent occurrence. It is not uncommon for the Qur'an, after a new subject has been entered on, to return gradually or suddenly to the former theme — a proof that there at least separation is not to be thought of. In short, however imperfectly the Qur'an may have been redacted, in the majority of cases the present suras are identical with the originals.⁴

How these revelations actually arose in Muhammad's mind is a question which it is almost as idle to discuss as it would be to analyze the workings of the mind of a poet. In his early career, sometimes perhaps in its later stages also, many revelations must have burst from him in uncontrollable excitement, so that he could not possibly regard them otherwise than as divine inspirations. We must bear in mind that he was no cold systematic thinker, but an Oriental visionary, brought up in crass superstition, and without intellectual discipline; a man whose nervous temperament had been powerfully worked on by ascetic austerities, and who was all the more irritated by the opposition he encountered, because he had little of the heroic in his nature. Filled with his religious ideas and visions he might well fancy he heard the angel bidding him to recite what was said to him. There may have been many a revelation of this kind which no one ever heard but himself, as he repeated it to himself in the silent of the night (lxxiii. 4). Indeed the Qur'an itself admits that he forgot some revelations (lxxxvii. 6). But by far the greatest part of the book is undoubtedly the result deliberation, touched more or less with emotion and animated by a

certain rhetorical rather than poetical glow. Many passages are based upon purely intellectual reflection. It is said that Muhammad occasionally uttered such a passage immediately after one of those epileptic fits which not only his followers, but (for a time at least) he himself also, regarded as tokens of intercourse with the higher powers.⁵ If that is the case, it is impossible to say whether the trick was in the utterance of the revelation or in the fit itself.

How the various pieces of the Qur'an took literary form is uncertain. Muhammad himself, so far as we can discover, never wrote down anything. The question whether he could read and write has been much debated among Muslims, unfortunately more with dogmatic arguments and spurious traditions than authentic proofs.⁶ At present, one is inclined to say that he was not altogether ignorant of these arts, but that from want of practice he found it convenient to employ someone else whenever he had anything to write. After the emigration to Medina (A.D. 622) we are told that short pieces — chiefly legal decisions — were taken down immediately after they were revealed, by an adherent whom he summoned for the purpose; so that nothing stood in the way of their publication. Hence it is probable that in Mecca, where, as in a mercantile town, writing was commoner than in Medina, a place of agriculture, he had already begun to have his oracles committed to writing. That even long portions of the Qur'an existed in written form from an early date may be pretty safely inferred from various indications, especially from the fact that in Mecca the Prophet had caused insertions to be made, and pieces to be erased, in his previous revelations.⁷ For we cannot suppose that he knew the longer suras by heart so perfectly that he was able after a time to lay his finger upon any particular passage. In some instances, indeed, he may have relied too much on his memory.⁸ For example, he seems to have occasionally dictated the same sura to different persons in slightly different terms.⁹ In such cases, no doubt, he may have partly intended to introduce improvements; and so long as the difference was merely in expression, without affecting the sense, it could occasion no perplexity to his followers. None of them had literary pedantry enough to question the consistency of the divine revelation on that ground. In particular instances, however, the difference of reading was too important to be overlooked. Thus the Qur'an itself confesses that the unbelievers cast it up as a reproach to the Prophet that God sometimes substituted one verse for another (xvi. 103). On one occasion, when a dispute arose between two of his own followers as to the true reading of a passage which both had received from the Prophet himself, Muhammad is said to have explained that the Qur'an was revealed in seven forms.¹⁰ In this dictum, which perhaps is genuine, seven stands, of course, as in many other cases,

for an indefinite but limited number. But one may imagine what a world of trouble it has cost the Muslim theologians to explain the saying in accordance with their dogmatic beliefs.¹¹ A great number of explanations are current, some of which claim the authority of the Prophet himself; as, indeed fictitious utterances of Muhammad play throughout a conspicuous part in the exegesis of the Qur'an. One very favorite, but utterly untenable interpretation is that the "seven forms" are seven different dialects.¹²

When such discrepancies came to the cognisance of Muhammad it was doubtless his desire that only one of the conflicting texts should be considered authentic,¹³ only he never gave himself much trouble to have his wish carried into effect. Although in theory he was an upholder of verbal inspiration, he did not push the doctrine to its extreme consequences; his practical good sense did not take these things so strictly as the theologians of later centuries. Sometimes, however, he did suppress whole sections or verses, enjoining his followers to efface or forget them, and declaring them to be "abrogated." A very remarkable case is that of the two verses in liii., when he had recognized three heathen goddesses as exalted beings, possessing influence with God. This he had done in a moment of weakness, to win his countrymen by a compromise which still left Allah in the highest rank. He attained his purpose indeed, but was soon visited by remorse, and declared the words in question to have been inspirations of the Evil One.¹⁴

So much for the abrogated readings; the case is somewhat different when we come to the abrogation of laws and directions to the Muslims, which often occurs in the Qur'an. There is nothing in this at variance with Muhammad's idea of God. God is to him an absolute despot, who declares a thing right or wrong from no inherent necessity, but by His arbitrary fiat. This God varies His commands at pleasure, prescribes one law for the Christians, another for the Jews and a third for the Muslims; nay, He even changes His instructions to the Muslims when it pleases Him.¹⁵ Thus, for example, the Qur'an contains very different directions, suited to varying circumstances, as to the treatment which idolaters are to receive at the hands of believers.¹⁶ But Muhammad showed no anxiety to have these superseded enactments destroyed. Believers could be in no uncertainty as to which of the two contradictory passages remained on force; and they might still find edification in that which had become obsolete. That later generations might not so easily distinguish the "abrogated" from the "abrogating" did not occur to Muhammad, whose vision, naturally enough, seldom extended to the future of his religious community. Current events

were invariably kept in view in the revelations. In Medina it called for the admiration of the Faithful to observe how often God gave them an answer to a question whose settlement was urgently required at the moment.¹⁷ The same naivete appears in the remark of the Caliph Uthman about a doubtful case: "If the Apostle of God were still alive, methinks there had been a Qur'an passage revealed on this point."¹⁸ Not infrequently the divine word was found to coincide with the advice which Muhammad had received from his most intimate disciples. "Umar was many a time of a certain opinion," says one tradition, "and the Qur'an was then revealed accordingly."¹⁹

The contents of the different parts of the Qur'an are extremely varied. Many passages consist of theological or moral reflections. We are reminded of the greatness, the goodness, the righteousness of God as manifested in Nature, in history, and in revelation through the prophets, especially through Muhammad. God is magnified as the One, the All-powerful. Idolatry and all deification of created beings, such as the worship of Christ as the Son of God, are unsparingly condemned. The joys of heaven and the pains of hell are depicted in vivid sensuous imagery, as is also the terror of the whole creation at the advent of last day and the judgment of the world. Believers receive general moral instruction, as well as directions for special circumstances. The lukewarm are rebuked, the enemies threatened with terrible punishment, both temporal and eternal. To the skeptical the truth of Islam is held forth; and a certain, not very cogent, method of demonstration predominates. In many passages the sacred book falls into a diffuse preaching-style, others seem more like proclamations or general orders. A great number contain ceremonial or civil laws, or even special commands to individuals down to such matters as the regulation of Muhammad's harem. In not a few, definite questions are answered which had actually been propounded to the Prophet by believers or infidels. Muhammad himself, too, repeatedly receives direct injunctions, and does not escape an occasional rebuke. One sura (i.) is a prayer, two (cxiii., cxiv.) are magical formulas. Many suras treat of a single topic, others embrace several.

From the mass of material comprising the Qur'an — and the account we have given is far from exhaustive — we should select the histories of the ancient prophets and the saints as possessing a peculiar interest. The purpose of Muhammad is to show from these histories how God in former times had rewarded the righteous and punished their enemies. For the most part the old prophets only serve to introduce a little variety in point of form,

for they are almost in every case facsimiles of Muhammad himself. They preach exactly like him, they have to bring the very same charges against their opponents, who on their part behave exactly as the unbelieving inhabitants of Mecca. The Qur'an even goes as far as to make Noah contend against the worship of certain false gods, mentioned by name, who were worshipped by the Arabs of Muhammad's time.²⁰ In an address which is put in the mouth of Abraham (xxvi. 75 sqq.), the reader quite forgets that it is Abraham, and not Muhammad (or God Himself), who is speaking. Other narratives are intended rather for amusement, although they are always well seasoned with edifying phrases. It is no wonder that the godless Quraishites thought these stories of the Qur'an not so interesting as those of Rostam and Ispandiar related by Nadr the son of Harith, who, when travelling as a merchant, had learned on the Euphrates the heroic mythology of the Persians. But the Prophet was so exasperated by this rivalry that when Nadr fell into his power after the battle of Badr, he caused him to be executed; although in all other cases he readily pardoned his fellow countrymen.²¹

These histories are chiefly about Scripture characters, especially those of the Old Testament. But the deviations from the Biblical narratives are very marked. Many of the alterations are found in the legendary anecdotes of the Jewish Aggadah and the New Testament Apocrypha; but many more are due to misconceptions such as only a listener (not the reader of a book) could fall into. The most ignorant Jew could never have mistaken Haman (the minister of Ahasuerus) for the minister of Pharaoh, or identified Miriam the sister of Moses with Mary (=Miriam) the mother of Christ.²² In addition to such misconceptions there are sundry capricious alterations, some of them very grotesque, due to Muhammad himself. For instance, in his ignorance of everything outside Arabia, he makes the fertility of Egypt — where rain is almost never seen and never missed — depend on rain instead of the inundations of the Nile (xii. 49). The strange tale of "the Horned" (i.e., Alexander the Great, xviii. 82 sqq.) reflects, as has been lately discovered, a rather absurd story, written by a Syrian in the beginning of the sixth century;²³ we may believe that the substance of it was related to the Prophet by some Christian. Besides Jewish and Christian histories, there are a few about old Arabian prophets. In these he seems to have handled his materials even more freely than in others.

The opinion has already been expressed that Muhammad did not make use of written sources. Coincidences and divergences alike can always be accounted for by oral communications from the Jews who knew a little and

Christians who knew next to nothing. Even in the rare passages where we can trace direct resemblances to the text of the Old Testament (comp. xxi. 105 with Ps. xxxvii. 29; i. 5 with Ps. xxvii. 11) or the New (comp. vii. 48 with Luke xvi. 24; xlvi. 19 with Luke xvi. 25), there is nothing more than might readily have been picked up in a conversation with any Jew or Christian. In Medina, where he had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with Jews of some culture,²⁴ he learned some things out of the Mishna, e.g., v. 35 corresponds almost word for word with Mishna Sanh. iv. 5; compare also ii. 183 with Mishna Ber. i. 2. That these are only cases of oral communication will be admitted by anyone with the slightest knowledge of the circumstances. Otherwise we might even conclude that Muhammad had studied the Talmud; e.g., the regulation as to ablution by rubbing with sand, where water cannot be obtained (iv. 46), corresponds to a Talmudic ordinance (Ber. 15a). Of Christianity he can have been able to learn very little even in Medina; as may be seen from the absurd travesty of the institution of the Eucharist in v. 112 sqq. For the rest, it is highly probable that before the Qur'an no real literary production — anything that could be strictly called a book — existed in the Arabic language.

In point of style and artistic effect, the different parts of the Qur'an are of very unequal value. An unprejudiced and critical reader will certainly find very few passages where his aesthetic susceptibilities are thoroughly satisfied. But he will often be struck, especially in the older pieces, by a wild force of passion, and a vigorous, if not rich, imagination. Descriptions of heaven and hell, and allusions to God's working in Nature, not infrequently show a certain amount of poetic power. In other places also the style is sometimes lively and impressive, though it is rare indeed that we come across such strains of touching simplicity as in the middle of xciii. The greater part of the Qur'an's message is decidedly prosaic; and so indeed is its style. Of course, with such a variety of material, we cannot expect every part to be equally vivacious, or imaginative, or poetic. A decree about the right of inheritance, or point of ritual, must necessarily be expressed in prose, if it is to be intelligible. No one complains of the civil laws in Exodus or the sacrificial ritual in Leviticus because they want the fire of Isaiah or the tenderness of Deuteronomy. But Muhammad's mistake consists in persistent and slavish adherence to the semi-poetic form which he had at first adopted in accordance with his own taste and that of his hearers. For instance, he employs rhyme in dealing with the most prosaic subjects, and thus produces the disagreeable effect of incongruity between style and matter. It has to be considered, however, that many of those sermonizing pieces which are so tedious to us, especially when we read two

or three in succession (perhaps in a very inadequate translation), must have had a quite different effect when recited under the burning sky and on the barren soil of Mecca. There, thoughts about God's greatness and man's duty, which are familiar to us from childhood, were all new to the hearers — it is hearers we have to think of in the first instance, not readers — to whom, at the same time, every allusion had a meaning which often escapes our notice. When Muhammad spoke of the goodness of the Lord in creating the clouds, and bringing them across the cheerless desert, and pouring them out on the earth to restore its rich vegetation, that must have been a picture of thrilling interest to the Arabs, who are accustomed to see from three to five years elapse before a copious shower comes to clothe the wilderness once more with luxuriant pastures. It requires an effort for us, under our clouded skies, to realize in some degree the intensity of that impression.

The fact that scraps of poetical phraseology are specially numerous in the earlier suras, enables us to understand why the prosaic mercantile community of Mecca regarded their eccentric townsman as a "poet," or even a "possessed poet."²⁵ Muhammad had to disclaim such titles, because he felt himself to be a divinely-inspired prophet; but we too, from our standpoint, shall fully acquit him of poetic genius. Like many other predominantly religious characters, he had no appreciation of poetic beauty; and if we may believe one anecdote related of him, at a time when everyone made verses, he affected ignorance of the most elementary prosody. Hence the style of the Qur'an is not poetical but rhetorical; and the powerful effect which some portions produce on us is gained by rhetorical means. Accordingly the sacred book has not even the artistic form of poetry; which, among the Arabs, includes a stringent meter as well as rhyme. The Qur'an is never metrical, and only a few exceptionally eloquent portions fall into a sort of spontaneous rhythm. On the other hand, the rhyme is regularly maintained; although, especially in the later pieces, after a very slovenly fashion. Rhymed prose was a favorite form of composition among the Arabs of that day, and Muhammad adopted it; but if it imparts a certain sprightliness to some passages, it proves on the whole a burdensome yoke. The Muslims themselves have observed that the tyranny of the rhyme often makes itself apparent in derangement of the order of words and in the choice of verbal forms which would not otherwise have been employed, e.g., an imperfect instead of a perfect. In one place, to save the rhyme, he calls Mount Sinai *Sinin* (xcv. 2) instead of *Sina* (xxiii. 20); in another Elijah is called *Ilyasin* (xxxvii. 130) instead of *Ilyas* (vi. 85, xxxvii. 123). The substance even is

modified to suit the exigencies of rhyme. Thus the Prophet would scarcely have fixed on the usual number of "eight" angels round the throne of God (lxix. 17) if the word *thamaniyah*, "eight" had not happened to fall in so well with the rhyme. And when lv. speaks of "two" heavenly gardens, each with "two" fountains and "two" kinds of fruit, and again of "two" similar gardens, all this is simply because the dual termination (-*an*) corresponds to the syllable that controls the rhyme in that whole sura. In the later pieces, Muhammad often inserts edifying remarks, entirely out of keeping with the context, merely to complete his rhyme. In Arabic it is such an easy thing to accumulate masses of words with the same termination, that the gross negligence of the rhyme in the Qur'an is doubly remarkable. One may say that this is another mark of the Prophet's want of mental training and incapacity for introspective criticism.

On the whole, while many parts of the Qur'an undoubtedly have considerable rhetorical power, even over an unbelieving reader, the book, aesthetically considered, is by no means a first-rate performance. To begin with what we are most competent to criticize, let us look at some of the more extended narratives. It has already been noticed how vehement and abrupt they are where they ought to be characterized by epic repose. Indispensable links, both in expression and in the sequence of events, are often omitted, so that to understand these histories is sometimes far easier for us than for those who learned them first, because we know most of them from better sources. Along with this, there is a great deal of superfluous verbiage; and nowhere do we find a steady advance in the narration. Contrast, in these respects, "the most beautiful tale," the history of Joseph (xii.), and its glaring improprieties, with the story in Genesis, so admirably executed in spite of some slight discrepancies. Similar faults are found in the non-narrative portions of the Qur'an. The connection of ideas is extremely loose, and even the syntax betrays great awkwardness. Anacolutha are of frequent occurrence, and cannot be explained as conscious literary devices. Many sentences begin with a "when" or "on the day when," which seem to hover in the air, so that the commentators are driven to supply a "think of this" or some ellipsis. Again, there is no great literary skill evinced in the frequent and needless harping on the same words and phrases; in xviii., for example, "till that" (*hatta idha*) occurs no fewer than eight times. Muhammad, in short, is not in any sense a master of style. This opinion will be endorsed by any European who reads through the book with an impartial spirit and some knowledge of the language, without taking

into account the tiresome effect of its endless iterations. But in the ears of every pious Muslim such a judgment will sound almost as shocking as downright atheism or polytheism. Among the Muslims, the Qur'an has always been looked on as the most perfect model of style and language. This feature of it is in their theology the greatest of all miracles, the incontestable proof of its divine origin. Such a view on the part of men who knew Arabic infinitely better than the most accomplished European Arabist will ever do, may well startle us. In fact, the Qur'an boldly challenged its opponents to produce ten suras, or even a single one, like those of the sacred book, and they never did so.²⁶ That, to be sure, on calm reflection, is not so very surprising. Revelations of the kind which Muhammad uttered, no unbeliever could produce without making himself a laughing-stock. However little real originality there is in Muhammad's doctrines, as against his own countrymen he was thoroughly original, even in the form of his oracles. To compose such revelations at will was beyond the power of the most expert literary artist; it would have required either a prophet or a shameless imposter. And if such a character appeared after Muhammad, still he could never be anything but an imitator, like the false prophets who arose about the time of his death and afterwards. That the adversaries should produce any sample whatsoever of poetry or rhetoric equal to the Qur'an is not at all what the Prophet demands. In that case he would have been put to shame, even in the eyes of many of his own followers, by the first poem that came to hand.²⁷ Nevertheless, it is on such a false interpretation of this challenge that the dogma of the incomparable excellence of the style and diction of the Qur'an is based. The rest has been accomplished by dogmatic prejudice, which is quite capable of working other miracles besides turning a defective literary production into an unrivaled masterpiece in the eyes of believers. This view once accepted, the next step was to find everywhere the evidence of the perfection of the style and language. And if here and there, as one can scarcely doubt, there was among the old Muslims a lover of poetry who had his difficulties about this dogma, he had to beware of uttering an opinion which might have cost him his head. We know of at least one rationalistic theologian who defined the dogma in such a way that we can see he did not believe in it (Shahrastani, p. 39). The truth is, it would have been a miracle indeed if the style of the Qur'an had been perfect. For although there was at that time a recognized poetical style, already degenerating to mannerism, a prose style did not exist. All beginnings are difficult; and it can never be esteemed a serious charge against Muhammad that his book, the first prose work of a high order in the language, testifies to the awkwardness of the beginner. And further, we must

always remember that entertainment and aesthetic effect were at most subsidiary objects. The great aim was persuasion and conversion; and, say what we will, that aim has been realized on the most imposing scale.

Muhammad repeatedly calls attention to the fact that the Qur'an is not written, like other sacred books, in a strange language, but in Arabic, and therefore is intelligible to all.²⁸ At that time, along with foreign ideas, many foreign words had crept into the language, especially Aramaic terms for religious conceptions of Jewish and Christian origin. Some of these had already passed into general use, while others were confined to a more limited circle. Muhammad, who could not fully express his new ideas in the common language of his countrymen, but had frequently to find out new terms for himself, made free use of such Jewish and Christian words, as was done, though perhaps to a smaller extent, by certain thinkers and poets of that age who had more or less risen above the level of heathenism.²⁹ In Muhammad's case this is the less wonderful, because he was indebted to the instruction of Jews and Christians whose Arabic — as the Qur'an pretty clearly intimates with regard to one of them — was very defective.³⁰ Nor is it very surprising to find that his use of such words is sometimes as much at fault as his comprehension of the histories which he learned from the same people — that he applies Aramaic expressions as incorrectly as many uneducated persons now employ words derived from the French. Thus, *furqan* means really "redemption," but Muhammad (misled by the Arabic meaning of the root *frq*, "sever, decide") uses it for "revelation." *Milla* is properly "word," but in the Qur'an "religion." *Illiyun* (lxxxiii. 18, 19.) is apparently the Hebrew name of God, *Elyon*, "the Most High"; Muhammad uses it of a heavenly book (see S. Fraenkel, *De vocabulis antiquis Arabum carminibus et in Corano peregrinis*, Leyden 1880, p. 23.). So again the word *mathani* is, as Geiger has conjectured, the regular Arabic plural of the Aramaic *mathnitha*, which is the same as the Hebrew *Mishna*, and denotes, in Jewish usage, a legal decision of some of the ancient Rabbins. But in the Qur'an "the seven Mathani" (xv. 87) are probably the seven verses of sura i., so that Muhammad appears to have understood it in the sense of "saying" or "sentence" (comp. xxxix. 24). Words of Christian origin are less frequent in the Qur'an. It is an interesting fact that of these a few have come over from the Abyssinian, such as *hawariyun*, "apostles"; *maida*, "table," and two or three others; these all make their first appearance in the suras of the Medinan period. The word *shaitan*, which was borrowed, at least in the first instance, from the Abyssini

nian, had probably been already introduced into the language. Sprenger has rightly observed that Muhammad makes a certain parade of these foreign words, as of other peculiarly constructed expressions; in this he followed a favorite practice of contemporary poets. It is the tendency of the imperfectly educated to delight in out-of-the-way expressions, and on such minds they readily produce a remarkably solemn and mysterious impression. This was exactly the kind of effect that Muhammad desired, and to secure it he seems even to have invented a few odd vocables, as *ghislin* (lxix. 36), *sijjin* (lxxxiii. 7,8), *tasnim* (lxxxiii. 27), and *salsabil* (lxxvi. 18). But, of course, the necessity of enabling his hearers to understand the ideas which they must have found sufficiently novel in themselves, imposed tolerably narrow limits on such eccentricities.

The constituents of our present Qur'an belong partly to the Mecca period (before A.D. 622), partly to the period commencing with the emigration to Medina (from the autumn of 622 to 8th June 632).³¹ Muhammad's position in Medina was entirely different from that which he had occupied in his native town. In the former he was from the first the leader of a powerful party, and gradually became the autocratic ruler of Arabia; in the latter he was only the despised preacher of a small congregation. This difference, as was to be expected, appears in the Qur'an. The Medina pieces, whether entire suras or isolated passages interpolated in Mecca suras, are accordingly pretty broadly distinct as to their contents, from those issued in Mecca. In the great majority of cases there can be no doubt whatever whether a piece first saw the light in Mecca or Medina; and, for the most part, the internal evidence is borne out by Muslim tradition. And since the revelations given in Medina frequently take notice of events about which we have pretty accurate information, and whose dates are at least approximately known, we are often in a position to fix their date with, at any rate, considerable certainty; here again, tradition renders valuable assistance. Even with regard to the Medina passages, however, a great deal remains uncertain, partly because the allusions to historical events and circumstances are general rather than particular, partly because traditions about the occasion of the revelation of the various pieces are often fluctuating, and often rest on misunderstanding or arbitrary conjecture. But, at all events, it is far easier to arrange in some sort of chronological order the Medina suras than those composed in Mecca. There is, indeed, one tradition which professes to furnish a chronological list of all the suras. But not to mention that it occurs in several divergent forms, and that it takes no account of the fact that our present suras are partly composed of pieces of different dates, it

contains so many suspicious or undoubtedly false statements that it is impossible to attach any great importance to it.³² Besides, it is *a priori* unlikely that a contemporary of Muhammad should have drawn up such a list; and if any one had made the attempt, he would have found it almost impossible to obtain reliable information as to the order of the earlier Meccan suras. We have in this list no genuine tradition, but rather the lucubrations of an undoubtedly conscientious Muslim critic, who may have lived about a century after the emigration.

Among the revelations put forth in Mecca there is a considerable number of (for the most part) short suras, which strike at every attentive reader as being the oldest. They are in an altogether different strain from many others, and in their whole composition they show the least resemblance to the Medina pieces. It is no doubt conceivable — as Sprenger supposes — that Muhammad might have returned at intervals to his earlier manner; but since this group possesses a remarkable similarity of style, and since the gradual formation of a different style is on the whole an unmistakable fact, the assumption has little probability; and we shall therefore abide by the opinion that these form a distinct group. At the opposite extreme from them stands another cluster, showing quite obvious affinities with the style of the Medina suras, which must therefore be assigned to the later part of the Prophet's work in Mecca. Between these two groups stand a number of other Meccan suras, which in every respect mark the transition from the first period to the third. It need hardly be said that the three periods — which were first distinguished by Professor Weil — are not separated by sharp lines of division. With regard to some suras, it may be doubtful whether they ought to be reckoned amongst the middle group, or with one or the other of the extremes. And it is altogether impossible, within these two groups, to establish even a probable chronological arrangement of the individual revelations. In default of clear allusions to well-known events, or events whose dates can be determined, we might indeed endeavor to trace the psychological development of the Prophet by means of the Qur'an, and arrange its parts accordingly. But in such an undertaking one is always apt to take subjective assumptions or mere fancies for established data. Good traditions about the origin of the Mecca revelations are not very numerous. In fact, the whole history of Muhammad previous to his emigration is so imperfectly related that we are not even sure in what year he appeared as a prophet. Probably it was in A.D. 610; it may have been somewhat earlier, but scarcely later. If, as one

tradition says, xxx. 1 sqq. ("The Romans are overcome in the nearest neighboring land") refers to the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians not far from Damascus, about the spring of 614, it would follow that the third group, to which this passage belongs, covers the greater part of the Mecca period. And it is not in itself unlikely that the passionate vehemence which characterizes the first group was of short duration. Nor is the assumption contradicted by the tolerably well-attested, though far from incontestable statement, that when Umar was converted (A.D. 615 or 616) xx., which belongs to the second group, already existed in writing. But the reference of xxx. 1 sqq. to this particular battle is by no means so certain that positive conclusions can be drawn from it. It is the same with other allusions in the Mecca suras to occurrences whose chronology can be partially ascertained. It is better, therefore, to rest satisfied with a merely relative determination of the order of even the three great clusters of Meccan revelations.

In the pieces of the first period the convulsive excitement of the Prophet often expresses itself with the utmost vehemence. He is so carried away by his emotions that he cannot choose his words; they seem rather to burst from him. Many of these pieces remind us of the oracles of the old heathen soothsayers, whose style is known to us from imitations, although we have perhaps not a single genuine specimen. Like those other oracles, the suras of this period, which are never very long, are composed of short sentences with tolerably pure but rapidly changing rhymes. The oaths, too, with which many of them begin, were largely used by the soothsayers. Some of these oaths are very uncouth and hard to understand, some of them perhaps were not meant to be understood for indeed all sorts of strange things are met within these chapters. Here and there Muhammad speaks of visions, and appears even to see angels before him in bodily form. There are some intensely vivid descriptions of the resurrection and the last day, which must have exercised a demonic power over men who were quite unfamiliar with such pictures. Other pieces paint in glowing colors the joys of heaven and the pains of hell. However, the suras of this period are not all so wild as these; and those which are conceived in a calmer mood appear to be the oldest. Yet, one must repeat, it is exceedingly difficult to make out any strict chronological sequence. For instance, it is by no means certain whether the beginning of xcvi. is really what a widely circulated tradition calls it, the oldest part of the whole Qur'an.³³ That tradition goes back to the Prophet's favorite wife Aisha; but as she was not (yet) born at the time when the revelation is said to have been made, it can only contain at the best what Muhammad told her years afterwards, from his own not very clear recollection, with or without fictitious additions. Aisha, moreover, is

by no means very trustworthy and, besides, there are other pieces mentioned by others as the oldest.³⁴ In any case xcvi. 1 sqq. is certainly very early. According to the traditional view, which appears to be correct, it treats a vision in which the Prophet receives an injunction to recite a revelation conveyed to him by the angel. It is interesting to observe that here already two things are brought forward as proofs of the omnipotence and care of God; one is the creation of man out of a seminal drop — an idea to which Muhammad often recurs; the other is the then recently introduced art of writing,³⁵ which the Prophet instinctively seizes on as a means of propagating his doctrines. It was only after Muhammad encountered obstinate resistance that the tone of the revelation became thoroughly passionate. In such cases he was not slow to utter terrible threats against those who ridiculed the preaching of the unity of God, of the resurrection and of the judgment. His own uncle, Abu Lahab, had somewhat brusquely repelled him, and in a brief special sura (cxi.) he and his wife are consigned to hell. The suras of this period form almost exclusively the concluding portions of the present text. One is disposed to assume, however, that they were at one time more numerous, and that many of them were lost at an early period.

Since Muhammad's strength lay in his enthusiastic and fiery imagination rather than in the wealth of ideas and clearness of abstract thought on which exact reasoning depends, it follows that the older suras, in which the former qualities have free scope, must be more attractive to us than the later. In the suras of the second period the imaginative glow perceptibly diminishes; there is still fire and animation, but the tone becomes gradually more prosaic. As the feverish restlessness subsides, the periods are drawn out, and the revelations as a whole become longer. The truth of the new doctrine is proved by accumulated instances of God's working in nature and history; the objections of opponents, whether advanced in good faith or in jest, are controverted by arguments; but the demonstration is often confused or even weak. The histories of the earlier prophets, which had occasionally been briefly touched on in the first period, are now related sometimes at great length.

There is one piece of the Qur'an belonging to the beginning of this period, if not to the close of the former, which claims particular notice. This is i., the "Lord's Prayer" of the Muslims, and beyond dispute the gem of the Qur'an. The words of this sura, which is known as *al-fatihah* ("the opening one"), are as follows:

1) In the name of God, the compassionate Compassioner.
2) Praise be (literally "is") to God, the Lord of the
worlds, 3) the compassionate Compassioner, 4) The So-
vereign of the day of judgment. 5) Thee do we worship,
and of Thee do we beg assistance. 6) Direct us in the
right way; 7) in the way of those to whom Thou hast been
gracious, on whom there is no wrath, and who go not
astray.

The thoughts are so simple as to need no explanation; and yet the prayer is full of meaning. It is true that there is not a single original idea of Muhammad's in it. Several words and turns of expression are borrowed directly from the Jews, in particular the designation of God as the "Compassioner," *Rahman*. This is simply the Jewish *Rahmana*, which was a favorite name for God in the Talmudic period. Muhammad seems for a while to have entertained the thought of adopting *al-Rahman* as a proper name of God, in place of Allah, which was already used by the heathens.³⁶ This purpose he ultimately relinquished, but it is just in the suras of the second period that the use of *Rahman* is specially frequent. It was probably in the first sura also that Muhammad first introduced the formula, "In the name of God," etc. It is to be regretted that this prayer must lose its effect through too frequent use, for every Muslim who says his five prayers regularly — as most of them do — repeats it no less than twenty times a day.

The suras of the third Meccan period, which form a pretty large part of our present Qur'an, are almost entirely prosaic. Some of the revelations are of considerable extent, and the single verses also are much longer than in the older suras. Only now and then a gleam of poetic power flashes out. A sermonizing tone predominates. The suras are very edifying for one who is already reconciled to their import, but to us at least, they do not seem very well fitted to carry conviction to minds of unbelievers. That impression, however, is not correct, for in reality the demonstration of these longer Meccan suras appeared to have been peculiarly influential for the propagation of Islam. Muhammad's mission was not to Europeans, but to a people who, though quick-witted and receptive, were not accustomed to logical thinking, while they had outgrown their ancient religion.

When we reach the Medina period it becomes, as has been indicated, much easier to understand the revelation in their historical relations, since our knowledge of the history of Muhammad in Medina is tolerably com-

plete. In many cases the historical occasion is perfectly clear, In others we can at least recognize the general situation from which they arose, and thus approximately fix their time. There remains, however, a remnant, of which we can only say it belongs to Medina.

The style of this period bears a pretty close resemblance to that of the latest Mecca period. It is for the most part pure prose, enriched by occasional rhetorical embellishments. Yet even here there are many bright and impressive passages, especially in those sections which may be regarded as proclamations to the army of the faithful. For the Muslims, Muhammad has different messages. At one time it is a summons to do battle for the faith; at another, a series of reflections on recently experienced success or misfortune, or a rebuke of their weak faith; or an exhortation to virtue, and so on. He often addresses himself to the "doubters," some of whom vacillate between faith and unbelief, others make a pretence of faith, while others scarcely take the trouble to do even that. They are no consolidated party, but to Muhammad they are all equally vexatious, because, as soon as danger has to be encountered, or a contribution is levied, they all alike fall away. There are frequent outbursts, ever increasing in bitterness against the Jews, who were very numerous in Medina and its neighborhood when Muhammad arrived. He has much less to say against the Christians, with whom he never came closely in contact; and as for the idolaters, there was little occasion in Medina to have many words with them. A part of the Medina pieces consists of formal laws belonging to the ceremonial, civil and criminal codes; or directions about temporary complications. The most objectionable parts of the whole Qur'an are those which treat of Muhammad's relations with women. The laws and regulations were generally very concise revelations, but most of them have been amalgamated with other pieces of similar or dissimilar import, and are now found in very long suras.³⁷

Such is an imperfect sketch of the composition and internal history of the Qur'an, but it is probably sufficient to show that the book is a very heterogeneous collection. If only those passages had been preserved which had a permanent value for the theology, the ethics or the jurisprudence of the Muslims, a few fragments would have been amply sufficient. Fortunately for knowledge, respect for the sacredness of the letter has led to the collection of all the revelations that could possibly be collected, the "abrogating" along with the "abrogated," passages referring to passing circumstances as well as those of lasting importance. Everyone who takes up the book in the proper religious frame of mind, like most of the Muslims, reads pieces

directed against long-obsolete absurd customs of Mecca just as devoutly as the weightiest moral precepts — perhaps even more devoutly, because he does not understand them so well.

At the head of twenty-nine of the suras stand certain initial letters, from which no clear sense can be obtained. Thus, before ii., iii., xxxi., xxxii. we find ALM (Alif Lam Mim), before xl.-xlvi. HM (Ha Mim). At one time I suggested that these initials did not belong to Muhammad's text, but might be the monograms of possessors of codices, which, through negligence on the part of the editors, were incorporated in the final form of the Qur'an; but now I deem it more probable that they are to be traced to the Prophet himself, as Sprenger and Loth suppose. One cannot indeed admit the truth of Loth's statement, that in the proper opening words of these suras we may generally find an allusion to the accompanying initials; but it can scarcely be accidental that the first words of the great majority of them (in iii. it is the second verse) contains the word "book," "revelation," or some equivalent. They usually begin with: "This is the book," or "Revelation (down sending) of the book," or something similar. Of suras which commence in this way only a few (xviii., xxiv., xxv., xxxix.) lack the initials, while only xxix. and xxx. have the initials and begin differently. These few exceptions may easily have proceeded from ancient corruptions; at all events they cannot neutralize the evidence of the greater number. Muhammad seems to have meant these letters for mystic reference to the archetype text in heaven. To a man who regarded the art of writing, of which at the best he had but a slight knowledge, as something supernatural, and who lived amongst illiterate people, an A B C may well have seemed more significant than to us who have been initiated into the mysteries of this art from our childhood. The Prophet himself can hardly have attached any particular meaning to these symbols; they served their purpose if they conveyed an impression of solemnity and enigmatical obscurity. In fact, the Qur'an admits that it contains many things which neither can be, nor were intended to be, understood (iii. 5). To regard these letters as ciphers is a precarious hypothesis, for the simple reason that cryptography is not to be looked for in the very infancy of Arabic writing. If they are actually ciphers, the multiplicity of possible explanations at once precludes the hope of a plausible interpretation. None of the efforts in this direction, whether by Muslim scholars or by Europeans, have led to convincing results. This remark applies even to the ingenious conjecture of Sprenger that the letters KHY'S (Kaf He Ye Ain Sad) before xix. (which treats of John and Jesus, and, according to

tradition, was sent to the king of Abyssinia) stand for "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum." Sprenger arrives at this explanation by a very artificial method; and besides Muhammad was not as simple as the traditionalists, who imagined that the Abyssinians could read a piece of the Arabic Qur'an. It need hardly be said that the Muslims have from old applied themselves with great assiduity to the decipherment of these initials, and have sometimes found the deepest mysteries in them. Generally, however, they are content with the prudent conclusion that God alone knows the meaning of these letters.

When Muhammad died, the separate pieces of the Qur'an, notwithstanding their theoretical sacredness, existed only in scattered copies; they were consequently in great danger to being partially or entirely destroyed. Many Muslims knew large portions by heart, but certainly no one knew the whole; and a merely oral propagation would have left the door open to all kinds of deliberate and inadvertent alterations.³⁸ Muhammad himself had never thought of an authentic collection of his revelations; he was usually concerned only with the object of the moment and the idea that the revelations would be destroyed unless he made provision for their safe preservation, did not enter his mind.³⁹ A man destitute of literary culture has some difficulty in anticipating the fate of intellectual products. But now, after the death of the Prophet, most of the Arabs revolted against his successor, and had to be reduced to submission by force.⁴⁰ Especially sanguinary was the contest against the prophet Maslama, an imitator of Muhammad commonly known by the derisive diminutive Musailima (i.e., "Little Maslama").⁴¹ At that time (A.D. 633) many of the most devoted Muslims fell, the very men who knew most Qur'an pieces by heart. Umar then began to fear that the Qur'an might be entirely forgotten, and he induced the Caliph Abu Bakr to undertake the collection of all its parts.⁴² The Caliph laid the duty on Zaid, the son of Thabit, a native of Medina, then about twenty-two years of age, who had often acted as amanuensis to the Prophet, in whose service he is even said to have learned the Jewish letters. The account of this collection of the Qur'an has reached us in several substantially identical forms, and goes back to Zaid himself.⁴³ According to it, he collected the revelations from copies written on flat stones, pieces of leather, ribs of palm-leaves (not palm-leaves themselves), and such like material, but chiefly "from the breasts of men," i.e., from their memory. From these he wrote a fair copy, which he gave to Abu Bakr, from whom it came to his successor Umar, who again bequeathed it to his daughter Hafsa, one of the widows of the Prophet. This redaction, commonly called *al-suhuf* ("the leaves"), had from the first no canonical authority; and its integral arrangement can only be conjectured.

The Muslims were as far as ever from possessing a uniform text of the Qur'an. The bravest of their warriors sometimes knew deplorably little about it; distinction on *that* field they cheerfully accorded to pious men like Ibn Mas'ud. It was inevitable, however, that discrepancies should emerge between the texts of professed scholars, and as these men in their several localities were authorities on the reading of the Qur'an, quarrels began to break out between the levies from different districts about the true form of the sacred book.⁴⁴ During a campaign in A.H. 30 (A.D. 650-1), Hudaifa, the victor in the great and decisive battle of Nehawand — which was to the empire of the Sasanians what Gaugamela was to that of the Achaemenidae — perceived that such disputes might become dangerous, and therefore urged on the Caliph Uthman the necessity for a universally binding text.⁴⁵ The matter was entrusted to Zaid, who had made the former collection, with three leading Quraishites. These brought together as many copies as they could lay their hands on, and prepared an edition which was to be canonical for all Muslims. To prevent any further disputes, they burned all the other codices except that of Hafsa, which, however, was afterwards destroyed by Marwan, the governor of Medina.⁴⁶ The destruction of the earlier codices was an irreparable loss to criticism; but, for the essentially political object of putting an end to the controversies by admitting only one form of the common book of religion and of law, this measure was necessary.

The result of these labors is in our hands; as to how they were conducted we have no trustworthy information, tradition being here too much under the influence of dogmatic presuppositions.⁴⁷ The critical methods of a modern scientific commission will not be expected of an age when the highest literary education for an Arab consisted in (the) ability to read and write. It now seems to me highly probable that this second redaction took this simple form: Zaid read off from the codex which he had previously written, and his associates, simultaneously or successively, wrote one copy each to his dictation. These, I suppose, were the three copies which, we are informed, were sent to the capitals Damascus, Basra and Kufa, to be in the first instance standards for the soldiers of the respective provinces.⁴⁸ A fourth copy would doubtless be retained at Medina. Be that as it may, it is impossible now to distinguish in the present form of the book what belongs to the first redaction from what is due to the second.

In the arrangement of the separate sections, a classification according to contents was impractical because of the variety of subjects often dealt with in one sura. A chronological arrangement was out of the question, because the chronology of the older pieces must have been imperfectly known, and because in some cases passages of different dates had been joined together.⁴⁹ Indeed, systematic principles of this kind were altogether disregarded at that period. The pieces were accordingly arranged in indiscriminate order, the only rule observed being to place the long suras first and the shorter towards the end, and even that was far from strictly adhered to. The short opening sura is so placed on account of its superiority to the rest, and two magical formulae are kept for sort of protection at the end; these are the only special traces of design. The combination of pieces of different origin may proceed partly from the processes of the codices from which Zaid compiled his first complete copy, partly from Zaid himself. The individual suras are separated simply by the superscription "In the name of God, the compassionate Compassioner," which is wanting only in the ninth. The additional headings found in our text (the name of the suras, the number of verses, etc.) were not in the original codices, and formed no integral part of the Qur'an.

It is said that Uthman directed Zaid and his associates, in cases of disagreement, to follow the Quraish dialect;⁵⁰ but, though well attested, this account can scarcely be correct. The extremely primitive writing of those days was quite incapable of rendering such minute differences as can have existed between the pronunciation of Mecca and that of Medina.

Uthman's Qur'an was not complete. Some passages are evidently fragmentary; and a few detached pieces are still extant which were originally parts of the Qur'an, although they have been omitted by Zaid.⁵¹ Amongst these are some which there is no reason to suppose Muhammad desired to suppress. Zaid may easily have overlooked a few stray fragments, but that he purposely omitted anything which he believed to belong to the Qur'an is very unlikely. It has been conjectured that in deference to his superiors he kept out of the book the names of Muhammad's enemies, if they or their families came afterwards to be respected. But it must be remembered that it was never Muhammad's practice to refer explicitly to contemporary persons and affairs in the Qur'an. Only a single friend, his adopted son Zaid (xxxiii. 37), and a single enemy, his uncle Abu Lahab (cxi.) — and these for very special reasons — are mentioned by name; and the name of the latter has been left in the Qur'an with a fearful curse annexed to it, although his son

had embraced Islam before the death of Muhammad, and although his descendants belonged to the high nobility. So, on the other hand, there is no single verse or clause which can be plausibly made out to be an interpolation by Zaid at the instance of Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman. Slight clerical errors there may have been, but the Qur'an of Uthman's contains none but genuine elements — though sometimes in very strange order.

It can still be pretty clearly shown in detail that the four codices of Uthman's Qur'an deviated from one another in points of orthography, in the insertion or omission of a *wa* ("and"), and such like minutiae; but these variations nowhere affect the sense. All later manuscripts are derived from these four originals.⁵²

At the same time, the other forms of the Qur'an did not at once become extinct. In particular we have some information about the codex of Ubai.⁵³ If the list which gives the order of its suras is correct, it must have contained substantially the same materials as our text; in that case Ubai must have used the original collection of Zaid. The same is true of the codex of Ibn Mas'ud, of which we also have a catalogue.⁵⁴ It appears that the principle of putting the longer suras before the shorter was more consistently carried out by him than by Zaid. He omits i. and the magical formulae of cxiii. and cxiv. Ubai, on the other hand, had embodied two additional short prayers,⁵⁵ whose authenticity I do not now venture to question, as I formerly did. One can easily understand that differences of opinion have existed as to whether and how far formularies of this kind belonged to the Qur'an. Some of the divergent readings of both these texts have been preserved, as well as a considerable number of other ancient variants.⁵⁶ Most of them are decidedly inferior to the received readings, but some are quite as good, and a few deserve preference.

The only man who appears to have seriously opposed the general introduction of Uthman's text is Ibn Mas'ud. He was one of the oldest disciples of the Prophet, and had often rendered him personal service; but he was a man of contracted views although he is one of the pillars of Muslim theology.⁵⁷ His opposition had no effect.⁵⁸ Now when we consider that at that time there were many Muslims who had heard the Qur'an from the mouth of the Prophet, that other measures of the imbecile Uthman met with the most vehement resistance on the part of the bigoted champions of the faith, that these were still further incited against him by some of his ambitious old comrades, until at last they murdered him, and finally that in

the civil wars after his death the several parties were glad of any pretext for branding their opponents as infidels — when we consider all this, we must regard it as a strong testimony in favor of Uthman's Qur'an that no party — that of Ali not excepted⁵⁹ — repudiated the text formed by Zaid, who was one of the most devoted adherents of Uthman and his family, and that even among the Shiites we detect but very few marks of dissatisfaction with the Caliph's conduct in this matter.⁶⁰

But this redaction is not the close of the textual history of the Qur'an. The ancient Arabic alphabet was very imperfect; it not only lacked marks for the short, and in part even for the long vowels, but it often expressed several consonants by the same sign, the forms of the different letters, formerly clearly distinct, having become by degrees identical. So, for example, there was but one character to express B, T, Th and in the beginning and in the middle of words N and Y(I) also. Though the reader who was perfectly familiar with the language felt no difficulty, as a rule, in discovering which pronunciation the writer had in view, yet as there were many words which admitted of being pronounced in very different manners, instances were not infrequent in which the pronunciation was dubious. This variety of possible readings was at first very great, and many readers seem to have actually made it their object to discover pronunciations which were new, provided they were at all appropriate to the ambiguous text. There was also a dialectic license in grammatical forms, which had not as yet been greatly restricted. An effort was made by many to establish a more refined pronunciation for the Qur'an than was usual in common life or in secular literature. The various schools of "readers" differed widely from one another; although for the most part there was no important divergence as to the sense of words. A few of them gradually rose to special authority, and the rest disappeared. Seven readers are generally reckoned chief authorities,⁶¹ but for practical purposes this number was continually reduced in process of time; so that at present only two "reading styles" are actually in use — the common style of the Hafs and that of Nafi, which prevails in Africa to the west of Egypt. There is, however, a very comprehensive masoretic literature in which a number of other styles are indicated. The invention of vowel sounds, of diacritic points to distinguish similarly formed consonants, and of other orthographic signs, soon put a stop to arbitrary conjectures on the part of the readers. Many zealots objected to the introduction of these innovations in the sacred text, but theological consistency had to yield to practical necessity. In accurate codices, indeed, all such additions, as well as the titles of the suras, etc., were written in colored ink, while the black

characters profess to represent exactly the original of Uthman. But there is probably no copy quite faithful in this respect.

The correct recitation of the Qur'an is an art difficult of acquisition to the Arabs themselves. Besides the artificial pronunciation mentioned above, a semi-musical modulation has to be observed. In these things also there are great differences between the various schools.

In European libraries, besides innumerable modern manuscripts of the Qur'an, there are also codices or fragments of high antiquity, some of them probably dating from the first century of the Flight. For the restoration of the text, however, the works of ancient scholars on its reading and modes of writing are more important than manuscripts, which, however elegantly they may be written and ornamented, proceed from irresponsible copyists.⁶² The original, written by Uthman himself, has indeed been exhibited in various parts of the Muhammadan world. The library of the India Office contains one such manuscript, bearing the subscription: "Written by Uthman the son of Affan." These, of course, are barefaced forgeries, although of very ancient date; so are those which profess to be from the hand of Ali, one of which is preserved in the same library. In recent times the Qur'an has been often printed and lithographed both in the East and West.

Shortly after Muhammad's death certain individuals applied themselves to the exposition of the Qur'an. Much of it was obscure from the beginning; other sections were unintelligible apart from a knowledge of the circumstances of their origin.⁶³ Unfortunately those who took possession of this field are not very honorable. Ibn Abbas, a cousin of Muhammad's, and the chief source of the traditional exegesis of the Qur'an, has, on theological and other grounds, given currency to a number of falsehoods; and at least some of his pupils have emulated his example.⁶⁴ These earliest expositions dealt more with the sense and connection of the whole verses than with the separate words. Afterwards, as the knowledge of the old language declined, and the study of philology arose, more attention began to be paid to the explanation of vocables. A good many fragments of this older theological and philological exegesis have survived from the first two centuries of the Flight, although we have no complete commentary of this period. Most of the expository material will perhaps be found in the very large commentary of the celebrated Tabari (A.D. 839-923), of which an almost complete copy is in the Viceregal library at Cairo. Another very famous commentary is that of Zamakhshari (A.D. 1075-1144), edited by Nassau-Lee, Calcutta 1859; but this scholar, with his great insight and still greater subtlety, is too

apt to read his own scholastic ideas into the Qur'an. The favorite commentary of Baidawi (died A.D. 1286) is little more than an abridgement of Zamakhshari's. Thousands of commentaries on the Qur'an, some of them of prodigious size,⁶⁵ have been written by Muslims; and even the number of those extant in manuscripts is by no means small. Although these works contain much that is useless or false, yet they are invaluable aids to our understanding of the sacred book. An unbiased European can no doubt see many things at a glance more clearly than a good Muslim who is under the influence of religious prejudice; but we should still be helpless without the exegetical literature of the Muhammadans.

Even the Arab Muslim of the present day can have but a very dim and imperfect understanding of the Qur'an, unless he has made a special study of its exegesis. For the great advantage, boasted by the holy book itself, of being perspicuous to everyone, has in the course of thirteen centuries vanished. Moreover, the general belief is that, in the ritual use of the Qur'an, if the correct recitation is observed, it is immaterial whether the meaning of the words be understood or not.⁶⁶

A great deal remains to be accomplished by European scholarship for the correct interpretation of the Qur'an. We lack, for example, an exhaustive classification and discussion of all the Jewish elements in the Qur'an; a praiseworthy beginning has already been made in Geiger's youthful essay, "Was hat Mohamet aus dem Judethum aufgenommen?"⁶⁷ We lack especially a thorough commentary, executed with the methods and resources of modern science. No European language, it would seem, can even boast of a translation which completely satisfies modern requirements. The best are in English, where we have the extremely paraphrastic, but for its time admirable, translation of Sale (repeatedly printed), that of Rodwell (1861), which seeks to give the pieces in chronological order and that of Palmer (1880), who wisely follows the traditional arrangements.⁶⁸ The introduction which accompanies Palmer's translation is not in all respects abreast of the most recent scholarship. Considerable extracts from the Qur'an are well translated in E.W. Lane's *Selections from the Kur-an*.

Besides the commentaries on the whole Qur'an, or on special parts and topics, the Muslims possess a whole literature bearing on their sacred book. There are works on the spelling and right pronunciation of the Qur'an, works on the beauty of its language, on the number of its verses, words and letters, etc.;⁶⁹ nay, there are even works which would nowadays be called

“historical and critical introductions.” Moreover, the origin of Arabic philology is intimately connected with the recitation and exegesis of the Qur’an. To exhibit the importance of the sacred book for the whole mental life of the Muslims, would be simply to write the history of that life itself; for there is no department in which its all-pervading, but unfortunately not always salutary, influence has not been felt.

The unbounded reverence of the Muslims for the Qur’an reaches its climax in the dogma (which appeared at an early date through the influence of the Christian doctrine of the eternal Word of God) that this book, as the divine Word, i.e., thought, is immanent in God, and consequently “eternal” and “uncreated.” That dogma has been accepted by almost all Muhammadans since the beginning of the third century.⁷⁰ Some theologians did indeed protest against it with great energy; it was, in fact, too preposterous to declare that a book composed of unstable words and letters, and full of variants, was absolutely divine. But what were the distinctions and sophisms of the theologians for, if they could not remove such contradictions, and convict their opponents of heresy?⁷¹

* * * *

Additional Comments and Conclusions

Indeed it has been the very dogma of the Muslims which has come to be at odds with the import of the Qur’an. According to a tradition quoting Ibn Abbas, the Qur’an is the last revelation of God, and thus precludes the consultation of the Torah and Gospel which, it is said, have been changed by the Jews and Christians.⁷² This notion, still popular among Muslims, simply overlooks the message of the Qur’an, which claims that even the Torah and Gospel were “sent down” by God (iii. 2; v. 48,50) and that God’s Word cannot be changed (vi. 34,115; xviii. 26). The doctrine that only the Qur’an is God’s Word, the apparent aim of the message in this tradition, also seems to have been the main cause of the problem that Abu Sufyan is reported to have had with v. 72, a verse which he regarded to be the hardest in the Qur’an.⁷³

This rather haughty refusal to consider anything other than the Qur’an as a viable source of information has, over time, produced a vast number of erroneous traditions. An example of this is one transmitted by Ibn Abbas, but alleged to have its origins with Ibn Mas’ud and some of the other companions of Muhammad, in which it is reported that John the Baptist

was killed after having met with Jesus, the blood of John was then later avenged by Nebuchadnezzar, who together with the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem; Nebuchadnezzar then returned with Jewish captives, among whom were Daniel, Eli (?), Azariah and Mishael!⁷⁴ In his extremely poor knowledge of Biblical chronology, the scholar Tabari places the stories of Jonah and Samson — the latter of whom he claims lived in a Roman city (and toppled the pillars of a minaret) after the ascension of Jesus.⁷⁵

Even in passages where the Qur'an alludes to something ambiguously, such as in the instance of Abraham sacrificing his son (xxvii. 101 sqq.), Muslim theologians seem rather to have trusted their own contradictory traditions in choosing between Isaac and Ishmael.⁷⁶ Similarly, the rejection of Jesus' crucifixion and death, a doctrine based on a certain understanding of iv. 156, not only seems to disagree with xix. 34, but is also countered by some traditions transmitted by Ibn Ishaq, one of the most respected early Islamic historians, who said that Jesus did die on the cross.⁷⁷

The main accusation which the Muslims bring against the Jews and Christians regarding changing the text of the Torah and Gospel is that they have removed prophecies concerning Muhammad's coming; and, in the case of Jesus, that the Christians have added verses to say He is the Son of God. This rather absurd claim, which has become doctrine, not only contradicts the Qur'an itself, as has been shown above, but it also runs aground scientifically, as has become obvious in the textual investigations of pre-Islamic Bible manuscripts, most notably the Dead Sea scrolls and Codex Sinaiticus.

Another area in which the dogma of the Muslims has developed away from the Qur'an concerns the person of Muhammad. Although the Qur'an nowhere mentions him as an intercessor, several traditions do, and a statement to this effect also appears in the *Wasiyat* of Abu Hanifa⁷⁸ of the ninth century A.D.⁷⁹ Later, the *Fikh Akbar II*⁸⁰ expresses the sinlessness of all the prophets, even though the Qur'an (xl. 57; xlvii. 21; xlviii. 2; cx.) and quite a few *sahih* ("genuine") traditions show that Muhammad had sins and prayed for forgiveness.⁸¹ The denial that Muhammad was ever an idolater also finds mention in this same creed,⁸² in spite of the fact that he was commanded to "desert the idols" in lxxiv.⁸³ Through the centuries this "glorification" of Muhammad has resulted in the general belief among Muslims that Muhammad is the greatest of the prophets, something which also comes across in the shortest creed of Islam "the shahada," where only Muhammad

is referred to as God's messenger. The Qur'an, to the contrary, prescribes a severe punishment for those who discriminate between God and between His prophets (iv. 149-151), and another version of the shahada, which even in its standard form is nowhere to be found in the Qur'an, also makes mention of Jesus.⁸⁴

In the absence of the traditions and later formulations of dogma, several institutions in Islam would have no legitimate theological foundation. The Qur'an is, for example, silent on exactly how the rituals of the pilgrimage and the prayer are to be performed, and, contrary to popular belief, it does not even state that one should pray five times a day.

The Qur'an is indeed the original basis for one of the world's largest religions, and in this respect it merits our attention. Yet though we can hardly begin to know Islam without reading the Qur'an, we certainly cannot understand Islam just by reading the Qur'an alone.

Notes

Volume and page number references for *Sahih Bukhari* are from the translation of Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan; those for *Sahih Muslim* are from the translation of Abdul Hamid Siddiqi. References to *The History of al-Tabari* are from the edition of Ehsan Yar-Shater; and references to Suyuti's *Al-Itqan* are from the Turkish translation *El-Itkan fi Ulumi'l Kur'an* by Dr. Sakip Yildiz and Dr. Huseyin Avni Chelik unless otherwise noted.

1. In terms of an immediate following Muhammad was by no means the most successful of the prophets, but in the context of having his "revelation" being the most read and recited, this statement appears to be correct.

2. I.e., Muslim.

3. The second sura of the Qur'an is generally regarded by both Muslim and Western scholars to be the first of the Medinan suras, which would have been composed some 12 years after the beginning of Muhammad's ministry.

4. As Nöldeke later remarks, there are no original codices of the Qur'an with which to make a comparison. What is meant here, is what Western Islamic scholars presume the original text of the Qur'an to be.

5. *Sahih Bukhari*, Book of Revelation, chap. 1, hadith 2, vol. 1, p. 2; Chapters of Umra, chap. 10, hadith 17, vol. 3, p. 10.

6. In Qur'an vii. 156 Muhammad is described as being *ummi*, ("unlettered," or "illiterate"). The general opinion among Western scholars of Islam is that this probably only means he was uneducated in the scriptures, i.e., the *Tawrat* (Torah) and *Injil* (Gospel), which had not yet been translated into Arabic. The general consensus among Muslim scholars of Islam is that Muhammad could not read at all.

7. The most striking example of this can be seen in the event which is popularly known as the "satanic verses," which Nöldeke addresses later in this work. An Islamic source is al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 4, pp. 107-112.

8. Muhammad was reminded of verses he had forgotten on a few occasions: *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chap. 27, hadith 562; vol. 6, p. 510; Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 2, p. 402.

9. *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chap. 5, hadith 14; chap. 37, hadith 582, vol. 6, pp. 482, 522.

10. Same as the first reference in footnote 9 above.

11. Suyuti gives at least 35 versions of how the "seven forms" can be understood; see: Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, pp. 14ff.

12. Suyuti ruled out this interpretation after noticing that Umar ibn Khattab and Hisham ibn Hakim, between whom the differing recitations of the Qur'an were disputed, were both from the same Arab tribe, the Quraish; see Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, p. 112. Nöldeke makes mention of this in his work *Geschichte des Qorans*, Teil 1.

13. As logical as this idea may appear to us, it has, however, no support in early Islamic sources.

14. *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 6, pp. 107-112.

15. Qur'an ii. 137, 138; v. 72; etc.

16. Qur'an ix. 4-7.

17. *Sahih Bukhari*, The Virtues and Merits of the Companions of the Prophet, chap. 30, hadith 117, vol. 5, p. 77; The Book of Monotheism, chap. 35, hadith 591, vol. 9, p. 77.

18. I have been unable to find this remark of Uthman's in any of the major Islamic sources - the editor.

19. Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, p. 75.

20. Qur'an lxxi. 22-23.

21. Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Guillaume, pp. 135-6, 360. Muhammad also had other opponents murdered; see *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of Al-Maghazi, chap. 14, vol. 5, pp. 248-255.

22. For Haman: Qur'an xxviii. 5, 7, 38; xxix. 38; xl. 25, 38. For Mary: Qur'an iii. 31; xix. 29; lxvi. 12.
23. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. Gibb and Kramers, p. 76.
24. The Jews in Medina were also in possession of the Torah, with which Muhammad was apparently only then confronted. Qur'an iii. 64, 84 (a Medinan sura); *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of Monotheism, chap. 51, vol. 9, pp. 474 ff.
25. Qur'an xxvii. 35.
26. Qur'an xi. 16; xvii. 90.
27. One of the arguments of the Arab Christian apologist Abd al-Masih ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (c A.D. 820) was along this line; see *The Apology of Al-Kindy*, ed. Muir, p. 80.
28. Qur'an xii. 2.
29. See Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*.
30. Qur'an ii. 98-99.
31. In his sura orderings, Nöldeke assigns 90 suras to the Meccan period and 24 suras to the Medina period. See T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorans*, Teil I, pp. xi-xii.
32. There are actually a few lists of suras orderings, most of which contain discrepancies, in older Islamic works (see Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, pp. 3-5), but the list Nöldeke is probably referring to here is that given in an-Nadim, *Fihrist*, trans. Dodge, vol. 1, pp. 49-53.
33. *Sahih Bukhari*, Book of Commentary, chap. 345, hadith 478, vol. 6, p. 450.
34. *Ibid.* chap. 323, hadith 446, vol. 6, pp. 418 ff.
35. Qur'an xcvi. 1-5.
36. This is one of Nöldeke's footnotes: ``Since in Arabic also the root *rh*m signifies `to have pity,' the Arabs must have at once perceived the force of the new name."

37. The major passages are Qur'an ii. 220-238; iv. 1-38.

38. In Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, vol. 2, Ibn Umar is quoted as saying: ``Let none of you say, `I have the whole Qur'an.' How does he know what all of it is? Much of the Qur'an has gone.... Let him say instead, `I have what has survived.' " trans. from Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, p. 117.

39. That Muhammad never made any serious attempt to collect the Qur'an can be seen in a remark of Zaid ibn Thabit to Umar in *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chap. 3, hadith 509, vol. 6, pp. 477 ff.

40. *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of Holding Fast to the Qur'an and the Tradition, chap. 2, hadith 388, vol. 9, pp. 286 ff.

41. *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of Al-Maghazi, chap. 69, hadith 659, vol. 5, p. 466.

42. See the reference in footnote 39 above.

43. See the reference in footnote 39 above.

44. To a small extent this can be seen in one of the arguments between the Muslims of Iraq and Damascus in *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Salat, chap. 291, hadith 1799, vol. 2, pp. 393-4.

45. According to this hadith, Hudaifa first noticed how differently the Muslims of Iraq and Damascus recited the Qur'an, and then he mentioned this to Uthman; see *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chap. 3, hadith 510, vol. 6, pp. 478 ff.

46. Jeffery gives a short discussion of this event in his *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an*, pp. 212-3, in which he also gives the Islamic sources.

47. According to Conservative Sunni, and at times even Shiite, dogma, not a single letter of the Qur'an has been changed since the time of Muhammad.

48. Suyuti shows that Uthman made five copies of his text, four of which he sent out. Suyuti also mentions that there is some evidence that Uthman had seven copies made; see *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, pp. 143-4.

49. It appears that there were several differing sura arrangements of the Qur'an as found in the pre-Uthmanic codices of others; see an-Nadim, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 53 ff. and Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 182-3.

50. See the reference in footnote 45 above.

51. There are several examples of this: *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of the Punishment for Those Who Wage War Against Allah and His Apostle, chap. 17, hadith 817, vol. 8, pp. 537 ff.; *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Zakat, chap. 391, hadith 2286, vol. 2, pp. 500-1; an-Nadim, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 70 ff.; Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol 2, pp. 65 ff.; Jeffery, *Materials*.

52. According to an-Nadim a few pre-Uthmanic codices or copies of them were still to be found in his day (died A.D. 995); see *Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 59 ff.

53. an-Nadim, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 58 ff.

54. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 53 ff.

55. For information on Ibn Mas'ud's codex, see Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, p. 153; Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 21 ff. For information on Ubai's codex, see Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, pp. 153-4; Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 180-1. Dodge, in his translation of an-Nadim's *Fihrist*, erroneously identifies these two suras for others.

56. Gleaning for the most part hadith and Qur'an commentaries, Jeffery shows over 1300 variants for the codex of Ibn Mas'ud and about 1000 for Ubai's codex; see *Materials*, pp. 20-181.

57. Ibn Mas'ud was one of the four Qur'an authorities chosen by Muhammad; see *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chap. 7, hadith 521, vol. 6, pp. 486-7.

58. The little effect Ibn Mas'ud's codex did have can still be found in the hadith; see the reference in footnote 44 above.

59. In Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, p. 143, we find a remark of Ali in which he says he would have done the same as Uthman with respect to compiling the Qur'an.

60. There are quite a few examples of Shiite additions to the text of the Qur'an; see Tisdall, "Shiite Additions to the Koran," *The Moslem World*, vol. 3, pp. 224, 227-241, and Nöldeke and Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans*, Teil 2, pp. 99 ff.

61. an-Nadim, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 63 ff.

62. The sources used by Jeffery and Bergsträsser also bear this out; see *Materials*, pp. 17-8.

63. There are many hadith describing the events which led up to the revelation of a particular verse. For a sampling, see *Sahih Bukhari*, Book of Commentary, vol. 6, pp. 1 ff.

64. Mention of the Qur'an commentary of Ibn Abbas is also made in Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 2, p. 482.

65. This is one of Nöldeke's footnotes in which he calls attention to a 100-volume Qur'an commentary of Khalaf, one of the largest then known. Its length has since been exceeded.

66. According to a tradition of Ibn Umar, a person who reads the Qur'an, understanding its meaning, receives 20 credits per letter (from God); he who reads without understanding receives 10 good credits for every letter read; see Suyuti, *El-Itkan*, vol. 1, p. 271.

67. Quite a few works have been done in this area since Nöldeke's writing; among them are: Guillaume, "The Influence of Judaism on Islam," *The Legacy of Israel*, pp. 129-171, and Rosenblatt, "Rabbinic Legends in Hadith," *The Moslem World*, vol. 35, pp. 237-252.

68. For a broader discussion of the history and development of English translations of the Qur'an, see Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, pp. 7 ff.

69. Suyuti's *El-Itkan (Al-Itqan)* is, among other things, such a book.

70. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 189, Article 3.

71. Nöldeke's text ends here with his now outdated list of recommended reading: "The following works may be specially consulted: Weil, *Einleitung in den Koran*, 2nd. ed., 1878; Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorans*, Göttingen, 1860; and the Lives of Muhammad by Muir and Sprenger."

72. *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of Monotheism, chap. 42, hadith 614, vol. 9, p. 416.
73. *Ibid.*, Book of Commentary, chap. 99, vol. 6, p. 102.
74. al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 4, pp. 105 ff.
75. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 160 ff (for Jonah); pp. 171 ff (for Samson).
76. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 83 ff.
77. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 124.
78. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 130, Article 25.
79. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 28.
80. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 192, Article 8.
81. Most notably *Sahih Bukhari*, The Book of Invocations, chap. 62, hadith 407, vol. 8, p. 271.
82. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 192, Article 9.
83. *Sahih Bukhari*, Book of Commentary, chap. 345, hadith 478, vol. 6, pp. 452-3.
84. *Sahih Muslim*, The Book of Faith, chap. 11, hadith 43, vol. 1, p. 21.

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