

The Qur'an as Scripture

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Part I

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In the old-fashioned classification of religions familiar to our forebears, Islam fell among the Scriptural religions as contrasted with those religions which possessed no Holy Book revered by the people as the depository of their religious traditions, and the source to which they turned both for the prescriptions to regulate the daily practice of their religion and the material on which to feed their devotional life. The Qur'an as the Holy Book of Islam thus belonged to the category of Scripture and took its place among the Sacred Books of the East.

This characterization is still valid. The Qur'an is the Scripture of Islam. It is the Holy Book which Muslims revere in precisely the same way as other communities have revered and do revere their Holy Books. It is the source from which the Muslim community draws the primary prescriptions for the regulation of daily living, and to which its people turn to find nourishment for their devotional life. That they turn also to Tradition (*hadith*) as a supplementary source both for the regulation of life and for devotion no more lessens the unique authority of the Qur'an as a Scripture than does the fact that both Jews and Christians also use supplementary sources for the same purpose lessen the Scriptural authority for them of the Old and New Testaments.

Like other Scriptures the Qur'an passed through various stages of textual history till there emerged a standard text which came to be regarded as sacrosanct. As a sacrosanct text it came in time to function in certain circles as an instrument of magic, in precisely the same way as other sacrosanct texts have done. Like other Scriptures it ere long needed explanation so that it became the subject of Commentaries, at first simple and then elaborate, and the work of the exegetes in Islam has followed very much the same lines of development as we find in the history of the exegesis of other Holy Books. There have been exegetes interested in linguistic and philological problems, others interested in theological and juristic problems, others in a mystical exegesis, and others in using the text for homiletic and devotional purpose. All these are quite legitimate types of exegesis and have been, within their limits, quite as fruitful in the case of the Qur'an as they have been in the service of other Scriptures. Like other Scriptures the Qur'an was used liturgically in services of worship, so that, as has happened with other Holy Books, there grew up traditional systems of cantillation of its text for liturgical purposes.

Every Sacred Book, just because it is sacred, is certain to make a deep impression on the cultural life of the community which reveres it, yet in some ways the Qur'an has entered even more deeply into the life of the Muslim community than any other Scripture has done in the older religious groups. To Christians Jesus Himself was the Word of God, so that in the life of the Church He, rather than the written documents, was the Gospel, the "good news," making Scripture of less importance to the Church than the risen Lord ever present and active among

them through the Spirit. So we find in the Coptic Manichaean texts that Mani himself is "the Illuminator," the "Master of the Writings," whose person was for the Manichaean community, as that of the Buddha for the various Buddhist communities, far more important than any Scripture. But in Islam Muhammad is only the mouthpiece of revelation. The Qur'an is the word of Allah. Later Muslim piety, it is true, has made much of the person of the founder, but it was the Book, the Qur'an, not the person Muhammad, which was the significant factor in forming the mould in which the Islamic system took shape.

Arabic philology grew out of the study of the Qur'an, so that Arabic grammar, to an even greater extent than Hebrew grammar, has been accommodated to the language of the Scripture. Muslim law, which is often regarded as the greatest achievement of the early Muslim community, was given its framework by the *ahkam*, the commands, prohibitions and judgments found in the Qur'an. Islamic theology would naturally turn to the Qur'an for the basic material on which to develop its doctrine of God, doctrine of Man, doctrine of the Last Things, etc., just as the theologies of other religions have turned to their Scriptures for this purpose. Yet if Islamic theology is, as is so often charged, unique in its barrenness, that barrenness is almost wholly due to the fact that the early rise of a dogma as to the impeccability of the Qur'an as the word of God effectually barred any freedom of theological development. In areas where there was no conflict with the statements of the Qur'an, Muslim theologians often show a remarkable subtlety of mind and capacity for closely reasoned argument, so that had they had freedom, the product of their labours might have been very different from what we have from their pens. No one who reads Dr. Elder's recent translation of the Commentary of at-Taftazani on the credal statement of al-Nasafi can fail to be struck by the frequency with which the Mu'tazilites opened up promising avenues of theological speculation only to have them closed off by appeal to the consensus of the community that the statements of the Qur'an must be accepted in simple faith, while any questioning as to *how* or *why* was unbelief.

Even in the realm of literary criticism the Qur'an was a limiting factor. It may be doubted whether there could have appeared in any other religious community such a work as al-Baqillani's *I'jaz al-Qur'an*, in which masterpieces of the Arabic literature whose use of words, elegance of diction, variety of expression, stylistic artifice, literary artistry, are to the Western student vastly superior to the uncouthness and dreary monotony of the Qur'an, are compared in detail with the Qur'an to their detriment, since *ex hypothesi* the Qur'an as the word of God must be perfect in style and diction and all that deviates therefrom must be shown to be imperfect.

Thus one can hardly exaggerate the importance of the role that the Qur'an as the Scripture of Islam has played in moulding the Islamic system as it has developed from century to century. The Scripture of no other community, not even the Old Testament among the Jews, has had quite the same influence on the life of the community as the Qur'an has had in Islam. One naturally asks why?, and the answer is to be found in the Islamic doctrine of Scripture.

This brings us face to face with an important question, that of the nature of Scripture. In most cases a body of writing that has come to be the Scripture of a community has been given the sacred character which makes it a Holy Book, distinct from other writings which are not holy, by the action of the community. It was the Christian community which selected four Gospels out of many, gathered a corpus of twenty-one Epistles, and combined these with the Acts and the Apocalypse to form the New Testament. It was the Zoroastrian community which drew together the Yasna and the Yashts, the Vendidad and the Visparad to form the older Avesta. These separate writings were not originally written with the idea that they were to enter into the composition of a Holy Book to be called the New Testament or the Avesta, any more than the writings gathered into the Taoist Canon or the various Buddhist Canons were written for the purpose of being included in those Canons of Scripture. The separate writings were the work of individuals, but the forming of them into a Scripture was the work of the community. The writers of the Vedas and the Puranas were no more conscious than the Prophet Amos or the Apostle Paul

that they were writing material that would one day form part of a Holy Book and would serve as the Scripture of a religious community. It was the community which decided this matter of what was and what was not Scripture. It was the community which selected and gathered together for its own use those writings in which it felt that it heard the authentic voice of religious authority valid for its peculiar religious experience.

Sometimes the collection of material for such a Scripture and its authorization for use as such were conscious and deliberate. The fixing of the Jewish Canon of Scripture at the Council of Jamnia c. 90 A.D., where certain writings were accepted as authoritative and others excluded as unauthoritative, was a conscious and deliberate action of the community working through its leaders. The reconstruction of the Taoist Canon in the XIth century was likewise a community undertaking, and such "Scripture lists" as that, for example, in the famous 60th Canon of the Council of Laodicea (c.363 A.D.) are but registering the judgment of the community as to what was and what was not to be considered Scripture. In other cases the process was unconscious. No one can say just when and where the Homeric poems came to be in such a curious way the "Bible of the Greeks." In ancient Mesopotamia and in ancient Egypt there were religious texts which continued to be copied by generation after generation of scribes, which seem to have been used liturgically in the temples as in some sense authoritative religious writings, and which certainly were used to feed the devotional life of their communities, yet apparently had come to be accepted in the community without any official authorization.

In all these ancient Scriptures the writings included were of varied authorship, generally anonymous, and coming from different periods in the life of the community whose Holy Book they formed. The nature of the writings accepted into the collection depended to some extent on the culture of the community concerned. Thus a Zoroastrian Parsee feels some astonishment at what the Taoists have included in their Canon, and to us it sometimes seems strange to find, even in deliberately canonized Scriptures, writings of a type that we should never dream of accepting as of religious authority. In each case it was the community feeling, in terms of its own culture, which decided what was to be included and what excluded.

The case of the Qur'an is obviously very different from this. It is from beginning to end the product of one man and from one period. It was the community which did the formal gathering together of the material after the founder's death and prepared it for use by the community, but its content had been given to them as Scripture before his death. It was not the product of the community in the sense that they decided that this was the collection of writings which had grown up in the community and in which they heard the authentic voice of religious authority, but it was formed by one man and given to the community on his authority as a collection of "revelations" which was to be regulative for their religious life as a community. Thus it resembles the Scripture which Mani set himself to provide as the sacred writings for his community, or such modern pseudo-Scriptures as the *Book of Mormon*, or *Oahspe*, or the writings of Baha'llah, each of which was the work of one man, and consciously produced for the purpose of being used by a community as a Holy Book. It also has in common with these the fact that it is conscious of the existence of earlier Scriptures, which were authoritative for religious communities, and was produced in deliberate imitation of them.

This fact is of the first importance when we are seeking to understand the Muslim doctrine of Scripture. The writers of the New Testament were aware of and quote from the Old Testament as Scripture. Similarly the compilers of the Khorda Avesta were aware of the older Avesta. In neither case, however, were the authors of the various writings consciously intending to produce documents which would take their place beside the older Scriptures as themselves of Scriptural rank. They were raised to Scriptural rank because the community heard in them the same authentic voice of religious authority it had been accustomed to hear in the older Scriptures. The Qur'an, on the contrary, was given to the community on the authority of Muhammad, and the

community was bidden to accept it as authoritative in the same way as the Jews and Christians accepted their Scriptures.

What then did Muhammad conceive the nature of Scripture to be? Unfortunately we can never fully know what Muhammad himself thought of when he used such words as *Kitab wahy*, *Qur'an*, *aya*, *hikma*, *'ilm*, etc., for we have only part of the evidence before us, and no assurance that at this distance we always understand aright all the evidence we have. We have, however, all that the early Muslim community had, and we have fair assurance that what that early community was able to preserve of the pronouncements of its founder has been on the whole faithfully transmitted to us, even though in a fragmentary and curiously jumbled condition. Neither the *Sira* nor *Tradition* is of much help to us in this matter, and though the exegetes have preserved in their work good evidence of what was thought in their day to be the meaning of words and phrases in the Qur'an, the bewildering array of variant opinions they record on almost every crucial point of interpretation, makes it quite clear than even the very early circle of exegetes was as much in doubt as we are as to the exact meaning of many of the terms that interest us the most. Modern scholars, however, have the advantage of a knowledge of the environment of sixth century Arabia, particularly its cultural and religious environment, and the use of tools of comparative linguistics and comparative religion, which were not available to earlier generations. So even though we may never be able to answer fully this question of what Muhammad's conception of Scripture was, we can perhaps approach very close to an understanding of those elements in his thought which were basic to the doctrine of Scripture in Islam.

Our starting point must be the recognition that the Qur'an is the result of, and in part the record of, a religious experience of Muhammad. It was because of a religious experience that he came forward in his generation as a religious reformer, and because of a growing religious experience that he carried through what he felt to be his mission in life. His place in history is that of a founder of a religious community. It may be that the evidence points to his having been a pathological case not to be judged by normal standards of behavior. It may be true that incidentally his mission caused him to be in some sense the champion of the proletariat against a wealthy merchant aristocracy who formed the ruling class. It may be true that he showed himself a man of unusual political genius who deserves to rank among the world's great nationalist leaders. Yet primarily he was a religious leader, as truly convinced as were Luther or John Wesley that he had a "call" to a religious mission, in the first instance to his own people, and then beyond them; a mission on which he would stake everything, and whose successful completion would make an enormous change in the religious life of his world. His "call," his sense of mission, came to him from a religious experience through which he had passed, just as it came in the well known cases of Luther and Wesley just mentioned.

Unfortunately we do not know in Muhammad's case just what that initial experience was. The familiar account preserved in the *Sira*, and in *Tradition*, of how the angel appeared to him while he was in meditation practising *tahannuth* in the cave at Mt. Hira, is obviously based on the vague references to the "call" in the Qur'an itself, which it seeks to supplement. Moreover, in the details of the account there are so many striking coincidences with the tales preserved of how the great angel Vohu Manah appeared to Zoroaster, after he had spent some time in a natural cave in a mountain, and gave him his "call" to his mission,¹ of how Mani, who had had no human teacher or Master, was called to his mission by an angelic visitant who brought him Divine wisdom,² and of how Elchasai³ was called to his preaching of the One God and an imminent Day of Judgment by an enormous angelic visitant who filled the horizon and brought him sheets of a heavenly book, that one is led to wonder whether the writers of the account in the *Sira* were not following a pattern of what was popularly recognized in their Milieu as the correct way for a religious "messenger" to be called to his mission.

In any case, whatever this initial religious experience may have been, one fruit of it was the Qur'an and in the Qur'an we can trace to some extent the development of Muhammad's

conception of his mission, and the measures he took to bring about the religious reformation with which that mission was primarily concerned. The task imposed on him by his acceptance of that mission was a many-sided one, as indeed is the task of every religious reformer. All the varied activities of his ministry, however, arose from his conviction that he was called to bring to the Arabs, who had had no prophet sent them, the same religion which the prophets had brought to those other religious communities whom he referred to as the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitab*). Since they had a Scripture his people must have in Arabic a Scripture. But what did he have in mind when he spoke of Qur'an and Scripture?

The common word for Scripture is *Kitab*. This literally means "a writing," then "a written document". The special meaning "book" seems to have developed in Arabic under the influence of Aramaic, but was in use in Arabic in this sense long before the time of Muhammad. *Kitab* is used in the secular sense of "letter" in the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in Sura XXVII.28,29, and of a document of manumission in XXIV.33. The verb is used in II.282,283 with reference to writing contracts, but with these exceptions the word is used in the Qur'an only in connection with Allah's concerns with His creatures.⁴

The idea that written documents entered into the relations between the divine and the human is to be found very early in the religious history of the Near East. One inheritance from the early Sumerian culture was the feeling that matters of importance must be written and that there is a certain finality about things when once it can be said, "it is written." So in heaven things were written, as things are on earth, and among the things so written in heaven was the will of the gods concerning the world of men. Perhaps the most solemn day in the annual Mesopotamian celebration of the New Year Festival was the day when all the gods gathered in the "Assembly Room" and went into council to fix the fates and arrange for all that was to happen among men during the coming year, while Nabu, the divine scribe, wrote down the decrees as they were fixed.⁵

Since these written decrees affected men in a particular way we often read of men being shown them. Sirach speaks of God showing men His decrees (*Eccles.* XVII.12). In *Jubilee's* XXXII.21 we read of Jacob being shown seven of the tables in which were contained records of all the things that were to happen to him and his descendants throughout the ages. The angel said to Enoch: "Observe, Enoch, these heavenly tablets, and read what is written thereon, and mark each fact. And I observed the heavenly tablets, and read everything thereon written, and understood it all. And I read the book of all the actions of man." (*Eth. Enoch* LXXXI.1,2; cf. XCLI.3; CIII.2,3; CVI.19; CVII.1; CVIII.7,10). In the *Prayer of Joseph* preserved in *Philocalia* XXIII.15, the patriarch says: "For I have read in the tablets of heaven all that shall befall you and your sons." The angelic figure says to Daniel: "I will tell thee what is inscribed in the writing of truth" (*Dan.* X.21).

Allah's book of decrees is mentioned several times in the Qur'an. In it is written whether a man's life is to be long or short (XXXV.11/12), so that one written down to die cannot escape (III.154/148) nor can anyone die without a written and dated permission from Allah (III.145/139). The punishments to be visited on earthly cities are written there (XV.4; XVII.58/60), and those to be meted out to individuals (XV.79; cf. *Jer.* XXII.30). No misfortune can happen which was not previously written there (LVII.22; IX.51), because for every term there is a *Kitab* (i.e. decree, XIII.38). This is the Book which uttereth truth so that no one will be wronged (XXIII.62/64; XLV.29/28), which contains men's names till the Day of Resurrection (XXX.56), and is apparently the Book in which Allah has written these things that He will surely accomplish (LVIII.21).

Since things are thus recorded as decreed, the word *kitab* can be used to mean not the Book of Decrees but Allah's decree itself, i.e., what has been written for men and must therefore needs come to pass.⁶ "Had it not been for a decree (*kitab*) from Allah which preceded" (VIII.68/69),

such and such would have happened. So the prescriptions which Allah has laid down to be observed by men are *kitab*, something which as decreed may not be set aside (II.236; IV.103/104). *Kutiba*, "it has been written," is used in connection with the law regarding retaliation (II.178/173), testamentary declaration (II.180/176), fasting (II.183/179), holy war (II.216/212). Not only are Allah's laws for the Muslim community thus prescribed (II.187/183; IV.77/79,127/126), but so were His laws for the Jewish community (II.246/247; V.32/35,45/49; VII.156/155), and those for the Christians (LVII.27), while VI.12 and 54 speaks of what Allah has prescribed as incumbent on Himself, by which, as written, He himself is bound. A specimen of these things decreed is given in XXII.4, where, concerning Satan, whom ignorant men perversely follow, we read: "Concerning whom it is written. 'Whoso takes him as patron will be assuredly lead astray.'"

Another "Book" with Allah, possibly part of this same Book of Decrees, but more likely an independent Book, is the Inventory Book in which everything great and small in His universe is recorded (X.61/62; XI.6/8; VI.59; XXII.79/69; XXVII.75/77; XXXIV.3). It was doubtless in this book of Inventory that Allah had with Him the account of former generations (XX.52/54; cf. *Eth. Enoch* LXXXI.2), for He has neglected nothing in it (VI.38). It would also doubtless be in this Book that such matters as the number of the months was fixed at creation (IX.36), and maybe it is the record book referred to in L.4. Seven times this Inventory is called the "clear book," or the "book that makes clear" (*kitab mubin*). This immediately refers us back to ancient Mesopotamia where there were elaborate inventories of every kind in order that everything might be kept clear. God's book of inventory is referred to by the Psalmist when he mentions the book in which all his members were written (*Ps.* CXXXIX.16). The heavenly books into which Enoch looked had an inventory of all things that had been and were yet to be, and the heavenly tablets of the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* seem to be of this nature, though at times it is difficult to distinguish between the inventory and the Book of Decrees.

Another heavenly Book often mentioned in the literature of the ancient religions is the Record Book or register of the good and evil deeds of men. The Zoroastrian *Yasna* XXXI.14 states that all men's works are duly recorded, and in XLIX.10 and XXXIV.2 we read that this record is preserved in the House of Ahura Mazda. Religious texts from Babylonia speak of the Tablets on which sins are recorded and which suppliants pray to have broken, as well as *tuppu damiqti* on which good works are written.⁷ In the Old Testament Malachi refers to the book of remembrance that is written before Jehovah (III.16), and in the Talmud, *Pirqe Aboth*, II.1 reads: "Know what is above thee - a seeing eye and a hearing ear, and all thy deeds are written in a book." *Slav. Enoch* XIX.5 mentions the angels set over the souls of men "who write down all their deeds and lives before the Lord," while *Eth. Enoch* XCVIII.7 tells how every sin is every day recorded in heaven in the presence of the Most High.

The Qur'an knows of this heavenly Record Book in which all that men are saying and doing is being written down (IX.120/121,121/122; LIV.52; XLIII.19/18), nothing, whether great or small being omitted (XVIII.49/47; LIV.53). This record is being kept that Allah may recompense (IX.121/122; cf. *Eth. Enoch* LXXXI.4), and on the Last Day it will be brought forth that men may face their record (XVII.13/14,14/15,71/73; XVIII.49/47; XXXIX.69; LXXVIII.29) reminding us of familiar passages about the Books being opened for judgment in *Dan.* VII.10; *Rev.* XXI.1-13; *Eth. Enoch* XCVII.6; XC.20. Some passages speak of Allah Himself doing the writing (III.181/177; IV.81/83; XIX.79/82; XXI.94; XXXVI.12/11 XLV.29/28),⁸ but others speak of heavenly scribes occupying themselves with this recording of men's deeds (X.21/22; XLIII.80; L.17/16; LXXXII.11).⁹ The verses LXXXIII.7,18 suggest that there were two books, one for the record of the wicked and one for the record of the virtuous, or if we have to think of individual tablets for individual persons as in Babylonian thought, then that the records of wickedness were kept in one place and those of virtue in another. Certainly they were individual records which on the Day of Judgment, it was thought, each person would receive in his own

hand (XVII.71/73; LXIX.19,25; LXXXIV.7,10). This Record Book of the deeds of men is likewise referred to as a *kitab mubin* (XXXVI.12/11), a "book which makes clear."

In all this it is clear that we are dealing with religious concepts which had been circulating from very early times throughout the Near East, and which had doubtless been part of the background of religious thought for most of the audiences that Muhammad addressed during the course of his ministry. The fact that in his preaching he is able to assume that he is talking about matters with which his audience is already familiar is proof of this. Moreover, the verses that have been preserved as coming from the old Arab poets show that there was even literary use of these concepts contemporary with, even if not earlier than Muhammad's ministry. He could therefore assume some familiarity on the part of his audiences with the idea of such heavenly writings as the Record Books of human deeds, the celestial Book of Inventory, and the great Book of Decrees.

But it would seem that his audience, or at least some of his audience, knew of yet another heavenly book. In XVII.93/95 the audience declares that they will not believe till he brings them down (from heaven) a *kitab* which they may read. This is usually regarded as a Meccan passage, but if, as Dr. Bell suggests (*Qur'an*, p. 262), it is Madinan, then it is explained by IV.153/152, where it is the Jews who challenge him to bring a heavenly book, and the answer is in VI.7, that even if Allah were to send down a book written on parchment which they could hold in their hands, they would say that he had but worked some magic trick and would not believe. To the People of the Book the idea of a man receiving a heavenly document written on parchment would not be strange. Ezekiel saw a celestial hand holding out to him a parchment scroll written within and without (*Ezek.* II.9), and the Seer in the Apocalypse had to take the little book that was in the hand of the angel (*Rev.* X.8-10), where since the Seer had to eat it we must assume that it was a book in the form of a scroll. In the story of Elchasai also the angelic visitant handed the Seer a "book." It is very interesting, therefore, to read in LXXIV.52, which is apparently an earlier Meccan passage, how the audience which turns away from Muhammad's "Reminder" like startled asses fleeing from a lion, has the reproach levelled against it that each one of them wishes that he were the recipient of revelation in "sheets unrolled" (*suhuf munashshara*), where *suhuf* "sheets," "scrolls," "pages" would represent exactly what is pictured in the stories of Ezekiel, John and Elchasai. Now the revelation given to Moses is said in the Qur'an to have been on *suhuf* (LIII.36/37; LXXXVII.18,19), the true Scriptures were in "sheets kept pure," (XCVIII.2,3/2), and Muhammad's own "Reminder" is said to be "in honoured sheets exalted, kept pure" (LXXX.11-14).

Here we approach something that is fundamental to the thought of Scripture in the Qur'an. The *megillath sepher* which was handed to Ezekiel was a heavenly book, but it was not Scripture in the sense that the canonical Book of Ezekiel is Scripture. Neither was the *biblaridion* of the story in the Apocalypse, though it was a book from heaven sent down to a man, a Scripture in the same sense that the Book of Revelation is Scripture. On the other hand the *biblos* of the story of Elchasai, whose ministry was in the midst of religious communities which possessed and revered Holy Books, was said to have been handed on by the founder to one of his disciples as a book of revelation, a book which Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* VI.38, knows was used in the Elkesite community as a Scripture. Here the heavenly book has itself become a Scripture. This is quite a different conception of the nature of Scripture, and it is clearly this new conception which appears before us in the passages from the Qur'an we have been considering.

At a very early period in ancient Mesopotamia it was believed that the gods might make known their will to mankind. This they might do through omens or signs or presages which skilled priests could interpret. Or they might make it known through dreams, as they did to that mighty king Gudea, or through the oracle. Shamash was "the Lord of the oracle." There were oracle priests trained to consult and interpret the oracle, and we have an abundance of oracle texts surviving from relatively early periods. In a prayer to Shamash we read:

*"To him who cannot see Thou providest light.
Thou readest the hidden tablet that is not revealed.
On the innards of sheep Thou dost write the omen
And dost provide a decision."*

If we interpret this aright it means that there were things written on the heavenly tablets to which man had no access but which it was important for men to know, and Shamash could and would enlighten men.¹⁰ Revelations of this kind, however, were necessarily limited in scope. Often a fuller and more detailed expression of the will of the gods as regards men was desirable and was possible. One way of securing this desirable expression of their mind and will was by embodying their injunctions in a Code of Law, whose prescriptions would provide a practical rule of life whereby man could know how to live on earth the kind of life that would be most pleasing to the gods and most profitable to themselves. How early such Codes began to appear we cannot tell, but c.2500 B.C. we find Urukagina at Larsa¹¹ executing extensive reforms, removing abuses, issuing decrees "to restore the Law of God." The Code of laws was the writing of king Urukagina himself, but it was done, he tells us, under the inspiration of his god Ningirsu, so that the Code was ultimately a revelation of the prescriptions of God for the direction of men. Hammurabi also, it will be remembered, later set forth his more famous Code under the name and authority of Shamash.

Law in this sense is both prescription and instruction, in other words what the Jews meant by Torah. Now the Jews came to believe that the Torah was in written form with God long before the creation of the world, that its prescriptions were in part made known to and observed by Adam and the Patriarchs before it was revealed in its fullness by being brought down to Moses, and that it will be revealed anew when the Messiah comes.¹² Elchasai, we know,¹³ appeared in close association with the Jewish and Judaeo-Christian Ebionite communities of the Transjordan area, so that there can be little doubt that he, or whoever circulated the story about his "Book" received from heaven, had learned from them the idea that a Holy Book is something that was in heaven before it was sent down to be a Scripture for a community on earth. Are we then, to think that Muhammad also had learned, directly or indirectly, from the Jewish communities of Arabia, to think of a heavenly Book of Scripture, a celestial archetype from which the various individual Books of Scripture among men derived?

Certain passages in the Qur'an certainly suggest this. Sura XIII.39 tells objectors that Allah can delete or confirm what He wills since He has there with Him the "Mother of the Book" (*Umm al-kitab*). This by itself might not mean more than that since Allah is the author of each special decree, He can confirm it or abrogate it as He sees fit. In XLIII.4/3, however, after a statement that this has been made an Arabic Qur'an so that the Arabs may understand, we read: "And, behold! it is in the Mother of the Book in Our presence," a passage which is difficult to understand otherwise than as a reference to a celestial archetype of the Qur'an. Again in LVI.77/76ff. it is said to be "a noble Qur'an in a treasured Book," and in XLI.41 the "Reminder" is said to be a "Book sublime" to which no falsehood comes either from before or behind, in both of which passages, though the reference could possibly be to Scripture as a whole of which the message of Muhammad forms a part, it is generally taken to refer to the archetype. Finally in LXXXV.21,22 we read of "a glorious Qur'an in a preserved tablet," which is the verse from which is derived the later legend of the Tablet on which the Divine Pen wrote when Time had just begun. The fact that "Qur'an" in the above passages may mean "Scripture lesson" and not refer at all to the book we now have in front of us as a book, does not affect this question of the archetype from which Scripture is drawn.

If these passages mean that Muhammad thought of such a heavenly original Scripture, a written word of God which was the origin of all Scripture, it would explain very neatly his insistence that the content of his own message was in Scriptures of former peoples (XXVI.196),¹⁴ that his Qur'an is both a confirmation of and a safeguard for previous Scripture (II.41/38,91/85,97/91; III.3/2 and

V.48/52) so that those who accept previously revealed Scripture ought to accept his Qur'an also (II.121/115; V.68/72). Thus it is easy to see why Muhammad's followers are told that they are to believe in "the entire Book" (III.119/115), both what came to them through Muhammad, and what had come through previous "messengers" (V.59/64. cf. XLII,15/14), and why the Scriptures brought by previous "messengers" are only a portion of the Book (III.23/22; IV.44/47,51/54), just as what has come to Muhammad is only a part of what is in the Book (XXIX.45/44; XXXV.31/28, and cf. II.231; XVIII.27/26).

This concept appears relatively late in Muhammad's ministry. In particular the passages which may refer to an archetype seem all to be Madinan, coming from a period when he had been for some time in fairly close contact with the Jewish communities. If this is so it makes significant a number of small details we find in connection with his words about Scripture.

(a) As we have already noticed, the revelation given to Moses is said in LIII.36/37; LXXXVII.19 to have been on *suhuf*, "sheets," "scrolls." So in *Canticle's Rabba* V.14 we read that though the Tablets of the Law were made of hardest stone they could nevertheless be rolled up like a scroll.

(b) The word used in LXXXV.22 for the "tablet" of the celestial archetype is *lauh*, the very word which is used in Hebrew and Aramaic for the tablets which Moses received at Sinai. Indeed it is the word used in the Qur'an in Sura VII.145/142ff., in the story of Moses receiving the Law.

(c) Muhammad seems to have thought of Moses receiving the whole of the Torah at Sinai. The Biblical accounts in Exod. XXXI.18 ff.; Deut. X.1-5, apparently mean us to think of the two tablets written by the finger of God as containing nothing more than the Decalogue, which would about fill two tablets written on both sides. Later Jewish accounts, however, spoke of the whole of the Torah being given there.

(d) Sura XVII.93/95 speaks of an ascension to heaven in connection with Muhammad's claim to have revelation material. Jewish legend told of Moses' ascent to heavenly places where he studied the Torah which he was to receive and deliver to the people.

There can be little doubt, therefore, that when Muhammad came forward in response to his "call" he came to preach to audiences which not only had a knowledge of Scriptures being used as Holy Books by religious communities, but which, in some cases at least, were familiar with a definite theory as to the nature of Scripture, a theory which had grown up in the Jewish community and had already before Muhammad's time passed from them to other communities. Clearly Muhammad in his turn accepted from his contemporaries this theory, which he proceeded to develop in his own way as he worked out the implications of the mission to which his "call" had committed him.

Here then is the first fixed point in our discussion of the Qur'an as Scripture. *Kitab* as heavenly book was a concept that had had a long history in the religious thought of the Near East. *Kitab* as Scripture had had a special development in Jewish thought and had given rise to a theory, current not only among Jews but also among other religious communities, as to the nature of Scripture. This theory is evidently basic to Muhammad's teaching about Scripture in his Madinan period if not earlier, and would seem to have been taken over by him from the religious thought of his environment. The fact that it is an erroneous theory is for the moment irrelevant. The important thing is that it involved the idea of a progressive revelation.

Notes

¹ Porphyrius. *de Antro Nymph.* VI.7; *Zat-sparam*, XXI.8; *Dinkart*, VII.iii, 51-53.

² *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. Polotsky, p. 47; *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 328; al-Biruni, *Chronologie*, p. 208.

³ Hippolytus. *Philosopheumena*, IX.13; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, XIX.1; XXX. 17.

⁴ Possibly a secular sense is intended in XXI.104, which describes how on the Last Day Allah will roll up the heavens like a scroll for writings. (*sijill li'l-kutub*). Otherwise the word used for secular books is *sifr*, (plu. *asfar* in LXII.5), which is cognate with the Heb. *sepher*, Aram. *siphra*. cf. *safara* used for "scribes" in LXXX.15.

⁵ See now M. David, *Les dieux et le destin en Babylonie*, Paris, 1949.

⁶ Cf. Ps. CXIX.9; XL.7; *Eth. Enoch* XCI.14; *Slav. Enoch* LIII.3; and note the assumption underlying such New Testament passages as Luke XXII.37: John XV.25.

⁷ Zimmern in Schrader's *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, pp. 402, 405; Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, II.125; Martin, *Textes religieux babyloniens*, p. 256.

⁸ Since LVIII.22 speaks of Allah inscribing faith on the hearts of Believers the question arises as to how literally this writing of Allah is to be taken. Perhaps it was thought of both literally and figuratively. Jeremiah speaks of God writing His covenant on the hearts of His people (*Jer. XXXI.33* quoted in *Heb. VIII.10*; X.16; cf. *Job XIII.26* and *Ps. LXXXVII.6*) while the tablets of the Law were "written by the finger of God" (*Ex. XXXI.18*; *Deut. IX.10*). Both in ancient Egypt and in ancient Mesopotamia we find the picture of a deity who writes, so there was a long-existent tradition in this area for the notion of a God who literally writes, and we imagine that no one would have found anything strange in the fact that Sura III.53/46 (cf. V.83/86) represents the disciples of Jesus asking Allah to write them down as those who bear witness.

⁹ In the older religions we find that it was generally angels who did this recording. See *Ta'anith* 11a; *Lev. Rabba*, XXII; *Test. Abrah.* XII; *Slav. Enoch* XIX; *Apoc. Pauli*, 10, and for the Zoroastrian tradition *Dadistan-i-Dinik*, XIV.23.

¹⁰ The text is in *Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts*, VI, 83. On Shainash as sun god and Lord of the oracle see Contenau. *La Divination chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens*, pp. 28ff.

¹¹ On Urukagina see Patrick Carleton, *Buried Empires*, pp. 113-116.

¹² For the pre-existence of the Torah see *Gen. Rabba* VIII, *Midrash Tehillim*, ed. Buber, p. 391, and also pp. 449, 450, where it is deduced from *Ps. CV.8* that the Torah was in existence a thousand generations before it was revealed. For Adam and the Torah see *Sifre Deut.* §41; *Gen. Rabba* XVI.5; *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* XII. For the new Torah to be revealed by the Messiah see Alphabet of Rabbi Aqiba in Jellinek *Bet Hamidrasch*, III.27.

¹³ Brandt. *Elchasai ein Religionsstifter*, pp. 11, 73.

¹⁴ The word used here is *zubur* not *kutub*, but the use of this word *zubur* both for the record books of men's deeds (LIV.52), and for the books with which Allah's messengers were sent (III.184/181; XVI.44/46; XXXV.25/23), makes it clear that it was used interchangeably with *kutub*. In LIV.43, indeed, *zubur* seems to mean "Scripture" in general.

Part II

The Muslim World, Volume 41 (1950), pp. 106-134

In the religious thought of the ancient Near East it was well understood that a man might be the recipient of a revelation from the gods and thereby be called upon to make known to others what he had learned of the divine will. The Louvre tablets make it quite evident that at least as early as the already mentioned Urukagina, King of Lagash, we are in contact with a man who claims to have heard the voice of his god Ningirsu bidding him undertake to restore the "way of the gods." After a period of political and social upheaval Urukagina came to the throne to find the situation in his realm well nigh out of hand, and organized religion not only incapable of dealing with the troubles, but itself involved in the corruption. Officials had misappropriated estates. Judges had been imposing a tax for their personal benefit on cases coming before them. Men in positions of power were enslaving the poor. Lay officials were plundering temple revenues. Even the Chief Minister was demanding his percentage on everything that passed through his hands, while in the temples, where one might have expected better things the oracle-priests and the sacrificial priests, in spite of the fact that they were on the temple budget, were demanding private fees, and for their own benefit were deliberately encouraging senseless extravagance in the funeral ceremonies. Such things ought not to be so, and at the call of his god Ningirsu king Urukagina girds himself to a mission of reform to restore the ancient ways, the "ways of the gods."

In early seventh century Mecca affairs were sadly out of joint. Outside pressure from three great powers, Byzantine in the north and west, Sasanian in the east, and Abyssinian in the south, was forcing the Arabs in on themselves, and there was no unity among the tribes to present an effective resistance. At home the wealthy merchants were growing ever wealthier and the poor folk ever poorer. There was injustice, oppression, exploitation, and the official religion of Mecca, though its shrine was in some sense the pantheon of all Arabia, was powerless to deal with the urgencies of the situation. Then there appeared a man Muhammad, just an ordinary man, one from among themselves, who had shared as they had in the caravan trade so important for their economy, but who claimed to have heard the voice of Allah calling him to a mission to restore a "way of God" which had been forgotten. As in the case of Urukagina his reform included large measures of social and political reform, but his reforms were based on religion. In essentials his mission was an attempt to bring the life of the community in which he lived once again under divine direction as it had been in olden time.

The Qur'an makes it clear that in undertaking his mission Muhammad thought of himself as standing in the succession of that great company of men to whom God had spoken, and who, because they had received a revelation of the mind and will of God, or what they conceived to be such, felt themselves called of God to announce that revelation to men and thereby undertake the task of reform within their communities. In his preaching he often referred to the stories of his predecessors in this succession. It seems evident that he knew that he could assume in his audiences some familiarity with a number of these stories, and indeed we have a certain amount of evidence that some of these stories of men of God who had preached to their communities were known to the pre-Islamic poets.¹ What Muhammad has to say about them in the Qur'an is interesting to us for two reasons, (1) because even a cursory examination shows that for him their stories follow a clearly defined pattern which obviously gives us his theory of the "messenger and his mission"; (2) because they provide another clue to what Muhammad meant when he spoke of his Qur'an as Scripture.

The two words that Muhammad used for such a messenger are *rasul* and *nabi*. Sometimes the messenger is called a *mursal*, but that is from the same root as *rasul* and in the Qur'an means the same thing. *Arsala* is "to send", so a *mursal* is "one who is sent," and *rasul*, "a messenger," is equally one who has been sent.

In the case of *rasul* we are dealing with a normal Arabic word which has been given a special religious meaning. Human messengers may bear the name *rasul*, as e.g. the messenger whom the king of Egypt sent to Joseph in the prison (XII.50), while the related word *mursal* is used of the envoys from the Queen of Sheba (XXVII.35). The celestial messengers sent to Lot have the name *mursal* (XV.57,61), Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that he is a *rasul* from Allah (XIX.19; cf. LXXXI.19), and the angels who come to take the soul at death are Allah's messengers (VI.61; VII.37/35). The parallel here with the development of meaning in the case of the Greek **ἀπόστολος**, and of the Jewish words *shaluah*, *shaliah*, is striking.²

Sh'liha is the *terminus technicus* in the Syriac-speaking Church for "messenger," "legate," and in the religious sense "Apostle." That this root RSL from which are derived both *mursal* and *rasul* was the normal South Semitic equivalent for the North Semitic root SLH would seem clear from the fact that it is used in Sabaeen inscriptions for "legatus" (Conti Rossini, *Glossarium*, p. 242).

The development of the religious use of such a word is fairly obvious. Kings and potentates sent messengers to carry word from their presence to those whom they desired that word to reach. Such messengers heard the word from their mighty overlords, in their turn they spoke the word with authority and with expectation that it would be received and obeyed. Often they carried with them credentials to prove that they were accredited messengers, and not uncommonly they were empowered to speak warnings or utter threats of what might be the consequences if their message were disregarded. Now God was King of Kings and Lord of Lords, so at any time He might send messengers to bear His word to men. Such a messenger would necessarily have what to all intents and purposes was an audience, in which he was told the content of the message he would have to deliver and given instructions as to the people to whom it was to be delivered. In the accomplishment of his mission he would have to speak in the name of God who sent him, might prove his accreditation by showing his credentials, and might have occasion to point out the kind of vengeance God would take on such as disregarded the message sent by his mouth.

It is obvious that such a conception might have arisen independently at a number of different points in time and space, but as we study Muhammad's statements in the Qur'an with regard to the messengers and to his own place in the succession of these messengers, it becomes clear that he is following very closely a pattern of thought already well established in the religious tradition around him in the area of his mission.

The other word *nabi* "prophet" was not originally an Arabic word. There is a genuine Arabic verb *naba'a* cognate with the Akkadian *nabu* "to summon, call," but the word *nabi* in the meaning of "prophet" is a borrowing into Arabic from the Judaeo-Christian tradition.³

In the Old Testament a *nabi'* is not necessarily a messenger. The Canaanite Baals and Asheras had their "prophets" (I Ki. XVIII.19-40; II Ki. X.19). Abraham was a prophet though he was the bearer of no message (Gen. XX.7), and indeed all the Patriarchs were Prophets (Ps. CV.15). Miriam, the sister of Moses, was a prophetess (Ex. XV.20), and when the Spirit of God happened to fall on quite ordinary men such as Saul's messengers (I Sam. XIX.20) they might prophesy. It seems that in ancient Palestine the *nabi'* was primarily associated with the cult and would normally be expected to have close associations with some shrine.⁴ The well-known gloss in I Sam. IX.9 shows that the *nabi'* was known to belong to the fraternity of what we should call the "diviners".⁵ The passive sense of the word would thus seem to be the original,⁶ i.e., the *nabi'* was one who "was called" and then acted in response to the call. The call was not necessarily by a voice. Some happening at the shrine; some seemingly fortuitous occurrence in life as it went on around him; some peculiarity in the casting of the lots or in the consulting of the omens; some sudden "falling of the spirit" on him, or it might even be just the sense of the shaping of political or social crises around him in his environment would call him and he would respond.⁷ The response was not necessarily the delivering of a message. Abraham heard the call and his

response was to go out on his venture of faith. Miriam heard the call and her response was to lead the song and dance in an expression of thankfulness for deliverance. Indeed, in his *Dalalat al-Ha'irin* Maimonides considers that the stories of the judges and the leaders who succeeded them are rightly labelled "Former Prophets" in the Hebrew Bible, for these were the men who heard the call and responded by delivering their country from oppressors, intervening to prevent injustice, and labouring to establish the well-being of the community. That is, in their way each of them responded by an effort to establish the "ways of God."

The response, however, might well be the delivery of a message. The prophet Gad gave David a message for his direction before he was king (I Sam. XXII.5), and the prophet Nathan gave him messages after he was king (II Sam. VIII.3 ff.) Deborah the prophetess seems to have given messages of counsel to the people as she judged Israel from her seat under the palm tree (Judg. IV.4 ff.). Hilkiah the priest and Shaphan the scribe went to Huldah the prophetess, wife of the keeper of the king's wardrobe, for the express purpose of getting a message with regard to the find they had made in the temple (II Ki. XXII.14 ff.). Even more explicitly we read of the message given in "the word of the Lord" to a prophet, as e.g., to the unnamed prophet in Judg. VI.7 ff. in the days of distress under the Midianites, or to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha king of Israel (I Ki. XVI.1-4,7,52). In later times the word "prophecy" came to be narrowed to this specific form of response by delivering a message. Still later attention was concentrated on the threats and promises contained in the message, so that prophecy tended to mean no longer the whole message of the prophet but the predictions of what doom would fall on the disobedient and what joyous triumph would be the lot of the obedient.

Muhammad as he took up his mission claimed to be both a *rasul* and a *nabi'* representing Allah as addressing him "O thou Apostle" (*ya ayyuha' r-Rasul*: V.41/45,67/71) and "O thou Prophet" (*Ya ayyuha' n-Nabi*: VIII.64/65,65/66). He assumes that the audiences know what these words mean, for more than once he gives expression to his distress that they think it amusing that he should consider himself in the succession of the ancient messengers (XXV.41/43; X.2). What then would the *nabi* as messenger have meant to the people of Scripture from whom his contemporaries had learned the word? A number of points immediately suggest themselves as important for our consideration.

(1) He was a source of guidance.

When there was a prophet among the people they would turn to him in moments when more than human guidance was needed with expectation that he could make contact with God and bring them a message containing such guidance.

"But Jehoshaphat said: Is there not here a prophet of the Lord that we may enquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said: Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat ... and Jehoshaphat said: The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him." (II Ki. III.11,12).⁹

In the First Book of Maccabees we see the other side of the picture, namely the makeshift arrangements that must of necessity suffice when there is no prophet among the people to whom they may turn for needed guidance.¹⁰

(2) He would be a man subject to peculiar experiences.

The contact with God through which the message was received was commonly, if not always, a psychically disturbing experience for the prophet.¹¹

(a) It might cause disturbances which were forced to manifest themselves in bodily reactions. The prophets of Baal in a kind of frenzy gashed themselves with knives (I Ki. XVIII.28). Saul when under the influence of inspiration stripped off all his clothing and lay naked for a day and a night (I Sam. XIX.24). The youthful attendant of the priest Zakarbaal at Byblos, as we read in Wen-Amon's narration, when he was "seized by the god" danced and began to prophesy (Breasted, *Ancient Records*, IV. p. 280, §570). So Ezekiel was as it were taken out of his body during the experience (Ezek. VIII.3; cf. II Cor. XII.1,4), and in the *Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, XXVIII.6 we read that when the Holy Spirit came upon Kenaz, as he sat among the elders, "it took away from him his bodily sense and he began to prophesy." This is the "prophetic ecstasy." The psychic experience frequently upsets the recipient. Daniel is pictured as being smitten down, overcome by the experience (Dan. X.9,15), as were Ezekiel (Ez. I.28) and Paul (Acts XXII.7) and the Seer in IV Ezra V.14,15. Commonly we read how the prophet was sore afflicted by the experience (Dan. VII.15; VIII.27; X.8; Isa. VI.5; IV Ezra V.14; *Apoc. Baruch* XLVIII.25; LV.1-4), which was doubtless one element in the "burden" of the Prophets (Isa. XIII.1; Nah. I.1; Jer. XXIII.33-39; Hab. I.1; Zech. IX.1).

(b) It might include visions. The passage in I Sam. IX.9 is interesting evidence of the connexion that was felt to exist between the *nabi'* and the Seer,¹² so that we are not surprised to find Michaiiah having a vision of the Lord on His throne and seeing the way in which the celestial powers were directing human affairs (I Ki. XXII.19 ff.). When Ezekiel was called to his mission in Babylonia the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God (Ezek. I.1). So Isaiah in the year that king Uzziah died saw a vision of the Lord sitting on His throne (Isa. VI.1 ff.), Amos saw Him on the altar (Amos IX.1), and Zechariah had vision of the chariots and horsemen (Zech. VI.1 ff.). Daniel tells what he saw in visions (Dan. VIII.1 ff.; X.7 ff.; XII.5 ff.), as in the later books do Baruch, Ezra and Enoch (*Apoc. Baruch* LIII.1; IV Ezra II.42 ff.; XIII.25; *Eth. Enoch* XXXVII.1 ff.). One of the afflictions of a community is when its prophets find no vision from the Lord (Lam. II.9), for people in distress turn expectantly to their prophet for a vision (Ezek. VII.26).

(c) It might include dreams.¹³ In Numb. XII.6 we read how God said, "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream." So some of the messages reported to have been given to Daniel were in dreams (Dan. VII.1), Enoch saw dreams (*Eth. Enoch* LXXXV.1), as did Ezra (IV Ezra XI.1). Jeremiah reports how the prophets of his day used to come forward with their message saying, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed" Jer. XXXIII.25, and cf. verses 28,32). Just as it was the descent of the spirit of God which caused the prophetic ecstasy, it was a similar descent of the spirit which caused such dreams, as the *Chronicle of Jerahmeel* XLII.8 tells us in connection with the dream of Miriam the sister of Moses.

(3) He would be a preacher.

The message had to be delivered. When it was a simple message as a word of God about some specific matter it might be delivered in a sentence or a few sentences. The message of Gad to David in I Sam. XXII.5 was in three brief commands. The message of the prophet to Ahab concerning the army of the Syrian Benhadad was in three sentences (I Ki. XX.13,14). Michaiiah, however, preached a little sermonette to the monarchs and their court when he was sent with his message (I Ki. XXII.19 ff.). Jonah was sent to preach (Jonah III.2). Amos preached his message to "all the house of Israel," and the "burdens" of Habakkuk and Nahum as well as the messages of the Second Isaiah and Jeremiah were sermons in the true sense. It was thus natural that at a later time the office of the prophet should be thought of as in a special sense that of a preacher, "And Thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of Thee at Jerusalem" (Neh. VI.7). So we find that Noah is described as a "preacher of righteousness" (II Pet. II.5. cf. Josephus *Ant.* I.iii, 1), Solomon was the preacher who was king over all Israel (Eccl. I.12), and in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* we find the Patriarch delivering a sermonette to his father Terah, much as Enoch is represented as preaching to his children (*Slav. Enoch* LVII ff.). In the *Apoc. of Baruch* the elders

are specially assembled that Baruch may preach to them, and Moses, the Rabbis say, preached and expounded the Torah in seventy languages (Ginzberg, [*Legends of the Jews*](#), III.439).

Since the message was from God the prophets preached what they claimed was a word from God (Jer. XXIII.16; XXVIII.18; XVIII.12; XXXIV.8; Ezek. XXIII.1; Hos. IV.1; Dan. IX.6; Hag. II.1; Zeph. I.1; Amos. VII.16; *Apoc. Baruch* XIII.2). Jeremiah in telling of his call says that the Lord put the words into his mouth (Jer. I.9; XV.19 and cf. XXXIV.8). Ezekiel contrasts his message as the word of the Lord with that of many contemporary prophets who but prophesied out of their own hearts (Ezek. XIII.2). The common complaint against the false prophets was that they prophesied although the Lord had not spoken to them (Jer. XXIII.21; Ezek. XIII.3,6-9), therefore their prophesying is called prophesying lies (Jer. XIV.14; XXIII.25; XXVII.9; Ezek. XXII.28), so that they are "prophets of deceit" (Jer. XXIII.26; Lam. II.14; Zeph. III.4), who lead the people astray instead of guiding them (Micah III.5). Since the message is the word of God the true prophet is under a sense of compulsion to speak the word that has been given him. This appears quite clearly in Jer. I.4-10, and was given its classical expression by Paul in I Cor. IX.16, "for necessity is laid on me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

(4) He might be a quite unexpected person.

Though in ancient times the prophets were generally attached to the shrines, and there was even a sort of "order of prophets" among whom men would naturally expect the gift of facility in making contact with the divine and bringing the message, yet the "spirit of God" might fall on any ordinary man at any time and cause him to prophesy. The story of Saul tells how at one time the spirit of God came upon him so that he prophesied among the prophets (I Sam. X.5-13. cf. I Sam. XIX.20-24). Amos told Amaziah the priest that he had been no member of any order of prophets, nor the son of a prophet, but a simple herdsman when God called him, taking hold of him and saying: "Go, prophesy to My people" (Amos VII.14,15). The most unexpected person, the most unlikely person,¹⁴ might at any time anywhere be "taken hold of" by God to serve as His messenger to preach His word.

(5) He might be expected to record his message.

Though the earlier prophets seem to have written nothing the later prophets were writing prophets who set down their message in a more permanent form. Habakkuk was expressly commanded to write his message (Hab. II.2), as were Jeremiah (XXX.2; XXXVI.2) and Isaiah (VIII.1). Since Daniel is told to seal up the scroll (XII.4) it would seem that he also had been bidden write his message. As this tradition of written prophecy gained authority there was a tendency to suggest that the earlier prophets had also written their messages along with accounts of the events amidst which they sought to carry out their mission. Thus in I Chron. XXIX.29 we read of books of Samuel, Nathan and Gad, in II Chron. XII.15 of books of Shemaiah and Iddo (cf. XIII.22), and in XXI.12 Elijah is pictured as writing to Jehoram. From this it was only a step to the idea that to every prophet must be ascribed a book, so that, presently, since all the Patriarchs were prophets, we begin to find references to Books bearing the names of Noah, Lamech, Enoch, Seth, Abraham, Joseph and even of Adam.

(6) He might be an unpopular person in the community.

The preaching of the prophets who as preachers of righteousness sought to restore the "way of God" among men was by no means always popular with the privileged and powerful in the community. We read of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada that the spirit of the Lord came upon him so that he prophesied but the powerful conspired against him and stoned him (II Chron. XXIV.20,21). The prophet sent to Amaziah had to hold his peace lest he be smitten (*ibid.* XXV.16). In the days of Jezebel's power in the land Obadiah had to save a group of prophets from slaughter by hiding them in a cave till the storm of persecution was over (I Ki. XVIII.4,13).

Elijah himself had to flee from Jezebel who threatened his life (I Ki. XIX.2-4). Ahab king of Israel tells Jehoshaphat plainly that he hates Michaiiah the prophet and only unwillingly brings him in for consultation, and then when Michaiiah tells the kings the truth a courtier smites him in the face and the king has him sent to prison (I Ki. XXII). Jeremiah was often in prison because of his message (Jer. XX.2; XXXII.2; XXXVII.15) and Jesus mourned over Jerusalem the city which killed the prophets and stoned those sent to it (Matt. XXIII.37. cf. Neh. IX.26). Even as early as Amos we hear the complaint that when God sent prophets the leaders of the people forbade them to prophesy (Amos II.12; VII.12-16). In this rejection by the people the messengers shared the fate of the prophets:

"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought upon them the King of the Chaldees" (II Chron. XXXVI.15-17).

It will already have been noticed how closely all this corresponds with the picture we have in Qur'an and Tradition of Muhammad as prophet. He claimed to come with "guidance" (XVII.94/96; V.15/18; XXVII.2), and expects the people to turn to him for the solution of their perplexities (II.189/185-217/214,222; V.4/6; LXXIX.42; XVII.85/87 and cf. IV.59/62,65/68; XXIV.48/47). The accounts of his ministry all mention the strange physical and psychical disturbances to which he was subject and which he associated with his reception of messages from Allah.¹⁵ Tradition says that his revelations began with veracious dreams,¹⁶ and there are Traditions recording his statement that certain classes of dreams belong to prophecy.¹⁷ Sura LIII.1-18 is an account of one of his visions, and the famous Mi'raj story recounts his vision of heaven and hell. Over and over again he announces that he has been sent to preach both good tidings and warnings (XI.2; V.19/22; VII.188; II.119/113; XXXIV.28/27; XXXV.24/22). What he has to preach is Allah's word (Kalima, XLII.24/23; X.82; XI.119/120; VI.115; XVIII.109), and so he is under constraint to deliver the message (X.16/17). That he was an unexpected phenomenon when he appeared as a messenger is clear both from the attitude of his contemporaries towards him (XLIII.31/30; X.2; L.2; XXXVIII.4/3; XXV.41/43), and from his own statement that he was only a messenger from among themselves (III.164/158; IX.128/129; LXII.2). That his preaching was highly unpopular with the groups in power and authority in his community hardly needs illustration. Finally there is his insistence that he has a Book from Allah (XLII.17/16; VI.114; III.3/2; IV.105/106).

To every prophet a Book, therefore Muhammad must have a Book. Here again it is clear that he has taken over from the religious tradition in his environment not only a theory as to the nature of Scripture but also a theory of the prophetic office in connection with which Scripture comes to men. Let us look therefore a little more closely into what the Qur'an reveals of his own thinking about that prophetic office to which his experience had led him to feel that he had been called.

Apparently he made no special distinction between the two names *rasul* and *nabi*. The later theologians made a definite distinction between them, taking *nabi* to be a word of wider significance than *rasul*. They spoke of a very great number of prophets, perhaps as many as 124,000, who while they exercised the prophetic office had no particular message, whereas the messengers were a smaller number, each of whom was given a special *risala*. Thus for them every *rasul* would be a *nabi* but not every *nabi* a *rasul*.¹⁸ The Qur'an does not support such a distinction.¹⁹ If anything the Quranic evidence would seem to point the other way and suggest that the *nabi* was the narrower term, the prophet being a special class among the messengers. In this Muhammad would be following the older usage for in the Old Testament the prophet appears as a messenger of a particular kind.

He speaks of himself as both a *rasul* (II.101/95) and a *nabi* (VII.158). Like those of old he was "sent" (III.144/138) in order to announce (*nabba'a*, XV.49), and to preach (*bashshara*, XXXIII.47/46), so that he is both a bearer of good tidings (*bashir*, XI.2) to those who heed the message, and a warner (*nadhira*, XVII.105/106) to those who disregard it. Thus he stands in the succession both of the ancient warners (LIII.56/57; XXVII.92/94), and of the previous messengers (II.252/253 ff.), and feels bidden to declare to his contemporaries, "I am Allah's messenger to you all" (VII.158/157). His message is in his Qur'an. It is the Qur'an he is to preach as his good tidings (XIX.97), and it is by the Qur'an that he is to warn (VI.19,92; XIX.97; XXV.1; XXXII.3/2; XLII.7/5) and to remind (L.45). He thus expects his Qur'an to be taken as Scripture in the same sense as the messages of earlier prophets and messengers had come to be regarded by other communities as Scripture.

What then did he know of these earlier messengers and their Books? Over and over again he reminds the Arabs that they had hitherto had no such messenger sent to them. "Nay it (i.e. the Qur'an) is the truth from thy Lord, that thou mayest warn a people to whom no warner has come before thee" (XXXII.3/2 and cf. XXVIII.46; XXXIV.44/43). For this reason he can claim that he is teaching them what neither they nor their fathers had known (VI.91), since they had so far received no book of Scripture (XXXIV.44/43; XXXV.40/38; LXVIII.37). He challenges them to produce Scriptural evidence in support of their religious practices if they think that they are in "the way of God" (XXXVII.157; XLVI.4/3 and cf. XVIII.5/4). He even represents them as complaining that had Allah sent them a messenger and a Scripture they might have been in the true path (XX.134; XXXVII.168,169; VI.157/158; XXVIII.47).

The point he is making in all this is that without Scripture there can be no true religion. For true religion men need accurate knowledge of God and guidance from God as to the "way of God." Such knowledge and guidance can come only by way of revelation. While it is true that the Divine Being does in a measure reveal Himself in His works (L.6-11),²⁰ and to some extent in history (XLVII.10/11), yet His more complete and purposeful revelation of Himself has ever been through the messages He has given to those men whom He has chosen (XXI.7,25). How foolish, therefore, is it for one to venture to dispute about Allah without knowledge or guidance or enlightening Book (XXII.8). Indeed, it is precisely because revelation is essential to true religion that Satan is ever interested in interfering in this matter (XXII.52/51).

Since revelation is of such importance it is obvious that Allah would have revealed Himself in this special way very early in the history of mankind. In the text books of Muslim theology we find at the sending of messengers is thought to have begun with Adam, who was the first of the series of prophets which extended in continuous succession up to Muhammad.²¹ In the Qur'an itself Adam is never called either a *nabi* or a *rasul*, but we read how Allah taught him (II.31/29 to 37/35), guided him (II.38/36; XX.122/120 and cf. 123/121), and particularly how Allah chose him (XX.122/121; III.33/30), all three of which are terms which have a special use in connexion with Allah's calling of messengers. The passage (III.33/30) is particularly interesting for it mentions how Allah chose above all human beings Adam, Noah, Abraham's family and the family of 'Imran, thus placing Adam at the beginning of that series of three groups which elsewhere in the Qur'an are specially marked as those chosen for the task of bearing Allah's revelation to mankind (XXXIII.7; LVII.26,27; XXIX.27/26; VI.84-89; XIX.58/59).²²

This setting of Adam at the beginning of the prophetic line is possibly a later development of thought, for there are other passages in which Noah appears to be the starter of the line of messengers. Sura LVII.26,27²³ speaks of the sending of Noah and Abraham and the appointing of the prophetic office and Scripture to be among their posterity, so that in their footsteps the messengers followed one another, and finally Jesus also. Again both IV.163/161 and X.74/75 suggest that it was only after Noah that messengers began to come in regular succession, while in XXXIII.7 we find him as the first in the list of those predecessors of Muhammad with whom Allah made strict covenant. It would be natural, of course, for a new start to be made after the

flood, so that this does not necessarily mean more than that with Noah the succession was taken up again.

In any case Adam's progeny were promised that messengers would come to them (VII.35/33), and that Muhammad thought of a succession of them according to some divine plan appears clearly. "Then sent We our messengers, one after the other. Every time its messenger came to a community they treated him as a liar, so We caused them to follow in succession of one another" (XXIII.44/46 and cf. X.74/75 ff.). One such messenger has been sent to every nation (XVI.36/38; X.47/48; XXXV.24/22), and even to the Jinn (VI.130), for it was not consistent with the justice of Allah to visit with punishment any community till a messenger had been sent to warn it (XXVIII.59; XVII.15/16), and after one has been sent men have no plea against Allah (IV.165/163). For this reason the messengers are normally chosen from the members of the community itself (XIV.4), so that their message may be plain.

In His choice of messengers Allah exercises His divine prerogative and chooses whom He will (III.179/174).²⁴ Some of them were more highly endowed than others, and some He raised to higher rank than others (II.253/254; XVII.55/57), but they are all His servants (XXXVII.171; XVI.2; XIV.1 1/13; XL.15). His sending them is an act of mercy (*rahma*) on His part (XLIV.6/5), and He desires that men make no distinctions among them (II.136/130,285; III.84/78; IV.152/151).²⁵ They are always humans (XXI.7,8; XVI.43/45; XVII.93/95 ff.; XIV.11/13; XII.109), performing normal human actions such as eating and going about the market places (XXV.20/22) and having wives and children (XIII.38). This apparently excited comment from Muhammad's contemporaries, for there seems to have been some idea abroad that this bringing a divine message ought to have been the task of angels rather than men (XXV.7/8,21/23; XV.7; XVII.92/94; XI.12/55; VI.8,9,91,111). Muhammad apparently felt the pressure of this objection so much that he represents the same objection having been raised against Noah by his contemporaries (XXIII.24; XI.31/33), and by the peoples of 'Ad and Thamud against their messengers (XLI.14/13). Since the messengers, however, are but humans, they are not to be taken as Lords (III.80/74), yet are to be obeyed (IV.64/67) as those to whom Allah has given authority over what He wills (LIX.6).

Having chosen His messengers Allah enters into a covenant with them (XXXIII.7; III.81/75). On His part He gives them a revelation of Himself which makes clear to them His uniqueness (XXI.25), promises them His aid (XL.51/54; X.103),²⁶ and His guidance (VI.90; XIX.58/59), and of course gives to them the message, His "word" which they are to deliver (XXXVII.171). They on their part undertake the task of delivering the message (V.67/71; VII.62/60,68/66,79/77),²⁷ firmly enduring in spite of all opposition (XLVI.35/34; VI.34), bearing witness (LXXIII.15), setting forth Allah's signs (XX.134), and asking no recompense from men since their reward is from Allah (XXXVI.21/20). They are to expect opposition to their mission (XXV.31/33; VI.112), and to be made mockery of (XLIII.7/6), but on the great Judgment Day all men will have to face questioning on how they responded to the messengers sent them (XXVIII.65; VII.6/5),²⁸ and it will then become apparent that Allah and His messengers finally prevail (LVIII.21; XXXVI.52).

In connection with this idea of a "covenant" with the prophets Muhammad uses a number of technical terms.

(1) There are first of all the two words he uses for the covenant itself, viz. *mithaq* and *'ahd*, both of which were in secular use but which lent themselves to use in a technical religious sense. (a) *mithaq* is related to the verb *wathiqa* "to put trust in anyone," which is used in the III. Form to mean "to enter into a compact or treaty with anyone." So *mithaq* is a "covenant" or "treaty" entered into in such a way. It is used in the Qur'an in its secular sense with reference to compacts between humans (IV.21/25,90/92,92/94; VIII.72/73). In its technical sense, however, it is used only in connection with messengers and their communities. Most often the *mithaq* is that between Allah and the Children of Israel (II.83/77,84/78,93/87; V.12/15,70/74; VII.169/168),²⁹ but Allah

also had one with the Christians (V.14/17), and indeed with all the people of Scripture (III.187/184). It was because of the covenant that messengers came to the Children of Israel (V.70/74), and part of the covenant was that they should believe in the messengers and help them (V.12/15), but they broke the covenant³⁰ and killed the prophets (IV.154/153 ff.). The communities, however, come into the covenant relationship only because of their prophets, for Allah's strict *mithaq* is really with those whom He sends (XXXIII.7). But when they have come into this covenant relation and have received Scripture through their prophet, they, like their prophets, are under covenant obligation to spread the message and labor to establish the "way of God" (III.187/184; XIII.20-25; II.27/25; V.12/15). Since Muhammad claims to have a place in the prophetic succession he also is under the *mithaq* (XXXIII.7),³¹ and so consequently is his community (LVII.8).

(b) *'ahd* is related to the verb *'ahida* "to enjoin," "to stipulate," which in the III. Form is used to mean "to make a covenant with." It is used in the Qur'an of covenants among men (II.177/172; III.76/70; XXIII.8; XIII.20; XVII.34/36; LXX.32), of Muhammad's compacts with his contemporaries (XXXIII.15,23; II.100/94; IX.12), and of covenants men might make with Allah (XIX.78/81,87/90). In this last case the word has already begun to take on a religious rather than a secular sense (cf. XLVIII.10; IX.75/76). It is more generally used in the Qur'an, precisely as *mithaq* is used, for the covenant relation entered into by communities with Allah through the messages sent to them by the messengers.³² It is in this sense that Allah is said to be faithful to His covenants (IX.111/112; II.80/74), that there is reproof for the ancient communities because Allah found them not following their covenant (VII.102/100), and men are reproofed for their evil ways since it was enjoined on them in their covenant not to serve Satan (XXXVI.60). It was in this sense that some among the audience answered back to Muhammad and told him that their covenant with Allah bade them accept no messenger unless he presented a sacrifice which fire from heaven devoured (III.183/179).

(2) In VI.189 after a list of the messengers who in times past had had the covenant with Allah and had been sent to their communities, we read: "these are they to whom We gave the *kitab*, the *hukm* and the *nubuwwa*."³³

(a) *Kitab*, as we have already seen, is the normal word for Scripture, so it is clear that the message, the "word" (*kalima*) of XXXVII.171, is thought of as connected with the Book. It is true that we are not expressly told of each messenger or prophet mentioned in the Qur'an that he had a Book, but we have the general statement that when Allah sent prophets to announce good tidings and to warn, He sent down Scripture with them (II.213/209; XXXV.25/23; XL.70/72; LVII.25).³⁴ This Scripture was given them *bi'l-haqq* that they might decide among the people on matters wherein they differed (II.213/209). Furthermore, LVII.26 states that it is particularly the progeny of Noah and Abraham who are concerned with the receiving of Scripture (cf. IV.54/57) and we have already noticed that these are the families specially associated with the gift of prophecy.

The *kitab* is given to the chosen messengers by revelation (IV.163/161; XXL.7,25; XVI.43/45; XI.36/38; XIV.13/16; XII.109). The mechanism of revelation we shall have to investigate later on, the point of interest at the moment is that the terms used for Allah's process of revealing His message to His messengers are precisely the same as those used for the revealing of Scripture.

(b) *hukm* in this connection means "jurisdiction." The word is used frequently in the Qur'an to mean "judgment" or "decision," as when the ordinance concerning marriage with believing and unbelieving women is called a *hukm* of Allah (LX.10), or when we are told that no man may have part in Allah's judgment (XVIII.26/25). It may even refer to a human decision, as e.g., that of David and Solomon (XXI.78), or that of the Times of Ignorance (V.50/55). In this sense the Torah contains the *hukm* of Allah (V.43/47), and the Qur'an is said to be sent down as an Arabic *hukm* (XIII.37). Since the root HKM also develops the meaning of "wisdom," some have thought that in these latter cases we are to understand the word in this sense, that the Torah and the Qur'an

contain the "wisdom" of Allah, that when Abraham prays for *hukm* to be bestowed on him he is praying for divine wisdom, and that when Allah bestows *hukm* on Joseph (XII.22), on Lot (XXI.74), on Moses (XXVI.21/20; XXVIII.14/53), on David and Solomon (XXI.79), on John Baptist (XIX.12/13) and on Jesus (III.79/73), it was a bestowal of His wisdom. This may be so. Its use along with *kitab* and *nubuwwa* in the three passages already mentioned, however, makes it more likely that when used in connection with the messengers whom Allah sent it refers to the prophetic jurisdiction.

In the ultimate sense final jurisdiction, of course, is with Allah alone (VI.57,62; XII.40,67; XXVIII.70; XL.12), so that when men differ about a matter the decision goes to Him (XLII.10/8; cf. XXVII.78/80). Yet Allah gives delegated authority to His messengers (LIX.6). They come with the truth (VII.43/41,53/51), at their coming to a community judgment is given with justice (X.47/48), and Allah expects that His messengers will be obeyed (IV.64/67).³⁵ Their jurisdiction is associated with Scripture, for we read that the prophets among the Children of Israel gave judgment according to the Torah (V.44/48).

(c) *nubuwwa* is the prophetic office. Those called of Allah are "sent" (XLIII.6/5; XXIII.44/46; XLIV.5/4 and frequently).³⁶ Their mission is twofold, they are to be announcers of good tidings and they are to be warners (II.213/209; VI.48; XVIII.56/54), the former to those who received the message, the latter to those who reject it. They are not responsible for the outcome of their mission, but only for fulfilling it (XXXIII.39) and clearly proclaiming their message (XXXVI.17/16; XVI.35/37; V.99; XXIV.54/53; XXIX.18/17). Allah knows best where to place His messengers (VI.124), and it is for Allah to make a way for the message in the hearts of sinners (XV.12; XXVI.200 and cf. XLIX.7). The message will differ in particulars according to the needs of the community to whom the messenger is sent but the one element common to all the messages was that Allah alone should be worshipped and idolatry shunned (XVI.36/38).

The messengers bring Allah's command (LXV.8), and they make known to men Allah's promises (III.194/192), but the two main functions are those mentioned above, those of

(a) warner - *mundhir* (XXXVII.72/70; IV.165/163; VI.48; XVIII.56/54), or *nadhir* (LIV.5,23,33,41) who bring to men Allah's threat (L.14/13,45) to evil doers and point to the coming judgment (XXXIX.71; VI.130).

(b) preacher - *mubashshir*, "announcer of good tidings" (IV.165/163; VI.48; XVIII.56/54), or *bashir* (V.19/22; VII.188; XI.2. cf. XII.96), setting forth Allah's signs for men to follow (XX.134),³⁷ and teaching men Scripture (II.129/123).³⁸

For their accreditation they bring from Allah clear evidentiary proofs (*bayyinat*). A *bayyina* may mean nothing more than something which makes clear. Allah's judgments on former peoples are a *bayyina* (XXIX.35/34). False gods have no Scripture which contains a *bayyina* (XXXV.40/38). What was revealed in previous Scriptures was a *bayyina* for men (XX.133), and so Muhammad's own message is referred to as a *bayyina* (II.209/205; VI.157/158; XXIX.49/48). The word, however, is also used for a miracle. Moses' nine miracles are called *bayyinat* (XVII.101/103), and Salih's miraculously produced she-camel is a *bayyina* (VII.73/71). So when the messengers are said to have come with *bayyinat* as well as Scripture (III.184/181; XXXV.25/23), and Allah declares that He has sent as messengers none but inspired men with their *bayyinat* (XVI.44/46), we are justified in deciding that the *bayyinat* with which several messengers are said to have come (VII.101/99; IX.70/71; IX.13/14,74/75; XIV.9/10; XXX.9/8; XXXV.25/23) were the miracles they performed in justification of their mission.³⁹ As such these miracles are also called *ayat* "signs" (XL.78; XXI.5; VI.109,124; XVII.59/61). The messenger does not himself choose the type of miracle he will produce, but Allah bestows the power of producing them when and how He sees fit (XIV.11/13), for such things of wonder are in the power of Allah alone (XXIX.50/49; VI.109) and may be wrought only by His express permission.

The fulfilling of the mission was no easy task. No messenger was ever sent but he was mocked at by his contemporaries (XV.1; XLIII.7/6; XXXVI.30/29). Men scoffed at them (XXI.41/42; XI.38/40; XIII.32), treated them as impostors (LXVII.9; L.12 ff.; XV.80; X.39/40; XXXVIII.14/13; XXIII.44/46),⁴⁰ argued with them to refute their message (XL.5; XVIII.56/54), thought their pretensions an example of insolence (LIV.25), taunted them that they were only human (XXXVI.15/14; XXIII.33/34 ff.,47/49; XXI.3), said they were possessed (LI.52), and not content with opposing them (LXV.8), tried to lay violent hands on them (LX.5; III.183/180). The Jews in particular are upbraided for having killed the prophets unjustly (II.61/58,91/85; III.21/20,112/108,181/177; IV.155/154). The miracles they produced as evidentiary signs were considered as impostures (LIV.42; XVII.59/61), or as the products of magic (LIV.2). The Satans endeavored to lead them astray from their mission (XXII 52/51), and we read that Allah appointed a special enemy to every prophet (XXV.31/33; VI.112).

We thus have a fairly clear picture of Muhammad's conception of the prophetic office of those messengers into whose fellowship he felt that he had been brought by his "call." But who were the prophets in whose succession he made claim to stand?

Nowhere in the Qur'an do we find any statement of the number and order of the prophet succession from Adam to Muhammad himself. Muhammad thought of them as a numerous body. Sura XLIII.6/5 reflects on how many a prophet Allah had sent to those of old, and Moses is represented as bidding the Children of Israel remember Allah's goodness in appointing prophets to be among them (V.20/23, cf. 32/36), a statement which assumes that there were a number anterior to Moses.⁴¹ That others were raised up later than Moses is clear from (II.87/81), and it was in the footsteps of these that Jesus walked (V.46/50)). The *Ahl al-Kitab*, i.e., the Jews and the Christians, know about these messengers (XXI.7; XVI.43/45), and think that the succession has already reached its end (V.19/22). Muhammad knows that though he has learned about the stories of a number of them yet there are some about whom he has no information (XL.78; IV.164/162). No list that we could derive from the Qur'an would thus be, even for Muhammad, a complete list, but such lists as we find are highly significant for our attempt to understand what the prophetic office meant to him.

The earliest passage which provides such a list is Sura XIX, where we have the stories of a number of messengers whom Allah chose and guided and sent. In this appear Zechariah and his son John Baptist, Jesus, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Ishmael, Idris and Noah. In II.136/130 we have mention first of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and "the Tribes,"⁴² as those to whom a message had been "sent down," and then Moses, Jesus and the prophets as those to whom something had been given. This list is repeated in III.84/78. In III.33/30 is the list of those whom Allah "chose" for his special service, namely Adam, Noah, Abraham's family and 'Imran's family,⁴³ all of whom are in family succession from one another. Sura LVII.26,27 makes the succession start with Noah and Abraham, then the messengers followed in their footsteps and finally Jesus in those of the messengers. The list in IV.163/161 also begins with Noah who was followed by the prophets, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Tribes, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, David, and then in the next verse Moses. The longest lists are those in VI.84-89 and XXI.48/49-91. In the former we find Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zechariah, John Baptist, Jesus, Elijah, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot. In the latter occur the names of Moses and Aaron, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Lot, Noah, David and Solomon, Job, Ishmael, Idris, Dhu'l-Kifl, Jonah, Zechariah and John Baptist, the Virgin Mary and Jesus. Finally in XXXIII.7 where Muhammad includes himself in the list of those with whom Allah made this strict covenant, the others are, the prophets, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus.

Apart from these lists we read elsewhere in the Qur'an of one Hud, who was sent to the ancient people of 'Ad, of Salih, who was sent to the people of Thamud, of Shu'aib, who was sent to the folk of Midian, and that is the complete list of the messengers mentioned by name in the Qur'an.⁴⁴

The most obvious thing about the personages in these lists is that they are almost all Biblical characters. Many Western scholars, indeed, have endeavored to make all of them Biblical characters. Idris is generally identified with Enoch, though Torrey would make him Esdras or Ezra. Dhu'l-Kifl has been thought to be Ezekiel or Obadiah. This name, which occurs in XXI.85 and XXXVIII.48, means "he of the portion," and may be but another name for Elijah, just as Jonah, who is usually called Yunus, in XXI.87 is called Dhu'n-Nun, "he of the fish." Shu'aib has often been equated with Jethro in view of his association with Midian, and with less likelihood Hud with Eber and Salih with Salah the father of Eber. In any case Muhammad's tradition about the succession of messengers would, as far as the lists go, quite clearly derive from the Jewish and Christian groups of his day. What is more striking, however, is that when we examine in detail the pattern of his teaching about these messengers and their mission we are at every point taken back to these same groups.

1. The Patriarchs as Prophets.

To us it seems a little strange to consider Adam as a prophet, but Clement of Alexandria commenced the prophetic line with the father of mankind, regarding him as a prophet "who spoke prophetically with regard to the woman and in the giving of names to creatures" (*Strom.* I.21). This was a notion he derived from Jewish sources⁴⁵ for it occurs in Philo's *Quis Rer. Div. Haeres*, 51, in the *Seder Olam Rabba*, XXI (ed. Ratner, p. 91) and the *Zohar* I. 125 a. Origen repeats it in *De Principis*, I,iii,6 (ed. Koetschau, V.58) and *In Cant. ii* (ed. Lommatzsch, XIV.418), and it is often referred to in the later literature.⁴⁶ It was doubtless under the influence of this idea that the various "Books of Adam" later came into circulation. Jewish sources similarly stress the prophetic activity of Noah (*Jubilees*, VIII.18; *Seder Olam Rabba*, XXI, ed. Ratner, p. 92; Philo *Quis Rer. Div. Haeres*, 52), and in this are followed by Christian writers (Clem. Alex. *Strom* I.,21; Theophilus ad *Autol.* iii,19), so that it is not surprising that we find "Books of Noah" in circulation.⁴⁷ Clement of Alexandria in the passage above quoted adds Abraham, Isaac and Jacob among those who prophesied, apparently reproducing an earlier Jewish idea that all the Patriarchs were prophets and consequently had books.⁴⁸

2. The Covenant with the Prophets.

That God had a covenant with the Patriarchs is a notion fundamental to the theology both of the Old and of the New Testaments. The covenant with the prophets as a body was but an extension of this, an extension which may very well have been suggested by the fact that Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, whom XXXIII.7 specially mentions in connection with Allah's strict covenant, are all figures prominently connected with covenant relations in the Scriptures of the older religions.⁴⁹

The illuminating passage with regard to this covenant is Sura III.81/75. There we read of a particular occasion on which Allah laid on the prophets as a whole the covenant obligation that in return for His giving them Scripture (*kitab*) and wisdom (*hikma*) they would promise that when a messenger came confirming what they had from Him they would believe in him and aid him. That was the condition on which they were to take up their task, and when they assented Allah promised that He would be with them. Obviously Muhammad is here referring to his own claim to be in the prophetic succession. He is the one who comes "confirming" what was sent to the earlier messengers,⁵⁰ and verse 85/79 expressly links this passage with his religion of Islam. On the surface it would seem absurd that the prophets, who were all dead long before Muhammad was born, should be called on to make a promise that when he did appear they would believe on him and aid him, so the Commentators have had to work out ingenious theories to explain that covenants with prophets included their followers, or that "prophets" in this passage does not mean the actual prophets but the descendants of the prophets, or that here it means the Jews, since they claimed that the gift of prophecy was found only among them.⁵¹ The fact, however, is that in this verse we have a reflection of the popular Jewish legend that all the Patriarchs and the

prophets were assembled at Sinai, both those who had been and those who were to come to witness the giving of the Torah to Moses, since the Torah was *the* great covenant of God with His people,⁵² and there Moses is told that the perfect successor he desires will not come till the end of time when he will come as Messiah.⁵³

Now Sura II.129/123 speaks of Abraham praying that Allah would raise up among the Arabs a prophet who would rehearse to them His signs, teach them the Scriptures (*kitab*) and wisdom (*hikma*) and purify them. Muhammad's claim is that he is the answer to this prayer, since he is the Arab prophet sent with an Arabic Scripture to warn Mecca and the places thereabout (XLII.7/5). Consequently he claims that his coming was foretold in previous Scriptures (VII.157/156; LXI.6)⁵⁴ that he is in a particular sense in the Abrahamic succession (III.68/61),⁵⁵ so that he is the one who has the *kitab* and the *hikma* (IV.113), who has come to purify them (LXII.2; II.151/146; III.164/158). This is conclusive evidence that he has heard of this Messianic expectation⁵⁶ among the People of the Book, and being convinced by his own experience of a call that he is to bring to his people the religion of the *Ahl al-Kitab*, he identified himself with this expected figure, and so included himself in XXXIII.7 among those under the prophetic covenant.

3. The Prophetic Succession.

That God, before sending chastisement upon the nations, gives them due warning by the mouth of His messengers, is clear enough from the messages of the Old Testament prophets. That there was a planned succession of such messengers was a later idea. The basis for it is in the Old Testament. There we find that such a prophetic order was not confined to the Children of Israel. God raised up prophets to bear His message also among the Gentile peoples. The most famous of these in the eyes of the later Rabbis were Balaam and Job⁵⁷ and his friends. Nor was the mission of the Jewish prophets confined to their own communities for Jonah was sent to Nineveh, Obadiah to Edom, and the messages of the greater prophets were often enough addressed to the surrounding nations. Later Jewish piety was anxious to confine the prophetic gift to its own people, so that on the one hand we find attempts to show that the Gentile prophets were somehow connected with the Israelitish community, and on the other hand, the theory worked out to show how the gift was withdrawn from the Gentiles and after the death of Moses was confined exclusively to Israel.⁵⁸ Nevertheless God's message through His prophets was intended for the seventy Gentile nations also, so the Torah was written out in their seventy different languages,⁵⁹ was interpreted by Moses in seventy tongues,⁶⁰ while the prophets preached their messages in seventy languages.⁶¹ There was also an idea of some plan of a succession among the prophets, for the Rabbis told how Adam was shown the series of prophets who should come each in his generation.⁶²

The universal outreach of the messengers appeared again in Christianity, for Jesus in the Gospels sends out the Seventy to preach his message (Lk. X.1,17). Early Christian legend delighted to elaborate on the missionary activity of the Seventy as they moved out into the various lands allotted to them as the scene of their labors.⁶³ In consideration of the gift of tongues at Pentecost it was taken for granted that they would be able to preach in the various tongues of the peoples to whom they were sent. These apocryphal Acts of the Apostles were widely read among the adherents of the Eastern Churches,⁶⁴ so that Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 203, has suggested that it was from them that Muhammad learned the idea of a messenger being sent to each people. A much closer parallel with the Quranic teaching on this matter is that of Mani, who not only sent his apostles as messengers to the peoples of the surrounding countries, but himself in his address to the Sasanian monarch Shapur I in his Shah purqan, as quoted by Biruni (*Chronologie*, ed. Sachau, p. 207), said:—

"Wisdom and mighty deeds have always been brought to mankind by messengers coming from time to time from God. So in one age they were brought to India by the messenger named Buddha, in another by Zarathushtra to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. So

now this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age, through me, Mani, the messenger of the God of truth to Babylonia."

4. The humanness of the Messengers.

It is curious how often the Qur'an mentions men's expectation that a messenger from God ought to have been an angel (XVII.92/94,94/96; VI.8,9; XXIII.24), against which expectation Muhammad feels the necessity of constantly asserting that they are always humans (XXI.7,8; XXV.20/22; XVII.93/95-95/97; XIV.11/13; XII.109; VII.35/33), though of course Allah can choose His messengers from among angels or men (XXII.75/74), and angels do mediate revelation (XVI.2). This expectation of angels as messengers may have something to do with the

fact that Heb. *mal'ak* and Aram. *mal'aak*, like the Gk. ἄγγελος, are both "messenger" and "angel." Yet there is also the fact that angels as God's messengers to bring messages and revelations are well known in both the Old and the New Testaments. It was an angel who came to the wife of Manoah (Judg. XIII.2 ff.), angels came to Lot (Gen. XIX), one to Gideon at Ophrah (Judg. VI.11 ff.), and it was Gabriel who appeared both to Daniel (Dan. IX-XII) and to the Virgin Mary (Lk. I.30 ff.).

The prophets of the Old Testament, however, were men with human imperfections and limitations. They were sent (Jer. XIV.15; XXIII.21,32; XXIX.19; Ezek. II.3; Isa. VI.8; Jonah III.1-3; Chron. XXXVI.15), just as Muhammad insists that prophets are sent (XLIII.6/5; XXIII.32/33 etc.). Also as Muhammad insists they are in the Bible always *servants* (Jer. XXIX.1-9; II Ki. IX.7; XVII.13,23; XXI.10; XXIV.2; Ezra IX.11; Amos III.7; Dan. IX.6; Ezek. XXXV.17; Jer. VII.25; XXV.4; XXXV.15), in whose mouths God has put His word (Jer. I.9; XXIII.16; Zech. VIII.9), that may warn (Jer. VI.10; XLIV. 4-14; Ezek. II.1-7; III.18,19; IXXXIV,XXXV; Acts XX.31). They give good tidings (Isa. XL; XLI.27; LV; LX-LXII; Nah. I.15),⁶⁵ they even reveal where necessary God's secret knowledge (Amos III.7). Their utterances, because they are human and deal with human situations, commonly make use of parables (Ezek. XXIV.3; XVII.2; XX.49 [in the Heb. XXI.5; Lk V.36; Mk. IV.13] where the Heb. word *mashal*

and the Aramaic word underlying the Gk. παραβολή are precisely the *mathal* used in the Qur'an for the similitudes employed by Allah's messengers. Indeed we learn from Hosea XII.10 (11) that similitudes were to be expected from prophets, who are always sent in the language of their own people (Ezek. III.5,6).

5. The Accreditation of the Messengers.

We have already noticed that some of Muhammad's audience averred that they could credit no messengers who did not cause fire to descend from heaven on a sacrifice (III.183/179). The reference is usually taken to be to the Elijah story of I Ki. XVIII, though the same idea is present in the Gideon story in Judges VI.17-24. In any case it is sure evidence of the presence in that audience of conceptions derived from the Old Testament, and since the Meccans seem to be well aware that all the messengers of old produced signs (XXI.5; VI.124), it would seem that the *Ahl al-kitab* of Muhammad's day had made so much of the miraculous in association with the messengers that when folk heard Muhammad claiming a place in the prophetic succession they immediately demanded a miracle as his credential (XX.133; XXI.5; XVII.90/92 ff.; X.20/21; VI.37,109).⁶⁶ To this his answer is that when such signs were granted to the peoples of old they did not believe in them (XVII.59/61; cf. VI.109). This demand was no new thing. When Jesus was preaching his Gospel he was asked: "What sign shewest thou, that we may see and believe thee? What workest thou?" (Jn. VI.30, cf. Matt. XII.38; XVI.1; Lk. XI.16). Such a request was not unnatural in that audience. They had read of how Moses was given his rod for the special purpose of working with it signs in accreditation of his mission (Exod. IV.17), being told when it was given him that if the Egyptians did not believe at the first sign maybe they would at the second (Exod. IV.8). Aaron also, they would remember, had performed signs (Exod. IV.30;

VII.9), and the man out of Judah in the story in I Ki.XIII produced a sign in attestation of his mission. That signs and wonders could be expected of prophets whether true or false was the common belief (Deut. XIII.1-5). Jesus warned that the false prophets who should come would show great signs such as might deceive even the elect (Matt. XXIV.24) and the Rabbis used to say that when a prophet came and began to prophesy, if he produced a sign or wonder men would hearken, but if he did not men would not hearken (*Sifre* Deut.XVIII 19, §177). The apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are full of stories of the miracles which the disciples of Jesus performed in attestation of their mission in the various lands to which they were sent.

Muhammad's usual word for such an evidentiary sign is *aya*, which is the Arabic equivalent of the Heb. *oth* and the Aram. *atha* used of the signs which in a special way were associated with God's messengers and His revelation to them.⁶⁷ His other common word *bayyanat* is formed from the verbal stem *bayyana*, "to make clear," "cause to understand," the Hebrew equivalent of which is the Hiphil form *hebin*, used in the Old Testament in precisely the same sense, and in particular in connection with God's making clear His and purpose to men.⁶⁸

6. The Reckoning with the Messengers.

It was doubtless a natural thing in the Courts of human kings that those who had been entrusted with a mission should be called on to render an account of their performance of that mission, which would suggest that the King of Kings would demand a reckoning both from His messengers and from those communities to whom they had been sent. There are two parables of Jesus (Lk. XVI.1-12 and XIX.12-26) which picture the master demanding an accounting from his stewards to whom he has committed his wealth, and in both there is an obvious reference to a coming accounting with God. The Grand Assizes at the Last Day is an appropriate place for this, so that such Quranic references as V.109/108; VII.6/5 to an accounting of this kind on the Day of Judgment might be part of any picture of the final Assizes. When we consider other passages, however, such as LXXVII.11; XVI.89/91; XXXIX.69 ff., which suggest that the accounting on the Day begins with the summoning of the prophets to bear witness,⁶⁹ the parallels with *aboda zara* 2a - 3b are so striking that we can hardly avoid Tor Andrae's conclusion⁷⁰ that both are the product of the same conception of the meaning of revelation from God and the responsibility on man's part to respond to its message when it is brought to him.

We thus come at the conclusion of our second study on the Qur'an as Scripture to the same point we reached in the first. In carrying through the mission to which he felt he was called Muhammad knew that he must have a Scripture such as the *Ahl al-Kitab* had, and from those *Ahl al-Kitab* he took over a theory as to the nature of Scripture. Scripture, however, was mediated through human messengers sent from God, the prophets to whom God had given revelation. The *Ahl al-Kitab* had a theory also about prophets and their mission, a sort of "Doctrine of Prophecy," and it is now clear why in such passages as XVI.43/45; XXI.7 he bids the Arabs ask the *Ahl al-Kitab* about the prophets. They would obviously tell the same story as he has been telling for he has taken over their pattern in this matter as he has thought out his own justification of his mission to his people.

Notes

¹ The relevant passages are assembled by J. Horowitz in his *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin, 1926.

² See Rengstorff in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, I, 406-434. From Epictetus

Diss. III, 22 we see that ἀποστῆλλειν was used in this sense as early as the Cynics, for they considered themselves to be "sent" to be the "messengers, intelligence officers and heralds of the gods."

³ See my *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, p. 276.

⁴ See A. Jepsen, *Nabi, soziologische Studien zur alttestamentlichen Literatur und Religionsgeschichte*, (1934). pp. 154 ff.; 191 ff.

⁵ Micah, it will be remembered, complains (III.11) of the prophets who so lower themselves as to divine for money: cf. Jer. XIV.14; XXIX.8; Mic. III.6.

⁶ Jepsen, *op. cit.* p. 10; Torczyner in *ZDMG*, LXXXV, p. 312.

⁷ Good illustrations of this are given in Guillaume's *Prophecy and Divination among the Hebrews and other Semites*, London, 1938.

⁸ A suggestion that fulfillment of prediction was the mark of a true prophet is already given in Jer. XXVIII.9.

⁹ See also I Ki. XXII.5-28; I Sam. IX.9.

¹⁰ I Macc. IV.46; IX.27; XIV.41; cf. Ps. LXXIV.9; I Sam.III.1; Lam. II.9.

¹¹ At times the bystanders also were affected by the psychical disturbance, though unaware just what it was that the prophet was experiencing. In the story of Daniel we read: "I Daniel alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide selves" (Dan. X.7). This reminds us of the experience of Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, where his companions stood speechless with amazement at the psychic manifestation, though they knew nothing of the "call" it gave to him (Acts IX.7).

¹² Seers are mentioned along with Diviners in the Zakir inscription, (Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* III.8). In II Sam. XXIV.11 the prophet Gad is called David's Seer; cf. II Ki. XVII.13; Hab. I.1.

¹³ Deut. XIII.1 ff. does not necessarily mean that the dreamer of dreams is to be distinguished from the true prophet, though it is clear from as far back as Early Sumeria that it was thought that revelations by way of dreams might come to others than prophets.

¹⁴ E.g., the messengers from Saul in the story in I Sam. XIX.20 were as unlikely persons as one could imagine, yet on their mission to apprehend David, when they came upon Samuel and the prophets prophesying the spirit suddenly seized them also so that they prophesied.

¹⁵ Bukhari, *Sahih*, I.4, 389, 447; Abo Dawud, *Sunan*, I.392.

¹⁶ Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, p. 151; *Musnad Ahmad*, VI.153; Bukhari, *Sahih*, III.380, 381.

¹⁷ Bukhari, *Sahih*, IV.348, 350; *Musnad Ahmad*, I.315.

¹⁸ *Sharh at-Tahawiya fi'l-'Aqa'id as-Salafiya*, p. 89; *Hashiyat al-Baijuri* p. 135; *Sharh at-Taftazani 'ala'l-'Aqa'id an-Nasafiya*, p. 30 (with the super-commentaries of al-Khayali and al-'Assam on the same page); *Sharh Abi Mansur 'ala 'l-Fiqh al-Akbar*, p. 26.

¹⁹ This is contrary to Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, p. 203, who has transferred the later theory of the theologians to the Qur'an.

²⁰ There is teaching (*'ibra*) in the phenomena of cattle (XVI.66/68; XXIII.21), in the succession of day and night (XXIV.44), in the histories of the messengers (XII.111), in the stories of the dire punishment visited by Allah on various peoples (LXXI X.26), and even in the events of the battle of Badr (III.13/11).

²¹ Cf. al-Jaza'iri in G. F. Pijper's *De Edelgesteenten der Geloofsleer*, Leiden, 1948, p. 17; Ibn Sa'd *Tabaqat*, I.1,26; *Musnad Ahmad* V.178,179; at-Tayalisi, *Musnad*, No. 479.

²² The fact that in XIX.58/59 the prophets are said to have been of the posterity of Adam is not significant in this connection, for it need mean nothing more than that as humans they were naturally children of Adam.

²³ The Exegetes make V.25 also refer to Noah, for the "balance" mentioned in that verse they regard as our well known instrument for weighing but which was unknown to mankind till Gabriel instructed Noah in its use and Noah instructed his posterity.

²⁴ "A big point was made of this in the later theological writings, which insisted that men might attain high positions of power, wealth, learning and even sanctity by their own efforts, but no man by his own efforts could ever attain the office of prophet. For that office Allah chose whom He would, perhaps a person of no learning or position or significance in human eyes, but whom He saw was the one best fitted to bear His message at that particular time to that particular group. It is noteworthy how often the word "chosen" (XIX.58/59) is used in connection with these messengers.

²⁵ Apparently there were some in his audiences who wished to believe in certain of the messengers but not in others (IV.150/149). One supposes that Muhammad is referring here to those who believed in earlier prophets but refused to believe in him, but the position he consistently takes is that belief in the whole succession of messengers is what is required of men who would follow the "way of God" (II.285; III.179/174; IV.136/135,150/149,152/151,171/169).

²⁶ Emphasis is laid on the fact that Allah always makes good His promises to His messengers (XXI.9; XIV.47/48) and on how when they are in distress and despair, He comes to their aid (XII.110).

²⁷ There is a curious suggestion in LXXII.27,28 that when Allah has revealed the message to a messenger, He sets angelic guards to see that the message is delivered.

²⁸ There is a suggestion that a special time is assigned to the Messengers on the Day, when they will be called to a reckoning and have to give an account of their mission (LXXVII.15; XVI.89/95; XXXIX.69-71 and cf. V.109/108).

²⁹ Some details are given of the content of the covenant with the Children of Israel (II.83/77 ff.; IV.154/153; V.12/15 ff.) which make it clear that Muhammad has in mind the Mosaic Law. This Jewish covenant is associated with revelation in II.63/60,93/87; V.70/74.

³⁰ Which suggests that II.27/25; V.7/10 were addressed to the Jews.

³¹ This explains why in III.81/75 he insists that part of the covenant with the prophets was that when he appeared to preach his mission their communities should recognize his claim to be in the succession and should aid him.

³² Covenant with the Children of Israel is particularly mentioned in II.40/38,80/74, and with the *Ahl al-Kitab* in general in III.76/70 ff.

³³ These three terms occur together again in XLV.16/15 where all three are said to have been bestowed on the Children of Israel, and in III.79/73, where it is said that it is unseemly for a man on whom Allah has bestowed *kitab* and *hukm* and *nubuwwa* to claim that men should worship (or serve) him instead of Allah.

³⁴ And compare III.184/185; XVI.43/45 ff.; II.136/130.

³⁵ This may be the meaning of the statement that Allah never sends a prophet to a people but He afflicts that people (VII.94/92; VI.42,43).

³⁶ Two different verbs are used *arsala* and *ba'atha*, but apparently they are used interchangeably. Thus *arsala* is used of the sending of Moses in XI.96/99, but *ba'atha* in VII.103/101.

³⁷ This is commonly referred to as "rehearsing" Allah's signs (XXVIII.45,59; XXXIX.75; VII.35/33; VI.130; II.129/123).

³⁸ This is said to "purify" men (II.129/123).

³⁹ This was the accepted theory of the later theologians who devoted much space to the discussion of miracles as evidentiary signs of the prophets. See *Sharh, al-Tahawiya*, 81 ff., *Sharh Abi'l-Muntaha 'ala 'Fiqh al-Akbar*, p. 31; al-Jaza'iri in Pijper's *Geloofsleer*, pp. 18-20; Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, p. 224.

⁴⁰ Cf. V.70/74; XXIX 18/17; XXXV1 14/13.

⁴¹ Since the verse 20/23 goes on to mention the appointing of kings some have thought that the reference is to the prophets and kings whom God has appointed to come in the future to the Israelites. In XL.31/32-34/36, however, we find that the Egyptian at Pharaoh's Court, who supported Moses there, is represented as knowing that messengers had been sent to early communities such as those of Noah, 'Ad and Thamud, and that Joseph had brought *bayyinat* to the Egyptians themselves.

⁴² In my *Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, pg. 57, I was inclined to favor the view that there was in this use of "the Tribes" a confusion between the twelve tribes and the "Twelve" as a name for the Minor Prophets, among whom was the Jonah who is mentioned in the Qur'an. It seems more likely, however, that it means "the Patriarchs," the twelve sons of Jacob, who in later Jewish thought were included among the prophets, and who even had a "Book," the well known Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

⁴³ By the well known confusion of Miriam the sister of Moses and Aaron with Miriam (= Mary) the mother of Jesus, the latter comes to belong to the family of Imran.

⁴⁴ "Two other lists should be mentioned which, though they are not strictly lists of messengers, are connected therewith for they are lists of ancient peoples who rejected their messengers. One such list is an interpolation in Sura L, where it now forms verses 12-14/13, and the other is in IX.70/71. The former lists the people of Noah, the men of ar-Rass, Thamud, 'Ad, Pharaoh, the brothers of Lot, the men of the Grove, and the people of Tubba'. The latter enumerates the people of Noah, 'Ad, Thamud, the people of Abraham, those of Midian and of the overthrown cities. The "overthrown cities" are Sodom and Gomorrah, in all probability, and so their prophet would be Lot. The "men of the Grove" are the Midianites of the Shu'aib story. Pharaoh's people, of course, had the message from Moses and Aaron. The men of ar-Rass are mentioned again in XXV.38/40, along with 'Ad and Thamud, as people of ancient times, but we have no idea who they were, nor who was the prophet Hanzala who later tradition says was sent to them. The people of Tubba' are the Himyarites of South Arabia, who are mentioned again in XLIV 37/36, but nothing is said as to their prophet, who some think is meant by the name Tubba', the people being so called because they were the people to whom he was sent. Ezra is mentioned in IX.30 and would be classed by us among the prophets, but the Muslim Commentators are doubtful whether he belongs to the prophet succession, as they are about the Luqman who appears in Sura XXXI, and the Dhu'l-Qarnain of Sura XVIII.

⁴⁵ In the Zoroastrian *Videvdat*, ii. Ahura Mazda revealed his law to the first man Yima and wanted him to promulgate it as the first prophet, but Yima was unwilling.

⁴⁶ Cf. Moses bar Kepha. *Comm. de Paradiso*, I .28; the Clementines *Homil.* III.21 (ed. Schwegler. p. 95); *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 62 (ed. Casey, p. 82); Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 14 of the Syriac text.

⁴⁷ Such passages as Jub. VI.35; VIII.11; X.13 connect Noah with written documents. A fragment of a "Book of Noah" is printed by Jellinek in his *Bet Hammidrash*, III.155-160.

⁴⁸ The idea is implicit in Ps. CV.15. Cf. also Philo *Quaest in Gen.* I,87, and Ratner's note to *Seder Olam Rabba*, XXI. That they had revelation given to them is often mentioned, e.g., *Mekilta de R. Shim'on*, 170,171. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Testament of Abraham* are well known pseudepigraphal books, but we also have Christian apocalypses of Isaac and Jacob, and the above mentioned *Testaments of*

the Twelve Patriarchs purports to derive from the sons of Jacob. It is curious that in *Test. Zeb.* IX.5 we have a tradition that Zebulun possessed the writings of the earlier Patriarchs.

⁴⁹ On the covenant idea see P. Karge, *Geschichte des Bundesgedankens im Alten Testament*, and Behm and Quell in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, II.105-137. For the covenant with Noah see Gen. IX.12; for that with Abraham Gen. XVII.7; for Moses and the covenant Exod. XXXIV.28; Deut. IX.9,11; and for Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. XII.24.

⁵⁰ II.101/95; XXXVII.37/36; cf. X37/38; VI.92; XXXV.31/28; III.3/2; V.48/52, and notice in this connection V.15/18; XVI.44/46,64/66.

⁵¹ See the Commentaries of Tabari, Qurtubi and Baidawi *ad loc.*, and the discussion in al-Alusi's *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, III.184 ff.

⁵² It is so called in Deut.IX.9-11.

⁵³ A simple statement of this legend may be read in Ginzberg's [Legends of the Jews](#), III.398.

⁵⁴ This latter is the famous Paraclete passage where the promise of the Paraclete in Jn. XVI.7 ff. is taken to be a prediction of the coming of Muhammad. It will be remembered that there was persistent tradition that Mani had much earlier identified his coming with the promise of the Paraclete (*Fihrist*, pp. 328,333; Al-Biruni *Chronologie*, p. 207; Augustine, *C. Felice*, ix; Schmidt, *Manifund*, pp. 55,56), and that the Montanists taught that the Paraclete had manifested himself in Montanus (Eusebius. *Hist Eccl.* V. 14), so that while the Old Testament and the New Testament were for the childhood and youth of religion respectively, this new revelation through Montanus was for the maturity of religion (Tertullian, *de Vel. Virg.* 1; *de Monog.* 14; *de Pudicit.* 21; Gregory Naz. *Orat.* XII, chap.11).

⁵⁵ Cf. VI.161/162; XVI.123/124; IX.113/114 ff.

⁵⁶ Though there was a consciousness among the Jews that prophecy had ceased (Ps.LXXIV.9; Zech. XIII.2; Josephus *C. Apion*, I.8; Sanh. 11a; *Tosephta Sota* XIII.2; I Macc. IX.27), there was an expectation that it would appear among them again (I Macc. IV.46; XIV.41; *Orac. Sibyl.* III.78; *Test.Benj.* IX.2) and the time of its reappearance would be in the Messianic age (Joel III.1; *Numb. Rabba*, XV), when a new Torah would be revealed (Jellinek, *Bet Hammidrash*, III.27-28). It will be remembered how this expectation appears in the Gospels (Jn. I.21; Lk. III.15), where Jesus is constantly spoken of as a prophet, and in the stories in Josephus of pretenders to the prophetic office with Messianic claims who all had a considerable following (Theudas: *Ant.* XX,V,1; the Egyptian: *Bell.Jud.* II.xiii,5). The more famous Bar Cochba stood in the same succession.

⁵⁷ In this connection it is of interest to note that Muhammad knows of both Balaam (VII.176/175) and Job (XXXVIII.41/40; IV.163/161; XXI.83,84).

⁵⁸ *Numb. Rabba*. XX.1; *Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, IV.132; *Baba bathra*, 15a - 15b; *Mekilta*, ed. Lauterbach. I, p. 4. Muhammad found the Jews of Arabia claiming this exclusive possession of revelation and for that reason rejecting his claims (II.91/85; III.73/66 and cf. II.135/129).

⁵⁹ From a calculation of the progeny of Noah as detailed in Gen.X it was held that there were seventy-two (or seventy) different nations and consequently seventy-two (or seventy) languages. That the Torah was in them all appears from the statement of *Sota* VII.5.

⁶⁰ See Ginzberg. [Legends of the Jews](#), III.439.

⁶¹ *Aggadath Bereshith*, XIV (ed. Buber, p. 32).

⁶² *Seder Olam Rabba*, XXX (ed. Ratner. p. 151).

⁶³ The material has been conveniently assembled by Lipsius, *Die apocryphen Apostelgeschichten*, 1884. A convenient tabulation of the various areas of their missionary activity is given by Solomon of Basra in chapter XLVIII of his *Book of the Bee*, the Syriac text of which was edited by E. A. Wallis Budge in 1886 for the *Anecdota Oxoniensa*.

⁶⁴ A characteristic sample of these legends is that in the Ethiopic *Gadla Hawaryat* (Contendings of the Apostles), edited by E. A. Wallis Budge in 1898 a cheap edition of the English translation of which is published by the Oxford University Press (London 1935).

⁶⁵ That prophets should be joyful persons was a theory of the Rabbis who held that the spirit of prophecy would come upon a Seer only when he was in a state of joyfulness. See on this Ginzberg, [Legends](#), II.116.

⁶⁶ Cf. in this connection VI.124; XIII.7/8; II.118/112; XXIX.50/49.

⁶⁷ See C. A. Keller, *Das Wort Oth als Offenbarungszeichen*, 1945.

⁶⁸ Ps. CXIX.27,34,73,135,169; Isa. XXVIII.9; Dan. VII.16.

⁶⁹ Pseudo-Ghazzali, *ad-Durra al-fakhira*, pp. 71 ff. makes much of the scene of the prophets being called up and having to confront their respective communities. Cf. also ash-Sha'rani, *Tadhkira*, p. 51.

⁷⁰ *Ursprung*, p. 69. In the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* we have the idea that the ancient worthies Enoch, Shem, Noah, Abraham, etc. rise first at the general resurrection for some sort of confrontation of their communities.

Part III

The Muslim World, Volume 42 (1950), pp. 185-206.

Once a pattern of the nature of the prophetic mission had begun to form in Muhammad's mind, based on what he had learned from the People of the Book, it was but natural that he should develop his thought of his own mission in terms of this pattern of the prophetic succession. As they were warners, so is he a warner (*mundhir*, LXXIX.45; XIII.7/8; XXXVIII.4/3: *nadhir*, LI.50,51; LIII. 56/57; VII.188). As they were preachers of good tidings, so is he a *mubashshir* (XXV.56/58; XVII.105/106; XXXIII.45/44) and a bashir (XI.2; V.19/22; VII.188). As they have the office of witness (*shahid*), so is he a witness from Allah (XI.17/20; XXXIII.45/44). As their coming was a mercy from Allah to mankind, so he is sent as a mercy (XXI.107). As they were sent in the language of the people to whom their mission was, so he is sent with a message in Arabic (XLIV.58; XVI.103/105). As they were told that their responsibility was to proclaim clearly their message, he is told the same thing (III.20/19; V.92/93; XIII.40; LXIV.12). As they brought Allah's commands, so did he (LXV.5). As they pointed to the dread of the coming Day of Judgment, so did he (XXXIX.71; VI.130). As men made mock of them and called them impostors, so they made mock of him (XV.95; XXI.41/42; XXV.41/43; V.57/62), and treated him as an impostor (VI.147/148; III.184/181; XXII.42/43). As men disputed with them about their mission, so did they dispute with him (XXII.3,8,68/67; VI.25; VIII.6), and as men sought to lay violent hands on them, just so did they seek to do to him (XXII.72/71).

What, however, is of more interest to our present study is that the stories of the previous prophets, in whose succession he claims to stand, come to be accommodated to that same pattern. Vague and indefinite figures in the early Meccan passages, their stories gradually take form and as they appear in his later preaching, they tend more and more to fall into a stylized pattern, viz. the pattern which he has as the background of his thought of his own mission.

The Prophets are chosen (XXII.75/74; XXVII.59/60), and so we read that Adam was chosen (XX.122/120), also Noah (III.33/30), Abraham (XVI.121/122; II.130/124), Jacob (XXXVIII.47), Joseph (XII.6), Jonah (LXVIII.50) and Moses (XX.13), while in the passage VI.84-87 Isaac, David, Solomon, Job, Aaron, Ishmael, Lot, Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, John Baptist and his father Zechariah are also enumerated as among those whom Allah chose.¹ Muhammad is, of course, par excellence al-Mustafa. In a very special sense the Prophets are guided (XXXVI.21/20), and so we read of how Adam was guided (XX.122/120), as were Noah (VI.84), Abraham (XXVI.78; VI.80), Moses (XL.53/56), Isaac and Jacob (VI.84), and Jesus (V.46/50). To these the passage VI.84-86 adds Lot, David, Solomon, Job, Aaron, Ishmael, Jonah, Elijah, Elisha, John Baptist and his father Zechariah as those whom Allah guided to a straight path. Muhammad also has this special guidance (XXXIV.50/49; XCIII.7).

As Allah's messengers they were given, as a special grace from their Lord, *bayyinat* (evidentiary signs) (III.183/180), and so we read how Noah had a *bayyina* (XI.28/30), as did Shu'aib (XI.88/90; VIII.85/83), and Hud (IX.70/71), Salih (VII.73/71), Abraham and Lot (IX.70/71), Joseph (XL.34/36), Moses (XVII.101/103; II. 92/86) and Jesus (II.87/81, 253/254). Muhammad, likewise came with *bayyinat* (LXI.6).

The Prophets were *faithful*, so we find this said of Noah (XXVI.107), of Hud (VII.68/66; XXVI.125), of Abraham (LIII.37/38), of Lot (XXVI.162), of Elijah (XXXVII.132), of Salih (XXVI.143) and Shu'aib (XXVI.178), of Joseph (XII.54) and of Moses (XLIV. 18/17; XXVIII.26). In the *Sira* we read how Muhammad was familiarly called by his fellow townsmen *al-Amin*, "the Faithful" (Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, p.125).

In a peculiar sense the Prophets are the "righteous ones" (*Salihun*),² (XXVII.19; XXXVII.100/98; XII.101/102), so this title is found in connection with the stories of Idris (XXI.86), Noah (LXVI.

10), Abraham (II.130/124; XVI.122/123); Lot (XXI.75; LXVI.10),³ Ishmael (XXI.86), Isaac (XXXVII.112), Jacob (XXI.72), Joseph (XII.101/102), Jethro (XXVIII.27), Elijah (VI.85), Dhu 'l-Kifl (XXI.86), Jonah (LXVIII.50), Solomon (XXVII.19), Jesus (VI.85; III.46/41), John Baptist (III.39/34) and his father Zechariah (VI.85).

The messengers come *bi'lhaqq*, "with the truth,"⁴ (II.213/209; VII.43/41), an expression which is often used of Allah's revelation (XLV.29/28; XLII.17/16; XXXIX.41/42, II.213/209), and which we find in connection with the mission of Abraham (XXI.55/56), Moses (II.71/66; XL.25/26) and David (XXXVIII.26/25). So Muhammad is sent *bi'l-haqq* (II.119/113; IV.170/168; XXIII.70/72; XXXV.24/22; XXXVII.37/36).

That Prophets were sent as "warners" to warn their contemporaries, we have already seen (XLVI.21/20; LIV.5; XXXV.24/22). In particular this is said of Hud (XXVI.136), of Salih (LIV.24 25), of Noah (LXXI.2), of Lot (LIV.33), and of course of Muhammad (X.2; VI.51; LXXIV.2). That they were bringers of good tidings is asserted in II.213/209; VI.48, and this is said in particular to have been the mission of Jesus (LXI.6) and of Muhammad (XXV.56/58; XLVIII.8).

As Allah's messengers they can claim obedience, so we find Salih claiming such obedience (XXVI.144, 150), as do Hud (XXVI.126, 131), Noah (LXXI.3; XXVI.110), Shu'aib (XXVI.179), Lot (XXVI.163), Jesus (XLII.63; III.50/44) and the anonymous messenger of XXIII.34/36. Similarly Muhammad is to be obeyed (LXIV.12; VIII.1,20,46/48; XLVII.33/35; III.32/29). But they are to ask no reward from men, an injunction that is laid on Salih (XXVI.145), Hud (XI.51/53; XXVI.127), Noah (XI.29/31; XXVI.109), Shu'aib (XXVI.180) and Lot (XXVI.164), just as Muhammad is to ask no reward of men (XXXVIII.86; XXIII.72/74; XXV.57/59; XII.104; XLII.23/22).

The Prophets were taunted with being merely men (XXXVI.15/14; LXIV.6; XIV.10/12) and this occurred to Salih (XXVI.154) to Hud (VII.69/67), to Noah (XI.27/29), to Shu'aib (XXVI.186), to Moses and Aaron (XXII.47/49) and to the anonymous messenger in XXIII.33/34,38/40. So this taunt was levelled against Muhammad (XXI.3). It is not surprising, therefore, that the common experience of the Prophets was to be rejected by their people.⁵ This was the experience of Noah (LIV.9; LXXI.5), of Salih (XCI.11), of Hud (XI.53/56), of Abraham (VI.80 ff.), of Lot (LIV.33, 36), of Moses (LXI.5), of the anonymous messenger (XXIII.33/34 ff.) and of Jesus (III.52/45). That it was the experience of Muhammad when he preached at Mecca needs no elaboration.

The commonest charge against them was that they were impostors who must be given the lie (L.12, 13). This was the experience of Noah (LIV.9), of Hud (XXVI.123,139), of Shu'aib (XXIX.37/36), of Abraham (XXIX.18/17) and Lot (XXVI.160), of Moses and Aaron (XXIII.48/50), of Elijah (XXXVII.127) and of the anonymous messenger (XXIII.38/40). It was what happened to Muhammad also (VI.147/148; III.184/184; XXII.42/43). Sometimes they were considered as men bewitched. This was what they said of Noah (LIV.9; XXIII.25) of Salih (XXVI.153) of Shu'aib (XXVI.185) of Moses (XVII.101/103) and it was said of Muhammad (XVII.47/50; XXV.8/9). Sometimes they deemed them mad (LI.52), as they did Noah (LIV.9), Hud (XI.54/57; VII.66/64) and Moses (LI.39), or accused them of sorcery (LI.52), as they did both Moses (LI.39) and Jesus (V.110) and also Muhammad (XXXVIII.4/3). Sometimes their people go even further and plot against them to their harm, (XL.5; III.183/180). This they did to Salih (XXVII.48/49 ff.); to Abraham (XXIX.24/23), to Moses (XL.26/27) and to Jesus (III.54/47; IV.157/156; V.110). In like fashion they plotted against Muhammad (XXII.72/71). Yet Allah's peace is with them, (XXXVII.181; XXVII.59/60). It was with Abraham (XXXVII.109) with Noah (XI.48/50; XXXVII.79/77), with Moses and Aaron (XXXVII.120), with Elijah (XXXVII.130), with Jesus (XIX.33/34) and with John Baptist (XIX.15). So the message of Muhammad guides to the way of peace (V.15/18).

Allah's aid was ever available to assist His messengers. When they called on Him in their distress He answered them. He answered the call of Noah (XI.45/47; XXI.76), of Moses (XX.25/26), of Job (XXI.83; XXXVIII.41/40), of Jonah (XXI.87; LXVIII.48) of Zechariah (XIX.2; XXI.89), while Sura XCIII recounts how Allah had come to the assistance of Muhammad in his need. It is Allah also who grants them their gift of miracles when they are challenged to produce a sign in evidence of their calling. Salih was so challenged (XXVI.154), as were Hud (XI.53/56), Shu'aib (XXVI.187) and Moses (VII.106/103), while Muhammad was constantly so challenged (XXI.5; XX.133; XVII.90/92 ff.). So Salih was given his miraculous she-camel (XVII.59/61), Moses was given nine special signs (XVII.101/103) besides the signs of his rod and his hand (XX.17/18ff.), the fire became cool so as not to burn Abraham (XXI.69), for David iron became tractable (XXXIV.10) to Solomon the winds were subject (XXXVIII.36/35) and also the birds (XXVII.16). Jesus miraculously healed the born blind and the leper and even raised the dead (III.49/43; V.100). Muhammad's miracle is his Scripture, the Qur'an.

It will already have been noticed that this pattern of the *Lives of the Prophets* draws its details almost as much from later legendary material as from the Scriptures of the People of the Book, though its general plan is Biblical. It is because Muhammad is in their succession that he is bidden recount their stories (XV.51; XIX.16,41/42,51/52,54/55,56/57; XXXVIII.17/16,41/40,45,48; X.71/72), and his claim is that Allah Himself recited to him their stories (XX.99; XI.120/121; XII.3; XXVIII.3/2; VII.101/99; III.58/51), for it was Allah who had given the stories that were in the Scriptures of the *Ahl al-kitab*. That is, his Scripture was by revelation as earlier Scripture had been by revelation.

The outstanding feature in the mission of the Prophets, indeed, was that Allah had spoken to them by revelation. This is said of Adam (II.37/35), of Noah (XXIII.27) of Abraham (XXI.51/52; IV.163/161), of Ishmael (II.136/130; III.81/78; IV.163/161), of Isaac (XXI.73; IV.163/161), of Jacob (XXI.73; IV.163/161), of Job (IV.163/161), of Joseph (XII.15), of Moses (XX.13), of David (XXXVIII.29/28), of Solomon (IV.163/161), of Jesus (IV.163/161) and of John Baptist (XIX.12/13). In precisely similar fashion He is represented as speaking by revelation to Muhammad (XXXVIII.70; XLIII.43/42; LXXII.1; XXI.45/46,108; XVII.39/41,73/75,86/88; XVIII.27/26,110; XII.102/103).

The two significant technical words in this connection are *nazzala* "to send down" (with its cognate *anzala* and its verbal noun *tanzil*), and *awha* "to reveal," with the related noun *wahy* "revelation."

The *nazzala* series offers no problem. Since the gods inhabit the heavens above any message from them to creatures on earth has obviously to be "sent down." So in ancient Mesopotamia a dream, an oracle or a commandment was "sent down" from gods to men.⁶ In the Old Testament prophetic inspiration is by a coming down of Yahweh or His Spirit. The Lord "came down" to the place where Moses was to meet with Him and receive divine instructions (Numb. XI.17), but it was the spirit which "came upon" Baalam so that he prophesied (Numb. XXIV.2), upon Eldad and Modad to cause them to prophesy in the camp (Numb. XI.26-29), and upon Saul at his unexpected experience recorded in I Sam. X.6,10. The visions whereby Enoch had his revelations of the unseen "fell down" upon him (Eth.Enoch XIII.8). In the New Testament also it was the "descent of the Spirit" on the day of Pentecost which gave the apostles utterance (Acts II.1-4). In both Jewish and Christian literature of later times there is constant reference to this concept of "descent" in connection with revelation, but the notion was not confined to these two religions, for in *Yasna*, XLIV.1 we read the prayer of Zoroaster -

"so may the kindly Right his timely succour bring. And with heaven's Good Thought to upward in his gracious power descend."

When, therefore, we read in the Qur'an that the Meccans deny that anything has been "sent down" by Allah (VI.91), we may assume that they were familiar, from their contacts with the people of the Book, with what Muhammad meant when he referred to his message as a "missive" (*tanzil*),⁷ or as something sent down (VI.114, *munazzal*). Indeed we find this same verb used in the stories of the ancient Arab poets whose verses are likewise said to be "sent down" to them. Hassan b. Thabit, for example, tells how verses of weighty import were sent down to him from heaven in the night season. (*Diwan*, ed. al. Barquqi, Cairo, 1929, p.335).

The situation with regard to the second term is somewhat more complicated; *awha* is Form IV of a verb *waha* "to indicate," "to signify," cognate with the Ethiopic *wahaya*. Muhammad does not use the simple form of the verb though his common word for "revelation," *wahy*, is properly the verbal noun of this simple form.

Awha is used in this primitive sense of "indicate" in XIX.11/12, where the afflicted Zechariah, who has been stricken dumb and cannot speak with his tongue, has to indicate by signs what is on his mind to say. Closely related to this is the meaning "to prompt," i.e., to give direction by an indication from within.⁸ Thus Allah prompts Moses to cast down his staff that it may become a serpent (VII.117/114), prompts him to strike the rock to produce water (VII.160), prompts him to lead out the Israelites by night (XX.77/79; XXVI.52), prompts him to smite the sea with his rod (XXVI.63), and prompts him and Aaron to make a *qibla* and appoint the prayer ritual (X.87). Likewise He prompted the mother of Moses to suckle the child (XXVIII.6), and later to send him forth in the ark (XX.38). Earlier He had prompted Isaac and Jacob to the doing of good deeds (XXI.73), and had prompted Noah to build the ark (XXIII.27). On the Day of Judgment He will prompt the Day to declare its news (XCIX.5). But it is not only Allah who thus directs by prompting from within, for Satans among Jinn and men may prompt each other to "tinsel speech" (VI.112). In the light of this we should probably interpret such a passage as XVI.123/124 as meaning that Allah prompted Muhammad to follow the creed of Abraham, i.e., it was not so much an express revelation as an inner prompting such as those felt by Noah or Isaac and Jacob.

A little further development of this notion of an indication from within is that in which Allah is said to have taught the bee in this manner where to build its house (XVI.68/70), and at the creation of the seven heavens and seven earths, He indicated to each what its *'amr* should be (XLI.12/11). From this it is but one step further to the more technical meaning of "revelation." Allah indicates His will in this way of revelation to the angels (VIII.12) and angel messengers mediate His revealed will to men (XLII.51). This was the case with all His human messengers (XIV.13/16) so that these messengers are characterized as those to whom Allah has given revelation (XII.109; XVI.43/45; XXI.7). This was so distinguished an honor that it led to imitation, some to whom Allah had not spoken falsely claiming to have had divine revelation granted them (VI.93).⁹ In IV.163/161 we have the statement that Allah spoke in this way to Noah and the prophets after him, to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob the Patriarchs (the Twelve) Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon, as well as to Muhammad himself. Besides these we read of such revelation being given to Joseph (XII.15), to Moses (XX.77/79; XXVI.63; VIII 117/114), and to the disciples of Jesus (V.111).

That Allah is the source of this *wahy* both to Muhammad and to the various messengers who preceded him is expressly stated in XLII.3/1, and is implied in the claim of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh to have received such a revelation (XX.48/50). Yet Allah is not the only source of *wahy*. The Satans in precisely the same way give revelations to their clients by this implication from within (VI.121), though in their case it is probably thought of as on the level of prompting from within rather than on the higher level where revelation is connected with a mission from the Unseen and is involved with Scripture.¹⁰

When Muhammad refers to his own reception of *wahy* it is quite clear that he places his experience in this matter on the same level as that of those previous messengers whom he

mentions in his preaching, (XXXIX.65; XLII.3/1; IV.163/161). Yet it is equally clear that his experience of *wahy* belongs to both levels, that of prompting from within and that of revelation from without. When he feels the prompting to follow the creed of Abraham (XVI.123/124), when he is inspired by a spirit of new religious interest (XLII.52) when he feels guided by what his Lord suggests to him (XXXIV.50/49; cf. VI.50,106; XLIII.43/42; X.109; XXXIII.2), when he fears lest he may be neglecting somewhat of that to which he feels the prompting (XI.12/15), when he is under the urge of the call to become one of the "warners" (XXXVIII.70; cf. XLVI.9/8), this seems to be nothing particularly different from the inner prompting felt by the mother of Moses (XX.38; XXVIII.7/6), nor indeed from that instruction from within which directed the bee where to set up its house (XVI.68/70). When, however, he speaks of his particular messages as the product of *wahy* (XXI.45/46; LIII.4; VII.203/202; VI.50; XLII.13/11; XVII.73/75; XIII.30/29; X.2), in particular the message concerning the limitlessness of Allah (XLI.6/5; XXI.108; XVIII.110), that message of monotheism which he says was revealed to each of the Prophets (XXI.25; XXXIX.65); when he asserts that it is a message that he cannot alter (X.15/16) seeing that it is God-given; when he learns by *wahy* that the Jinn listened and believed (LXXII.1 ff.) and feels that he has to be on his guard lest he be tempted to invent on his own (XVII.73/75), and run the risk of having Allah take away the gift of *wahy* (XVII.86/88) then we are dealing with something not prompted from within but given from without.

On this second level *awha* is practically identical with *nazzala* (*anzala*), and it is in this sense of the word that revelation is associated with Scripture. He says of it that it is some of the eternal Wisdom which Allah has been pleased to reveal to him (XVII.39/41), so that the regulations he lays down for the religious life of his community he can claim are revealed to him from the "Book", i.e., the heavenly archetype of Scripture (XXIX.45/44; cf. VI.145/146). Similarly the stories about ancient worthies and about Allah's judgment which he tells in his preaching, and says were given him by revelation (XI.49/51; XII.102/103; III.44/39), are doubtless meant to be understood as taken from the same source (XXXV.31/28). It is in this sense that he speaks of "Qur'an" being given to him by *wahy*.

"We shall narrate to thee the best of narratives in revealing to thee this Qur'an, even though thou wert before this one of the negligent" (XII.3).

"And thus we have revealed to thee an Arabic Qur'an¹¹ that thou mightest warn the Mother of Cities and those around it, and mightest warn of the Day of Assembling, about which there is no doubt. One party (will be) in the Garden and one party in the Blazing Fire" (XLII.7/5). "Say: Allah is a witness between me and you. And this Qur'an has been revealed to me that by it I might warn you and whom-soever it may reach" (VI.19).

So he is bidden recite what has been put into his mind of the *Book* of his Lord (XVIII.27/26), and warned not to be too hasty in speaking till the revelation that is being given him is completed (XX.114/113).

When we ask, therefore, what was Muhammad's conception of the mechanism whereby the material of Scripture was revealed, we have to deal with two conceptions which, for convenience of reference, we may label *inspiration* and *revelation*, the former being concerned with a prompting from within, and the latter with a bestowal from without. The former conception belongs mainly to the earlier stages of his prophetic activity and the latter to his later years.

The environment in which he spent his early years was one in which inspiration, as above defined; was well understood. Both poets and soothsayers (*kahin*) in the Arabia of that day were known to produce their rhymed rhythmical utterances in response to an inner prompting. The popular explanation of this was that they were "possessed," and because of being possessed by a jinni or a Shaitan who forced them to utter their proclamations they were considered to be more or less mad.¹² The interesting thing is that when Muhammad came forward with his earliest

public pronouncements his contemporaries immediately recognized them as akin to those of the soothsayers and poets (LII.29,30; XXI.5; LXIX.41,42) judging him to be Jinn-possessed, and therefore somewhat mad (LXVIII.51; LXXXI.22; XV.6; XXXVII.36/35; XLIV.14/13). It is not strange that they should have so judged. The *saj'* style of rhymed rhythmical prose used in Muhammad's early pronouncements is hardly to be distinguished from that which we find preserved in the books of the later antiquarians as specimens of the pronouncements said to have come from the mouths of the ancient Arabian *kahins*.¹³ Moreover, the story preserved in the *Sira* and the *Hadith* telling of his "first revelation," pictures him as experiencing precisely what a poet was thought to experience when inspiration seized him. We read there how the angel came unexpectedly upon him, bidding him proclaim what is dictated to him. He resisted, so the angel seized him and choked him¹⁴ till he thought he would expire. This happened three times, till finally he submitted and recited at the angel's dictation (Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, pp.152,153). Now we read of the poet Hassan b. Thabit, who later became a sort of Court poet to Muhammad himself, that in his youth he had no thought of becoming a poet, but one day, in the streets of Madina, a female Si'lat-demon cast herself upon him, knelt on his chest, struggling with him and threatening to kill him, till she finally forced three verses out of him and started him on his career as a poet. (Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, II, 247).

Ibn Hisham was writing when the theory of angel mediation of all revelation was the orthodox theory, and so the choking is done in his story by an angel. Muhammad himself, however, would seem at first to have feared that his experience was a case of Jinn possession which had come upon him as suddenly and as unexpectedly as the coming of the Si'lat-demon on Hassan b. Thabit. In the earliest account we have of this experience of his¹⁵ we read that it left him in a terror of apprehension lest it should mean that he was possessed, so that he even contemplated suicide - by casting himself down from the mountain side. Hurrying home to Khadija he buried his head in her lap, and to her inquiry as to what had happened he said: "He of whom no one would ever have believed it has become a poet or one Jinn-possessed." But Khadija comforted him, assuring him that Allah would never permit such a thing to happen to a person of his reputation one who ever spoke the truth, returned not evil for evil, kept faith with his fellows, lived a good life and was always kind to relatives and friends. She then questioned him more closely, the story goes on to say, about the portentous thing which had terrified him, and when he told her about it she first gave him a word of cheer, suggesting that this experience might be something quite other than what he feared, and then sought counsel from her cousin Waraqa b. Naufal. This Waraqa who was well acquainted with the People of the Book and with their Scriptures, immediately recognized that this experience of Muhammad was the same as was told of in those Books in connection with the descent of the *Namus* which came down upon Moses.

Though the tendential character of this story about Waraqa is quite obvious it may well embody a memory of the transition in Muhammad's own thought from the concept of *inspiration* to that of *revelation*. The idea of *inspiration* belonged to the environment of his childhood and youth, the idea of revelation was something learned from fuller contact with the People of the Book. The Qur'an itself shows how he needed assurance that he was not mad (LXVIII.2). Perhaps those biographers are right who think that Muhammad had begun to produce "effusions" such as those we now have in Suras CVI; CV; LXXXVI.1-10; LXXXVII.1-9; C; XCIII; XCIV; CIII etc., before the great experience that gave him his call to his mission.¹⁷ That would mean that he had two experiences,¹⁸ the first which was much the same as the experience of a poet or a *kahin*, and then the great experience which convinced him that he had something more than just the message of a *kahin*. It is then that he insists that his message is not something spoken but of mere impulse (LIII.3). He knows well that the Satans inspire wicked, lying persons and poets (XXVI.221-224), but declares that this message of his is not the word of a poet (LXIX.41), is not something the Satans have heard and have brought down (XXVI.210-212). It was from contact with the People of the Book that he had learned the distinction, so that the story about Waraqa may preserve a memory of this fact. Muhammad knows that other messengers before him among the communities known to the People of the Book had been considered by their contemporaries as

Jinn possessed madmen. In particular he refers to this charge as levelled against Noah (LIV.9), and against Moses (XXVI.27/26; LI.39), just as the Rabbinic tales tell of the mockery made of Noah's madness in building such a thing as the Ark,¹⁹ and of the three occasions when the Israelites made protest at the madness of Moses' command to them,²⁰ when he led them into the waters of the Red Sea, when he took them into the waterless wilderness, and when, in spite of the report of the spies, he insisted that they march into the land of Canaan. In LI.52 he says that no messenger had ever come to any people in earlier times without their having called him either a madman or a sorcerer, which reminds one of the popular judgment on the prophets in Hos. IX.7:

"the prophet is a fool: the man of the spirit is mad."

It will be remembered how Sheinaiah the Nehelemite wrote to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest reminding him of his duty to punish with prison and the stocks "every man that is mad and maketh himself a prophet" (Jer. XXIX.25-27). Likewise in the New Testament we find that the contemporaries of Jesus reacted to his preaching by saying: "He hath a devil and is mad. Why hear ye him?" (Jno. X.20), and even his friends are represented as having at one time thought that he was ἐξέστη "beside himself" (Mk. III.21 ff.).²¹

But not all prophetic experience was on this level. In every case it was concerned with a breaking through of the Unseen with a message to be delivered. That message might be nothing more than information about the whereabouts of someone's stray asses (I Sam. IX.6 ff.), or it might be a matter of oracles of blessing and cursing (Numb. XXIII,XXIV), or a prediction of coming woe (Jonah III.4), but it might be on the level of the impassioned utterances of an Amos or a Jeremiah. If the Prophet were a true prophet it was always a message from God, however humble a matter it might seem in our judgment. It might be the Holy One Himself who broke through from the Unseen and without any intermediary gave the message. He spoke with Adam in the earthly Paradise (Gen. III.8 ff.). He spoke personally to Abraham when He called him to go out on his great venture of faith (Gen. XXIV.7). He spoke with Moses at the bush (Ex. III.4 ff.), with Samuel at Shiloh (I Sam. III.4-14), and with David about the Jerusalem temple (I Ki. V.5). More commonly, however, it was by the Spirit as intermediary that He spoke. It was the spirit which came upon Gideon to give him guidance in the days of the struggle against the Midianites and the Amalekites (Judg. VI.34), which came upon Samson to move him (Judg. XIII.25; XIV.6,19), and upon Saul to make him prophesy (I Sam. X.6,10; XVIII.10), just as later it came upon the writing prophets to give them their message (Isa. LXI.1; Ezek. XI.5). This spirit is the Holy Spirit which the Psalmist pleads may not be taken away (Ps. LI.11), and which inspired Moses during the carrying out of his mission (Isa. LXIII.10,11). That it was the special agent of prophecy appears quite clearly in the story of how Moses appointed the seventy elders (Numb. XI.25), where we read how the Lord took of the Spirit which was already upon Moses and gave it to these seventy elders whom Moses had chosen, whereupon, as soon as it rested upon them, they began to prophesy.²²

Muhammad knows that it is the Spirit who is the agent of revelation. He tells his audience that Allah sends down His Spirit upon whom He wills among His servants that he may undertake the task of warning (XL.15; XVI.2). Consequently it is this Spirit who brings down Muhammad's message from the Lord (XVI.102/104; XXVI.193ff.; XLII.52), that he also may warn (XXVI.194).

The word he uses here for "Spirit" is *ruh*, which, of course, is the Heb. *ruah*, Aram. *ruha* of the Old Testament and the Rabbinic writings, which like the Syr. *ruha*, representing the πνεῦμα of the New Testament, is the word that is always used of the spirit which is active in connection with the inspiration of men of God. In XL.15; XVI.2 and XLII.52 this spirit is said to be *min'amrihi* (or *min'amrina*), which may mean no more than that it is connected with Allah's affairs, as Bell translates it. If, however, as has been more than once suggested,²³ it represents the

Rabbinic *memra*, it is curious to note, i) that in IV.171/169 Jesus is referred to as "a spirit from Him (*minhu*),"²⁴ ii) that on the Day the Spirit will stand²⁵ apart from, yet with, the angels (LXXVIII.38); iii) that the Spirit along with the angels is concerned with every '*amr* "affair" (XCVII.4).

In his Meccan period Muhammad is conscious that he knows very little about the Spirit (XVII.85/87) save that it has some connection with Allah's '*amr*', and is angelic in nature. Later on he identifies it with the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-Qudus*, XVI.102/104) which (or who) was the strengthener of Jesus (II.87/81,253/254; V.110/109). The reason is clear. In the Old Testament it is, as we have seen, the "spirit" which is the agent in mediating the prophetic message. Yet often enough in the Old Testament it is a special angelic visitant who speaks with the prophets. It was such an angel of the Lord who spoke with Hagar and the child Ishmael in the wilderness (Gen. XVI), who spoke with Abraham at the test of sacrificing Isaac (Gen. XXII.11ff.), who spoke to Balaam (Numb. XXII.35),²⁶ to Gad (I Chron. XXI.18), to Elijah (II Ki. I.3) and to Zechariah (Zech. I.9ff.). In the Book of Daniel this angel is identified with Gabriel (IX.21ff.), and it is Gabriel who in the Gospel is the messenger from the Lord to announce the birth both of John the Baptist and of Jesus (Lk. I.19,26). In Sura XIX.17 it was Allah's Spirit who made the announcement to Mary, so that we have the ground for the identification of the Spirit with Gabriel, and are prepared for II.97/91 where it is Gabriel who brings down the message to Muhammad's heart,²⁷ and LXVI.4 where he is Muhammad's angelic patron.

In the later theological tractates it is Gabriel who, as the angel of revelation, is entrusted with the task of transmitting from the heavenly archetype of Scripture the message that was given to each Prophet as he appeared to undertake his mission, and it was Gabriel who for the twenty odd years of Muhammad's prophetic activity visited him from time to time to transmit to him the "words of Allah" he was to proclaim in his preaching and leave as his Scripture for his community. This particular association of Gabriel with the matter of revelation is peculiar to Islam,²⁸ but there can be little doubt that it was suggested by the activity of Gabriel in delivering messages from heaven as pictured in the Book of Daniel and the Gospel of Luke. Some steps in this direction had been taken already in the Rabbinic writings, where pious fancy had seen Gabriel in the messenger who in Gen. XXVII.15 showed the way to Joseph,²⁹ taught him the seventy languages (*Sota* 36b), and cared for and instructed Moses in Egypt (*Exod. R.*i,67b).

Having come thus far in our discussion we are in a position to answer the question of how Muhammad conceived the mechanism of revelation whereby Scripture became available to men. In Sura VI.93 we read -

"Who has done greater wrong than he who has invented a falsehood about Allah, or says: 'I have received a revelation,' when nothing has been revealed to him; and he who says: 'I shall have sent down (to me) the like of what Allah has sent down?'"

and again in XLII.51/50 we read -

"It is not for a human that Allah should speak to him save by *wahy*, or from behind a veil, or should send a messenger to reveal by His permission what He wills and thus have We revealed to thee a spirit (*ruh.*) from Our affair ('*amr*), for thou didst not know what Scripture (*kitab*) or Faith (*'iman*) was. But We have made it a light to guide whom We will of Our servants, and thou, indeed, wilt guide to a straight path."

In these two passages we have all the essential elements. Scripture is necessary that men may be rightly guided (VI.157/158; III.4/2) to that "straight path," may know and understand the "way of God" they could never have found by the exercise of their own intelligence. To know and walk this way is to walk in the safety of true religion, to be in the Faith. It is the function of Scripture to record what Allah has been pleased to reveal about this Faith. The initiative in the matter is

with Allah. He could have left men without guidance, but in His mercy He has at various points in history chosen humans to whom He has revealed messages which He wished them to set forth as guidance for their fellows. These chosen servants are His messengers, His prophets, and so significant is their office that evil-minded men will falsely pretend to have also had such a revelation for human guidance. No greater wrong than this can be conceived, for instead of guiding men such pretenders would be leading them astray from the "straight path." There are three ways in which Allah can convey such a message to His chosen messenger.

(i) He may speak with him in personal converse at a personal interview, when there is naught but the Veil between Allah and His Servant (II.253/254). It was thus that He spoke with Moses (IV.164/162; VII.144/141),³⁰ and thus did He speak with Muhammad on the famous night of the *Mi'raj* or Heavenly Journey.³¹ Perhaps we are also meant to understand that He spoke thus with Adam in personal converse in the Garden (II.31/29.37/35).³²

(2) Or He may speak by *wahy*, giving inspiration from within much as He inspires the bees in the matter of house building, or inspires the heavens and the earth as to their cosmic functions. In manner this is not very different from the way in which the poets and soothsayers are inspired, though in the case of Allah's messengers the source is divine not demonic and the material given is heavenly instruction.

(3) Or He may send a celestial messenger. There seems to have been some confusion at first in Muhammad's mind as to whether this was just any angel or a special celestial being. Later he identifies this messenger with the Holy Spirit, and finally with Gabriel.

In all this we are dealing with matters commonly discussed among those People of the Book with whom Muhammad was in contact during his formative period. Among them all three methods were associated with God's revelation of Himself to men. He spoke directly to Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen. III), and He spoke to Moses (Ex. XXXIV.34)³³ both at the Bush (Ex. III,IV) and at Sinai (Ex. XIX), as well as to others among His servants such as Abraham (Gen. XXVI.2), Jacob (Gen. XXXV.15) and David (I Ki. VI.12). At a later period reverence for the Divine introduced the notion of the Veil that hung between the Divine Presence and creatures who drew near.³⁴ But God also prompted from within those servants whom He sent, thus giving them what they were assured was the word of the Lord. Ezekiel says of his experience -

"Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house but when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them: Thus saith the Lord God. He that heareth let him hear," (Ezek. III.24,27).

And the Lord also sent His angels with His heavenly message to His servants. He so sent His message to Gideon (Judg. VI.11ff.), to Manoah (Judg. XIII.3ff.), to Abraham and Lot (Gen. XVIII.XIX), to Elijah (I Ki. XIX.5ff.) to the unnamed prophet of Bethel (I Ki. XIII.18), and we read in the Gospel that when a heavenly voice answered the cry of Jesus the people said: "An angle hath spoken to him" (Jno. XII.29). That there was understood to be a connection between the angelic messengers and the moving of the spirit is quite clear both in Judg. XIII.20-25 and Luke I.13-17. Finally in Daniel and in the Gospel of Luke the angelic messenger is named Gabriel, so that in later writings there is a strong tendency to identify the celestial being who appears in the Old Testament theophanies with Gabriel.³⁵

There is thus no escape from the conclusion that though Muhammad began with a concept of inspiration hardly, if at all, distinguishable from that of the poets and soothsayers in the Arabia of his day, yet as he developed his interpretation of his mission to bring to the Arabs the content of the religion of the People of the Book his thinking expanded from this limited concept of *inspiration* to a fuller concept of *revelation* connected with a Scripture. In this development of his thinking³⁶ it is now clear that he took over from the People of the Book a theory of the

mechanism of revelation as well as a theory of the nature of Scripture and a theory of the prophetic succession through which that Scripture was communicated to Allah's creatures.

Since Muhammad thought of himself as in the succession of these men sent of God, and since the Qur'an as a revelation to him from Allah was to take its place beside previous Scriptures, it is of some importance to consider what the Qur'an has to say about these previous Scriptures.

In his thinking about the messengers it was part of the office of a messenger to be sent with Scripture (LVII.25; XVI.36/38; X.47/48; XXXV.25/23; III.184/181),³⁷ and in V.44/48 we read that the function of doctors and teachers among the people was to guard Scripture. The necessity for such guarding is obvious. Scripture is the ultimate authority in matters of religion,³⁸ given that men may be rightly guided (XXIII.49/51; VI.157/158), and so something over which men should meditate, and which the intelligent should ever keep in mind (XXXVIII.29/28). It is not strange, therefore that belief in Scriptures sent from Allah should be laid down as a fundamental belief for Muhammad's followers (II.177/172; IV.136/135). But ultimately all Scripture is one, for there was one archetypal Book of which the Scriptures of the various Prophets were but portions (XVIII.27/26; III.23/22; II.231; XXXIII.6; XXIX.45/44; XXXV.31/28; IV.44/47,51/54). Therefore Muslims are to believe in the entire Book (III.119/115; cf. V.59/64), as Muhammad himself was bidden believe in whatever Scripture Allah had sent down (XLII.15/14).

What then does the Qur'an have to say about these portions of the archetypal Scripture which were sent down to his predecessors, and in which he and they are to believe? In XIII.138 we read that each age had its Scripture,³⁹ but in VI.156/157 the Arabs seem to know that Scripture has been sent down to only two previous peoples, an idea which would fit in very well with passages we have already considered, such as II.136/130; LVII.26; IV.54/57, which suggest that the receiving of Scripture was a matter confined to the two groups of the *Ahl al-Kitab*.³⁷ Thus the regulation for Muslims is that they believe in what was sent down to the People of the Book (XXIX.46/45; II.4/3; IV.136/135; cf. XLII.13/11; V.59/64). This assumes that they were in a position to discover what was in those previous Scriptures, just as the injunction to Muhammad to consult those who read Scripture when he is in doubt about what is being revealed to him (X.94) assumes that such Scripture readers were readily available. Yet the only Scriptures mentioned by name in the Qur'an, apart from two early references to the Scrolls (*suhuf*) of Abraham and Moses (LXXXVII.19; LIII.36/37,37/38), whose meaning is doubtful,⁴¹ are the *Taurah* of Moses, the *Zabur* of David and the *Injil* of Jesus.

i) Of the *Taurah* we read that it was "sent down" like other revelation material (III.3/2,65/58,93/87; V.44/48 etc.), to be the Scripture for the Children of Israel (XLV.16/15; XL.53/56; II.41/38,44/41), giving them Allah's guidance (XVII.2; XXXII.23; XL.53/56). It was later than the time of Abraham (III.65/58), and is specifically the Book of Moses (XI.17/20; XLVI.12/13),⁴² though Aaron's name is associated with his in this matter (XXI.48/49; XXXVII.117). It is described as a light and a warning to the God fearing (XXI.48/49; cf. XL.54/56), for it was given for men's enlightenment (XXVIII.43). It is called an *Iman* (XI.17/20; XLVI.12/11) and a mercy (VI.154/155; XI.17/20; XLVI.12/11), a *dhikra* (XL.54/56), a light (VI.91; V.44/48) and a guidance (VI.91,154/155; IV.44/48).⁴⁸ It contains the *huk* of Allah (V.43/47), is a *tafsil*⁴⁴ of every matter (VI.154/155; VII.145/142), teaching the Children of Israel much that neither they nor their fathers knew (VI.91). It is a completion (*tamam*) for everyone who would do right (VI.154/155), and contains Allah's pledged promise of Paradise for such as will devote their persons and their substance to Him (IX.111/112). Nevertheless it is but a portion of the *Kitab* of Allah (V.44/48). In particular it contained the Law for the Children of Israel, for it was the *Taurah* which contained the law of retaliation (V.45/49), the food regulations they had to observe (III.93/87), the prohibition of usury (IV.161/159; V.42/46), etc.⁴⁵ It is doubtless what is meant by the Tablets written out by Allah for Moses,⁴⁶ since they also are called a guidance and a mercy, a monition concerning all things which Moses is to command the people to observe (VII.145/142, 154/553).

After the time of Moses this Taurah was inherited by the Prophets among the Children of Israel who judged the people according to it (V.44/48). Later Allah taught it to Jesus (III.48/43) for Jesus came to confirm it (LXI.6; III.50/44; V.46/50) as it was read and studied by his contemporaries (III.79/73). Later still it was inherited by the doctors and teachers of the Jews,⁴⁷ who were its keepers and witnesses to it, and who judged the people of their community according to it (V.44/48). Finally it came down to the Jews of Arabia, Muhammad's contemporaries, who had copies which he challenged them to bring out and read (III.93/87), for he claimed that in it was a word-picture of the perfect Muslim (XLVIII.29), a teaching with regard to that Day of Meeting about which the Arabs laughed when he preached of it (VI.154/155), and a description of himself as the expected prophet (VII.157/156). His Jewish contemporaries used to read in it (II.44/41,75/70ff.; V.43/47; VII.169/168), knowing that it was something revealed from the Lord (II.76/71), but obstinately they say that they will believe in it but in nothing that has come after it (II.91/85). Sura V.45/49 quotes Exod. XXI.23-27, and it is possible that parts of V.32/35 and XVII.2,4,7 are meant to be quotations from the Taurah.

ii) The *Zabur* was the Book given to David (XVII.55/57; L.163/161), a "blessed Book" sent down to him (XXXVIII.29/28), since he was one of Abraham's rightly-guided progeny (VI.84,87) and thus among those to whom Allah gave the gifts of Scripture, Wisdom and Prophecy (VI.89). As such he was taught by Allah (II.251/252). The *Zabur* is actually quoted in Sura XXI.105, where the words "My righteous servants shall inherit the earth" is a quotation from Ps. XXXV.11.29. When Sura V.78/82 says that the unbelieving among the Jews were cursed by the tongue of David this may possibly be a reference to certain imprecatory Psalms, though it is more likely to be a generalization.

iii) The *Injil* is the revelation given to Jesus, who was taught it by Allah (III.48/43; LVII.27; V.46/50). Like other Scriptures it was "sent down" (III.65/58; V.47/51), and like them it was intended to give guidance and light (V.46/50; cf. III.3/2),⁴⁸ and to give warning (V.46/50). It agrees with the Taurah in giving a word-picture of the perfect Muslim (XLVIII.29), in containing Allah's pledged promise of Paradise (IX.111/112), and in having in it a description of Muhammad as the coming Prophet (VII.157/156).⁴⁹ This agreement is not strange since it was intended as a confirmation of the Taurah (V.46/50). From Jesus the disciples received it and believed in it (III.53/46), and the Christians are to judge according to it (V.47/51).

In each case, it will have been noticed, the Scripture is thought of as a body of material given from without to one individual. Moreover the *Injil* is thought of as, like the Taurah, something to be observed, being thus the Law for the Christian community as the Torah was the Law for the Jews. The names used for these three Scriptures are words borrowed from the religious vocabulary of the *Ahl al-Kitab*. Taurah is the Heb. *Torah*, meaning "instruction," which among

the Jews early came to be used as a technical term for the Law (*ὁ νόμος*)⁵⁰ and by extension for the whole of the Old Testament.⁵¹ *Zabur* is an Arabic corruption of the Hebrew word *mizmor*,⁵² doubtless under the influence of the genuine Arabic word *zubur*. *Injil* is *εὐαγγέλιον*, but passed on to Arabic through the Ethiopic *wangel*.⁵³ Both the names Muhammad uses for his own "lessons" of Scripture are likewise words taken from the technical religious vocabulary of the People of the Book, *Qur'an* being the Syriac *qeryana*, used in the Syriac speaking Church for the "readings" used as Scripture lessons,⁵⁴ and *Sura* being a distortion of another Syriac word.⁵⁵ The more general word for Scripture, viz. *Kitab* was also derived from the same source,⁵⁶ as was the word *furqan* which in II.53/50; XXI.48/49 is associated with Moses, in III.4/2 with both the Taurah and the *Injil*, and in XXV.1; II.185/181 with the revelation to Muhammad.⁵⁷

It is not surprising therefore to see how closely Muhammad's thought of his own Book follows this picture he had formed from what he had learned about the Scriptures of the *Ahl al-Kitab*. Like them his Scripture is derived from the celestial archetype (XLIII.4/3; LVI.78/77ff.; and cf.

LII.2,3; XVIII.27/26), from which, like them, it is "sent down" (LVI.80/79; XLIV.3/2; XCVII.5; II.185/181; XXVI.192; XXXIX.1; XX.4/3), though it also consists of only portions of that divine original (XXIX.45/44; XXXV.31/28). It was brought down, as they were, by angelic mediation (XXVI.193; XVI.102/104). Thus it is truly *wahy* (LIII.4). Its message, like theirs, is something taught by the Merciful One Himself (LV.1ff.),⁵⁸ so it is a book of warning (X.57/58; XXVI.194; XXV.1; XXXII.3/2; XXXVI.70), as well as of good tidings (XXVII.2; II.97/91; XVI.89/91,102/104). Like its predecessors it is a mercy (XXVII.77/79; XLV.20/19; XVI.64/66,89/91), and a light (XII.52; LXI.8; IV.174) to give men guidance (LXXII.13; XVII.9; XXVII.2; II.97/91; XVI.89/91,102/104; XII.111) leading them out of darkness into light (XIV.1) and into the paths of Allah (XIV.1; XXXIV.6). It contains Allah's command (LXV.4,5,8), so that like the earlier Scriptures it is a book of Law, containing Allah's legal prescription (*farida*, IV.11/12,24/28; IX.60), His ordinance (*wasiyya*, IV.12/16), His precepts (*hudud*, IV.13/17; II.187/183,229-230; IX.97/98), and His injunctions (*kitab*, IV.24/28; cf. 66/69). That is, it contains Allah's instructions for the Muslim community (IV.127/126) just as the Torah contained those for the Children of Israel and the Gospel those for the Christians. So Muhammad is to give judgment according to it (V.48/52,49/54) as the Children of Israel were to be judged by the Taurah and the Christians by the Injil. For this reason the Qur'an is placed on a level with those two Scriptures (IX.111/112; cf. XXVIII.48,49; II.136/130),⁵⁹ and as the Gospel came to confirm the Torah so the Qur'an has come to confirm them both (II.89/83; XII.111; X.37/38; XXXV.31/28).

It is thus clear that as Muhammad claimed to be in the succession of the earlier Prophets as messengers called to summon men to the "way of God," so his Book, the Qur'an is considered to be in the succession of the earlier Scriptures which men read to find what had been revealed from heaven as to that "way of God." It remains to see how both his conception of his own office and his conception of a Scripture connected with that office went beyond the teaching of the People of the Book.

Notes

¹ Three different verbs are used for "to choose" in connection with Allah's messengers, viz *ikhtara*, *ijtaba* and is *istafa*, but for the purposes of our discussion here they are synonymous and could each translate the Biblical *bakhar*. In the Qur'an Allah's choosing is not confined to choosing the prophetic succession. He chooses Saul to be king over Israel (II.247/248), and the Virgin Mary was "chosen" (III.42/37). This is consonant with Scriptural usage.

² This word, which Bell translates "upright," is also used of the faithful followers of a Prophet. Since the *salihun* of the Qur'an obviously represent the *saddiqim* of the Old Testament, (the *δικαιοι* of the Greek Bible), perhaps we should include here the title *siddiq* given in the Qur'an to Abraham (XIX.41/42), to Idris (XIX.56/57), to Joseph (XII.46), to the Virgin Mary (V.75/79), and used of certain faithful believers in IV.69/71; LVII.19/18. On the word see my *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*. pp. 194, 195.

³ That Lot should be included among the righteous bespeaks Christian influence. It is only in very late Jewish documents that we find Lot included in such a fellowship, whereas as early as the Second Epistle of Peter (II.8) we find Lot referred to in Christian circles as *ὁ δικαίος*.

⁴ So the angelic messengers came *bi'l-haqq* (XV.55,64).

⁵ It is because each prophet is chosen from among his own people that they are commonly referred to as "their brother." This is said of Salih, who was the "brother" of Thamud (XXVII.45/46). Of Hud who is the "brother" of 'Ad (XI.50/52), of Shu'aib who is the "brother" of Midian (XXIX.36/35). So also Noah is the "brother" of his people (XXVI.106) and Lot of his (XXVI.161).

⁶ In Sumerian the compound verb *a2.....ag3* means both "to send" and "to command", and the corresponding noun *a2-ag2 (-ga2)* means "a message".

⁷ Cf. LXIX.43; LVI.80/79; XX.4/3; XXVI.192; XLI.2/1; etc. In the Quran *tanzil* is used only for the messages sent down to Muhammad, never for the message sent to any other prophet, though the verb is used of the message in the Torah and of that in the Gospel (III.3/2; IV.136/135; etc.).

⁸ R. Bell in his translation of the Qur'an always renders *awha* by the verb "to suggest", which will cover all the meanings: "to indicate," "to prompt," "to reveal."

⁹ Similarly in the Old Testament the false prophets are rebuked for claiming that God had spoken to them when He had not spoken (Jer. V 31; XIV.14; XXIII.21ff; Mic.III.11), and the New Testament in its turn warns of the coming of such false prophets (Matt. VII.15; XXIV.11,24; Mk.XIII.22; I John IV.1).

¹⁰ Perhaps this distinction should not be pressed. Mani, it will be remembered, was said to have taught that the Law and Prophets were produced under the inspiration of the Evil Spirits. (*Acta Archelai*, caps.x,xi-xiii,xxxix; Serapion of Thumuis *Adversus Manichaeos*. xxxvi; Titus of Bostra, *Contra Manichaeos*, III.5), so that it is not impossible that in Muhammad's environment revelation even at the Scripture level may have been thought of as possible through Satanic inspiration.

¹¹ Qur'an in each of these passages means not the whole book which we know as the Qur'an but rather "Scripture lesson," i.e., it has the original meaning of the Syriac word from which it is derived. Similarly the stories about the ancient worthies in the passages previously mentioned might each be taken as a Scripture lesson, for they are the stories of Noah (XI.49/51), of Joseph (XII.102/103) and of the Virgin Mary (III.44/39).

¹² Goldziher has gathered material on this in an essay "Ueber die Vorgeschichte der Higa-Poesie," in Bd. I of his *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, Leiden, 1896. It will be remembered that in quite another area we have the statement of Democritus that it is impossible to produce good poetry without an inspiration akin to madness, (Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, II. 66).

¹³ Specimens are given in al-Jahiz. *Kitab at-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, (Cairo, 1926). I,203; al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-A'sha*, I,211; al-Ibshihi, *al-Mustatraf*, II,105. The lexicons say that this word *saj'* meant originally the prolonged yearning-cry of a female camel (*al-Sihah*, sub. voc.), or the cooing of a pigeon (Lane, p. 1309), and then was applied by a figure to the utterances of the soothsayers. It is worthy of note that the cognate Heb. *meshugga'* is used in connection with the ecstatic utterances of the prophets (Hos. IX.7; II Ki. IX.111, Jer. XXIX. 26), and also in I Sam. XXI.14 (15) ff. for the kind of madness David simulated at the Court of Achish of Gath.

¹⁴ "Choked" is perhaps the best word to use here. Ibn Hisham has the verb *ghatta*, but al-Bukhari Sahih, I.5 has *ghatta* with *th* instead of *t*. Both verbs have the meaning "to plunge deep into water," though *ghatta* is used also of the gurgling sound of a cooking-pot. In al-Athir, *Nihaya*, III, 68 says that both words mean the same thing and suggests that we are to understand a choking for breath.

¹⁵ It is quoted from the early biography of Ibn Ishaq by Tabari. *Annales*, I,115off. In the bowdlerized edition of Ibn Hisham the account of Muhammad's fear and a considerable part of Khadija's words of comfort have been omitted. The story was known, however, to the canonical Traditionists, (cf. al-Bukhari I.5; IV.347), though there also considerations of reverence for the prophet have caused the deletion of all reference to his particular fear and to the thoughts of suicide. Sprenger, *Leben*, I,336-339, translates the whole passage from his copy of Tabari. The pleasant tale told in the *Sira* of Ibn Hisham of how Khadija thought out a device to prove whether Muhammad's visitor from the Unseen were demonic or angelic obviously arose after the identification of the source of revelation with Gabriel had been made.

¹⁶ The thought of suicide is seen by some writers in such Qur'anic passages as XVIII.6/5; XXVI.3/2, but these passages must in any case refer to events later in his ministry, and have no relevance to this "first revelation."

¹⁷ Wm. Muir, [Life of Mohammed](#). (Edinburgh. 1912), p. 42.

¹⁸ Sura LIII.1-18 distinctly mentions two experiences of visitation from the Unseen. This double "calling" is met with elsewhere in that area. It will be remembered that the angelic being visited Mani when he was just emerging out of childhood to teach him how to prepare for his mission, and then came and "called" him again when it was time for his mission to commence (*Fihrist*, p. 328).

¹⁹ *Lekach Tob*, ed. Buber, p. 36; *Midrash Tanhuma* Noah; and cf. Book of the Bee, XX.

²⁰ In the Quran. however, it is Pharaoh who brands Moses as mad.

²¹ This N.T. word ἐξίστημι "to throw out of position" fits well with what the Qur'an says of the reception of the prophet Hud by his people, for they said that it was clear that one of the gods must have smitten him (XI.54/57), and this throwing him off his balance was the cause of his *safaha* "craziness" (VII.66/64). Here we are reminded at once of Homer's picture of Hector, smitten by the god Ares, rushing with foaming mouth and blazing eyes towards the Greek ships (*Iliad* XV.605), and of the smitten Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus who cries (II.1214-1216):

"Oh! Oh! the agony?
Once more the dreadful throes of prophesy
Whirl and distract me with their ill boding onset."

²² In Deut. XXXIV.9 we read that the spirit of wisdom which Joshua had was passed on to him from Moses.

²³ Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, p. 51; Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, p. 15.

²⁴ This spirit of Allah was breathed into Mary (XXI.91; LXVI.12), just as Allah's spirit was breathed into Adam (XV.29; XXXVIII.72; XXXII.9/8).

²⁵ So in LXX.4 the Spirit is distinguished from and yet functions along with the angels.

²⁶ It is perhaps worth remembering that where in the Hebrew text of the chapters of Numbers it is an angel who speaks to Balaam, in the Aramaic Targums it is a *Memra* from God who meets Baalam in the way.

²⁷ Thus the "faithful spirit" of XXVI.193 is identified with Gabriel, likewise the "one strong in power" of LIII.5, and the "noble messenger" of LXXXI.19 (unless the noble messenger here refers to Muhammad himself, as in LXIX.40). It will be noticed that the phrase "beside Him of the Throne established" in LXXXI.20 is much the same as Gabriel says of himself in Lk. I.19 ἡ παρεστηκώς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ, a phrase to which Strack-Billerbeck II.97 bring Rabbinic parallels.

²⁸ It is common to both Sunni and Shi'a Islam. For the Shi'a doctrine see Ibn Babawaihi as translated by A. A. Fyze. *A Shi'ite Creed*, pp. 82,83.

²⁹ Targ. Yer. I on the passage.

³⁰ The reference is to the theophany at Sinai (Ex. XIX.20).

³¹ See *Hashiyat al-Dardir 'ala Qissat al-Mi'raj*, pp. 22,23.

³² The older Commentators on the passage II.253/254, e.g., al-Baidawi, mention only Moses and Muhammad as those to whom Allah spoke face to face. Later writers, however, such as al-Alusi, *Ruh at-Ma'ani* III,2, and al-Khafaji, *Inayat al-Qadi*, II.332, add Adam to them.

³³ The New Testament writers also note this, cf. Mk. XII.26; Jno.IX.29.

³⁴ The Qur'anic *hijab* corresponds to the *wilon* and the *pargod* of the Rabbinic texts (*Hag.* 13a; *Gen.R.* iii,4; *Lev.R.* xxxi,7; *Midrash Tehillum* at end of Ps. XI; III Enoch XLV,1.6), the *bar goda* of the Mandaean texts, and the **καταπέτασμα** of the early Christian and Gnostic tractates (see the Index to Miss Baynes' *Coptic Gnostic Treatises*, p. 197). This same word *hijab* is used for the veil before the Presence in the Arabic text of the Samaritan *Molad Mosh*, (ed. S. Miller, p. 133).

³⁵ The evidence for this is assembled in Strack-Billerbeck II,91.

³⁶ It is significant that in XXVIII.86 we have the statement that he had had no expectation that Scripture would ever be given him, cf. in this connection also XXIX.48/47.

³⁷ In this connection we may also note II.213/209 which states that whenever Allah sent a Prophet He sent him with Scripture, and remind ourselves that in connection with the covenant with the Prophets III.81/75 regards the giving of Scripture and Wisdom as part of Allah's Covenant obligation.

³⁸ Cf. the oft repeated taunt at the Meccans that they can produce no Scriptural authority for their religious ideas and practices (XXXVII.157; LXVIII.37; XXXIV.44/43).

³⁹ When in XLV.28/27 it says that on the Day every nation will be summoned to its own Book, this might seem to carry out this idea that each group will have to give an accounting of its response to the Scripture sent for its guidance. *Kitab* in this verse, however, may not mean Scripture, but may refer to the Record Book in which the records of nations as well as of individuals are written.

⁴⁰ This is the strongest argument in favour of the idea that such messengers as Hud, Salih, Shu'aib must be meant to represent Old Testament characters.

⁴¹ If it is insisted that these *suhuf* must have been writings circulating under the names of Moses and Abraham, one can only suggest that the reference may be to some such works as the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Apocalypse of Moses*, or the *Testament of Abraham* and the *Testament of Moses*. In XX.133, however, *as-suhuf al-'ula* apparently means nothing more than "previous Scriptures." so that the reference in LXXXVII.19 and LIII.37/38ff. may be merely to the Old Testament Scriptures.

⁴² So we are to understand that the Taurah is meant in numerous passages such as XXIII.49/51; XXV.35/37; XVII.2 etc. which speak of the Book that was given to Moses.

⁴³ Possibly it is meant by "the truth" in VII.159.

⁴⁴ Bell translates *tafsil* as "a clear setting forth." It is said of the Qur'an in X.37/38 and XII.111.

⁴⁵ XVI.118/119 says that Allah had told Muhammad about the things He had made forbidden to the Jews, where the reference would be to the Torah.

⁴⁶ In later Rabbinic teaching the Tablets given to Moses at Sinai contained not merely the Ten Commandments but the whole Torah. See on this Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*, III.97.197; VI.60.

⁴⁷ The words he uses here are two technical words of Jewish origin, *rabbaniyun* and *ahbar*, the plurals of *Rabban* and *Hibr*, both derived from words in common use among the Jews for their teachers. See *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* pp. 137 and 49.

⁴⁸ Thus it may be the Gospel that is meant by the "enlightening Book" in XXXV.25/23

⁴⁹ Since in this passage Allah is speaking to Moses this is a reference to a Book not yet in existence among men, unless we are to believe, as has sometimes been suggested, that Muhammad at one time believed that Moses and Jesus were roughly contemporary, and only later learned that Jesus was a much later prophet.

⁵⁰ Since (ὁ νόμος) was given to Moses (cf. Jno. I.17) this is doubtless the origin of the *Namus* in the Waraqa story already mentioned.

⁵¹ Isaiah is quoted as the Law in I Cor. XIV.21, and the Psalms similarly in Jno. X.34; cf. also Jno. XII.34; XV.25; IV Ezra XIV.21, and the Talmudic passages *Sanh.* 91 b, and *Mo'ed Kalon* 5a.

⁵² See *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, p. 149.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 72.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 234.

⁵⁵ In *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 182, I favored the derivation from *surta* "writing," but scholars now seem more inclined to think that it is a corruption of *sbarta*, "preaching."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 249.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 225-229.

⁵⁸ That it was "from the Lord of the Worlds" is often emphasised (XXVI.192; XXXII.2/1; X.37/38).

⁵⁸ Cf. in this connection such passages as II.4/3; III.84/78; IV.60/63,136/135,162/160; V.59/64,66/70,68/72.

Part IV

The Muslim World, Volume 42 (1950), pp. 257-275

It is not infrequently urged against Western scholarship that in its investigation of Muhammad and his message it concerns itself too closely with tracing the origins of the various elements which enter into that teaching, and does not sufficiently consider what Muhammad himself made of the material he had at his disposal as he moulded it for the service of his mission and for the use of his community after him. Shakespeare often enough took over plots from stories more or less familiar to his audiences, even themes which had already been used by his predecessors in the dramatic art, but the dramas that have become part of world literature are the fruit of Shakespeare's own handling of that material. It is doubtless true that Shakespeare had read Francis de Belleforest's version of the Hamlet story from the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus, and he may have seen, perhaps even have acted in, the play about Hamlet which was popular in London in his youth. Yet the *Hamlet* we know and admire is what Shakespeare made out of the earlier material he found to his hand. So in discussing the Qur'an as Scripture it is not enough to show that Muhammad took over from his contemporaries a particular theory of the nature of Scripture, and one particular form of the doctrine of a prophetic order with which Scripture revelation was associated, as well as a concept of the mechanism of revelation whereby Scripture was made available to mankind, we must ask what Muhammad did with all this as he built Scripture into the religion of the community he was organizing in Arabia.

It is necessary to insist again that it was a religious mission which Muhammad came forward to undertake among his people, the Arabs. We must regard him as quite as sincerely convinced of his "call" to this mission as Martin Luther and John Wesley were to theirs, and as fully prepared as they were to give his all to the carrying through of his mission. Like them, however, he was a child of his age and environment, who thought and planned the details concerned with the working out of his mission in terms of the religious life of his contemporary world. Part of contemporary life in the more advanced religious communities of his day was the use of Scripture, and so part of what he was to do for his religious community was to provide them with a Scripture. This Scripture is in our hands as the Qur'an. What we have may not be precisely what he would have wished to leave with his community as the *Kitab*, for he died before he had issued it as an authoritative collection, and we cannot be absolutely sure that what his successors gathered together and issued after his death was just what he would have wished it to be. Orthodox theory insists that it is, and in any case it is all that we have as his *Kitab*, so to it we must look for the answers to our final questions.

The first of them is - how does Muhammad relate his Scripture to the earlier Scriptures which were in the hands of his contemporaries?

He claims that what he has proclaimed was "sent down" as a message to his contemporaries, just as earlier Scripture was "sent down" to earlier peoples (XXI.10; VI.114; II.23/21,89/83ff.; V.66/70). It is intended to give his Arab contemporaries the substance of what had been given these earlier communities in their Scriptures, so he declares that its message is substantially what was in the earlier Books (LXXXVII.18,19; XLII.13/11; XXVI.96; IV.26/31). It is thus a confirmation of them (XII.111; X.37/38; VI.92; XXXV.31/28; IV.47/50) and their safe-guard (V.48/52). Therefore it is explicitly put on the same level as the *Torah* and the *Injil* (IX.111/112), and the members of his community are instructed that they must believe in the earlier Scripture revelations as well as in what has been "sent down" to Muhammad (II.4/3,89/83ff.,136/130; III.84/78; IV.60/63,136/135,162/160; V.59/64).

If this were all we could say that the relation of the Qur'an to other Scriptures was that it was an Arabic version of the message already given in them. The claim for it, however, goes further than

this, for we find it stated that its message is intended to make clear what had been sent down to previous messengers (XVI.44/46,64/66; X.37/38) clearing up for the people of the earlier religious communities those matters about which they differ (XXVII.76/78; III.23/22). This is practically a claim to supersede previous Scripture, and Muhammad says that the people of knowledge among those earlier communities recognize in his message the promise of their Lord (XVII.108).

What promise of their Lord? Obviously Muhammad must have learned that in their Scriptures there was some promise which he could interpret his mission as fulfilling. But how had he learned such a thing as this? Certain things in our previous discussion may have suggested that perhaps Muhammad's closer contact was with Scripture in the hands of Christians, but careful examination of the matter makes it quite plain that the Book with which he had most contact was that in the possession of his Jewish contemporaries. He had seen that book in their hands (V.43/47), knew that they studied it (VII.169/168; II.76/71), and heard it recited (II.44/41). He also knew that they were accustomed to write the *Torah* on parchment (VI.91; II.79/73). Quite possibly it was in his earlier days that he first saw Scripture in the hands of the *Ahl al-Kitab*, for in early passages of the Qur'an he refers to Scripture as something in *suhuf* (LXXX.13; LXXIV.52; LXXXVII.18,19; LIII.36/37; XCVIII.2). That Scripture is for him always something written out (XXIX.48/47; XXXIV.44/43; VI.155/156; LII.2,3) would fit with either the Jewish or the Christian Holy Book, but the *suhuf* rather suggests Jewish scrolls. It is also significant that he refers more particularly to the *Torah* as that which preceded his own revelation (XI.17/20; XLVI.12/11; II.41/38; III.3/2), and to his teaching as the confirmation in Arabic of the *Torah* (XLVI.12/11; II.41/38,89/83).

Now it is evident that he was anxious to gain a closer acquaintance with this Book of the Jewish community, but was thwarted by some of their leaders. He complains that they show the parchments but conceal much (VI.91), so he challenges them to bring out the Book and read it (III.93/87). That he had learned something of the legal prescriptions of their Law appears from the statement in VI.118,119 about slaughtering for food, and he could hardly have ventured the statement that when their learned men hear the message he is setting forth in his preaching they recognize it (XXVI.197; cf. IV.162/160; XLVI.10/9), unless he knew well that he was reproducing something he had learned from their Book. It is possible that at first the Jewish leaders welcomed his inquiries about their Scriptures, and became uncooperative only when they discovered the import of his own claims to be in the prophet succession.¹

Sura II.76/71 makes it plain that some of them objected to Muhammad and his followers being told what was in their Scriptures, but apparently he persisted in his attempts. He knows that among them are unlearned folk from whom it is useless to seek information since they know nothing of Scripture but its stories (II.78/73). What most curious is that he seems to have attempted to purchase from some of the Jews transcripts of matter from their Scripture, only to find after they had taken the money that they had deceived him. V.44/48, which is dealing with the *Torah*, reprobrates the selling of Allah's verses for a small price, and this is explained by II.79/73:

"Woe to those who write out Scripture with their hands and say: 'This is from Allah,' that they may buy with it some small gain. Woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for the gain they make."²

In Madinan passages there are several references to the tampering with Scripture.

III.78/72: "Among them is a group who torture Scripture with their tongues that ye may suppose it to be from Scripture, though it is not from the Scriptures. They say: 'It is from Allah,' though it is not from Allah. They utter a lie against Allah, and know that they are so doing."

V.15/16: "they" change the words from their places, and have forgotten part of that of which they were reminded.³ Thou wilt not cease to come upon treachery on their part, save a few among them, but pardon them, and overlook it."

V.41/45: "they change the words from their places, and say: 'If ye are given this, accept it, but if ye are not given it, beware.' ... These are they whose hearts Allah desires not to purify."

II.75/70: "there was a group of them who would hear the word of Allah, then they would change it, after they had understood it, and would do this knowingly."

IV.44/47ff.: "Hast thou not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture purchasing error and desiring that ye should err from the way? Allah well knows your enemies, and Allah suffices as a patron. Allah suffices as a helper. Some among those who profess Judaism change the words from their places, and say: 'We hear and we rebel.' and 'Hear' something that is not audible, and 'Shepherd us' - torturing (it) with their tongues, and violating religion. Had they said, 'We hear and we obey,' and 'hear' and 'regard us,' it had been better for them and more correct, but Allah has cursed them with their unbelief."⁴

The key words to the understanding of these passages are *harrafa* "to change," and *lawa* "to torture." Each radical in the root of a Semitic word is a *harf*, and to make play with these radicals in a word would be to do what is meant by *harrafa*. Thus to change an '*ain*' to a '*ghain*' would change *ba'al*, a husband, into *baghl*, a mule, or by metathesis *kallama*, "he spoke," might become *kammala* "he completed." *Lawa* is properly "to twist," so that to twist a thing with the tongue would mean much the same thing as *harrafa*. It would thus seem that all these passages refer to Muhammad's contact with Jewish contemporaries who knew the Scriptures, presumably in Hebrew, and translated portions for him into Arabic,⁵ but wittingly altered words so as to deceive him. We have already noted passages which show that certain groups among the *Ahl al-Kitab* resented Muhammad's claim to have a revelation, and the continuation of II.75/70 actually shows us the change from friendliness to opposition, and anger that some among them still continued to tell him about their Scripture.

II.76/71: "When they meet those who have believed (i.e., the followers of Muhammad) they say: 'We (too) have believed'; but when they get alone with one another they say: 'Do ye converse with them about what God hath revealed to you. that they may dispute with you before your Lord? Have ye no sense?'
77/72: Know they not that Allah knows what they keep secret as well as what they let out?"

The Prophet's Arab opponents knew of these attempts to learn about Scripture from the *Ahl al-Kitab*. Not content with asserting that the substance of his message was but a rehash of the "tales of the ancients" (LXXXIII.13; LXVIII.15; XLVI.17/16; XXVII.68/70; XXIII.83/85; XVL24/26; VIII.31; VI.25), they even claimed to know that his message was only a devising of his in which others helped him, for he used to have copied down these "tales of the ancients," sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening, as they were recited to him XXV.4/5,5/6). To this his only reply is that One who knows what is secret in heaven and on earth has sent it down (XXV.6/7).⁶ Then when they charge that they know he is taught by a human (XVI.103/105), his reply is that the language of the person to whom they are referring is foreign whereas his message is in plain Arabic speech.⁷

In any case it is obvious that Muhammad did learn a good deal about the great characters of Scripture, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon, Jesus and John Baptist, as well as certain elements of the religious teaching of both the Jews and the Christians. The fact that what he learned of these revered characters came more often from uncanonical than from canonical sources, and that certain elements in the teachings of these religions were sadly misunderstood, is of less moment to our discussion than the fact that this material is incorporated

in his Scripture as revelation given to him in continuation and confirmation of previous Scripture. It must have been evident to any in his audience who had close acquaintance with the Old or the New Testament that his accounts of Biblical matters were far from accurate. There is evidence, indeed, in the *Sira* that on more than one occasion certain Jews in his audience made merry over his ignorance of Biblical matters. How then was he to justify his Scripture against them?

Could we answer that question fully we should have our final answer as to his doctrine of Scripture. Perhaps we can answer it in part, for we have a hint of the answer in the passage already mentioned where Muhammad says that the people of knowledge among these other communities recognize in his message the promise of their Lord (XVII.108). But what promise of their Lord?

Muhammad knows that the Jews disputed among themselves about the Book, and were in doubt and questioning (XLI.45; XI.110/112; X.93; XLV.17/16). He knows also that they and the Christians differed about Scriptural matters (II.113/107), so that on the Day of Resurrection Allah will have to decide between them on these matters. But if Scripture is really the same message revealed from the archetypal Book through the succession of prophets whom Allah sent, why should there be these questionings and doubts and disputes? Surely the only answer is that men have corrupted the message of the prophets. It will be remembered that this was the charge preferred against the Jews in earlier days by the Ebionites,⁸ those Judaeo-Christians whose communities to the east of the Jordan seem to have been still active even later than the Vth century, and to whose teachings the Qur'an presents at times such close resemblances, Their charge was that "false pericopes" had been introduced into the Old Testament in order to validate later Jewish teaching and practice,⁹ so that only by the removal of these "corruptions" could the teachings of the original revelation be recovered. According to the Ebionites it was the function of that angelic being whom they called the True Prophet, to care for the revelation of this original faith. This being was very closely associated with Adam, appeared as the bearer of revelation to both Abraham and Moses, and was in a way incarnated in Jesus.¹⁰ Now in Deut. XVIII.15 is the promise by Moses:

"A prophet will the Lord thy God raise up unto thee from the midst of thee, from thy brethren, like unto me. To him shall ye hearken."

and in Jno. XIV.26 is the promise by Jesus:

"But the Paraclete, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things."

In LXI.6 we have the well-known passage where Muhammad identifies himself with the promised Paraclete, so that in VII.157/156 we could well see his identification of himself with the promised prophet of Deuteronomy. This then would be the "promise of their Lord" which they should have recognized. If so it could well be the point of his chiding them for concealing the truth when they know it (III.71/64; cf. II.42/39,44/41).

Possibly some contact with Ebionite teaching in North Arabia gave the pattern for Muhammad's thought in this connection. The prophetic succession from Adam to Jesus and then to himself, with its curious emphasis on the names of Adam, Noah, Abraham, the Tribes and Moses in the succession,¹¹ the angelic figure associated with the transmission of revelation whom he equates with Gabriel and the Holy Spirit, the emphasis on the "heavenly book," the docetic Christology, and the charge of corrupting Scripture, all point in this direction.¹² His own interpretation of the promise, however, would seem to be original,¹³ and is for us the important thing, for it gave a ground on which he might base his claim that his Scripture was the final revelation.

The Scriptures known to his contemporaries were in the hands of the Jews and the Christians. Though the Jews followed the revelation as it had been delivered to Moses in the *Torah*, and the Christians that delivered to Jesus in the *Injil*, both Jews and Christians claimed to have Abraham as their father.¹⁴ Yet as he came in contact with these groups in his milieu he found that -

"The Jews say: 'The Christians have no foundation' and the Christians say: 'The Jews have no foundation,' though both read the Book." (II.113/107)

and in particular they disputed about Abraham (III.65/58). Consequently he went back to this Abraham from whom both Jews and Christians derived, but from whose teaching both must manifestly have departed and interprets his religion as a restoration of the "faith of Abraham." The steps of the argument are plain -

1) The gift of Scripture as a revelation of "the way of Allah" was a gift peculiarly associated with the family of Abraham (XXIX.27/26; cf LVII.26; IV.54/57)

2) The message given by revelation to Muhammad is that he follow the religion (*milla*) of Abraham (XVI.123/124; III.95/89; cf. IV.125/124; III.68/61; VI.161/162).

3) This religion of Abraham was what had already been given to Noah (XLII.13/11; XXXVII.83/81), and was later given to Moses and Jesus (XLII.13/11; cf. LVII.27).

4) It was revealed again to Muhammad, whose message is thus essentially that revealed to these earlier prophets and founders of communities (LIII.36/37,37/38; LXXXVII.18,19).

5) This Abrahamic faith is the "right religion" (*din qiyam*, VI.161/162), since Abraham was a *Hanif* (VI.161/162; II.- 135/129; III.67/60,95/89; XVI.120/121,123/124), was a Muslim (III.67/60; cf. XXII.78/77), and was in particular distinguished as not being "one of the associators" (VI.161/162; III.67/60,95/89; XVI.120/121,123/124; II.135/129) For this reason Allah made him a model (*imam*) of right religion to guide others (II.124/118), so that none but the debased of soul would dislike this faith of Abraham (II.130/124).

6) This religion Abraham bequeathed to his descendants (II.132/126), promising that those who followed him should be of him (XIV.36/39). The Jews and Christians of Muhammad's day, however, who disputed about Abraham (III.65/58) have clearly departed from that original faith, so that Muhammad can declare that it is something different from the religion of contemporary Jews and Christians (II.135/129; III.67/60).

7) Abraham had foreseen this defection of later days and had prayed that an Apostle might be raised up from his people to rehearse Allah's signs to them, teach them Scripture, and purify them (II.129/123).

That prayer had now been answered in the coming of Muhammad. He was raised up from among the Arabs whom the Jews recognized to be of the descendants of the Patriarch through Ishmael (*Baba mezi'a* 86b). He was sent to rehearse Allah's signs (II.151/146; LXII.2; III.164/158; LXV.11), to purify them (II.151/146; III.164/158; LXII.2), and to instruct them in Scripture and wisdom (*idem*, and see LIV.5; XVII.39/41), that wisdom (*hikma*) which is especially associated with the line of Abraham (IV.54/57). Therefore his community is the true succession to the *umma* of Abraham, walking in that "straight path" (*as-sirat al-mustaqim*) into which Allah had guided Abraham (XVI.121/122). It is they who are the "Hanifs to Allah" (XXII.31/32), the true Muslims, to whom the greatest of all sins is that of "association" (*shirk*), for it is this faith of Abraham which is laid upon Muhammad's followers (XXII.78/77), who are to find in him and in those who followed him their finest example (LX.4,6).

"O People of the Book. why dispute ye about Abraham, Seeing that neither the Torah nor the Injil were sent down till after him? Have ye no intelligence? Behold ye are they who have been disputing about a matter whereof ye have no knowledge. So why do ye dispute about a matter concerning which ye have no knowledge? Allah knows, but ye do not know. Abraham was not a Jew. And he was not a Christian, but he was a Hanif, a Muslim, and was not one of the associators. The nearest people to Abraham are surely those who have followed him, and this Prophet and those who believe" (III.65/58 ff.).

One consequence of this position was that Abraham had now to be brought into association with the developing cultus of Muhammad's religion, and this was secured by linking his story to that of the ancient shrine at Mecca which Muhammad, after his breach with the Jews and the Christians, had made the cult center for his community.¹⁵ In a fairly early Madinan passage which was later worked over (XIV.35/38ff.) we find Abraham represented as praying that "this land" be kept secure, and that he and his sons be kept free from idolatry, after which prayer he states that he has caused some of his descendants to settle in the valley of the Sacred House. In XXII.26/27 it is Allah who makes the site of the Sacred House habitable for Abraham, bids him purify it and prepare it for the pilgrimage rites and then summon folk to the pilgrimage. In II.125/119ff. Ishmael is associated with Abraham in the building of the Sacred House and in the preparation of it for the rites of the pilgrimage to this place, which in III.96/90 is declared to be the first such Sacred House founded for this purpose.

This brings us face to face with a very important element in the development of Muhammad's conception of his Qur'an as Scripture. These additions to the Abraham story are given out as "revealed" in the same way as other Scripture material was revealed. The earlier material concerning the Abraham story was "Scripture" inasmuch as it was reproducing in Arabic what was told among the *Ahl al-Kitab* about Abraham, even though parts of it came from legendary lore rather than from the Biblical account. Now, however, "Scripture" has expanded to include Muhammad's own additions to the story made in the interests of developing the cultus for his community.

A second consequence was that it brought about a further definition of Muhammad's own position with regard to Scripture. Scripture, as he understood the matter, was always associated with the labors of Allah's messengers the Prophets, to whom revelation was mediated by an angelic minister. From early in his ministry, as we have seen, he had spoken of himself as both *rasul* and *nabi*, claiming to have been called to his mission by that angelic minister (LIII.2-18). All the various functions ascribed to the prophets in the Scriptures of the People of the Book are in his pronouncements similarly ascribed to himself. But if he is the fulfilment of the promise to the People of the Book, and the Apostle whom Abraham had prayed might be raised up, then he is the final link in the prophetic succession, and *ipso facto* his Scripture the final revelation for mankind. In IV.163/161 we find him spoken of as on the same level as the other members of the prophetic succession; in II.108/102 as in particular on a level with Moses, and in IX.113/114ff. as on a level with Abraham, but in XXXIII.40 he is the "seal of the prophets."

This latter may have been an expression already familiar to his contemporaries. The word itself - *khatam* - which is used in the Qur'an only in this passage, is a word derived from Aramaic,¹⁶ where we find "seal" used in the sense of *obsignatio, finis, conclusio*. The claim to be the final member of the prophetic chain, the bearer of the final revelation, had been made by others before him. It is implicit in the Christian claim that God who in earlier days had spoken through the prophets had spoken a final word in the message of Jesus.¹⁷ Explicitly, however, Mani¹⁸ had claimed that he was the last in the succession of messengers from God, so that in the Arabic sources it is recorded that his followers called him "the Seal of the Prophets." As such Mani had issued his own Scriptures¹⁹ and had set forth a "new law" for his community. This is what Muhammad does. He will enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong (VII.157/156), will instruct his community in Scripture and in wisdom (II.151/146; III.164/158; LXII.2), will care for

his community (IX.128/129; V.55/60), establishing dietary laws for them to follow (II.172/167ff.; V.3/4ff.; VII.157/156),²⁰ and being the arbiter will decide differences that arise among them²¹ (IV.59/62,65/58). But more than that, it is now he who will decide also among those who still hold to former Scriptures (XLII.15/14), seeing that he has the commission to be Allah's further warner and bringer of good tidings to them also (V.19/22). Thus he can claim, as Mani had claimed, that his religion is to be victorious over all other religions (IX.33).

This naturally gives the Prophet a position of peculiar authority. What more natural, then, than that this position of authority be given confirmation by revelation. Late Madinan passages in the Qur'an have many such "revelations" with reference to the position of the Prophet in the community and the indulgences he may claim for himself in this privileged Status. The community is informed that his dignity must be guarded (XXXIII.53ff.; XLVIII.9; XLIX.1-7), that he must not be treated as on the same level with ordinary believers (XXIV.62ff.; XXXIII.36,56; IX.58ff.; LVIII.5/6). He is allowed special matrimonial privileges (XXXIII.50/49ff.), and his disposition of the spoils is not to be questioned (LIX.6,7). Most curious of all, his personal affairs, in particular his domestic difficulties with his wives, become the subject of "revelations" (LXVI.1-5; XXXIII.4-6,28-34,37-40,59; XXIV.1ff).

The charge often brought against Muhammad of having deliberately made use of the mechanism of revelation for his own ends can be, and not infrequently is, overstressed. The facts, however, are there in the Qur'an itself, and were fully recognized by the older Commentators, who apparently felt no necessity to explain them away. Our present interest in these matters is in the fact that they show what Muhammad himself is making of the concept of Scripture. He has obviously moved a long way from the idea of the heavenly archetype as that was thought of by his Jewish and Christian contemporaries. Yet the path of the development is clear. From that source of revelation, as he understood it, had come the stories of Moses, of Joseph, of David and Solomon, of Jesus and his mother, as these circulated among People of the Book, and those stories, as he was able to learn them, had in part to do with the domestic affairs of the prophets - of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, of the infancy of Moses and Pharaoh's daughter, of Moses' meeting with the daughters of Jethro, of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, of the barrenness of Zechariah's wife and the promise of John. It may thus have been a perfectly natural transition of thought for him to conclude that, since he belonged to the prophetic succession, "revelation" could concern itself with his domestic affairs as it had with theirs, without his having any realization of the enormous gulf between the way the People of the Book understood revelation in connection with these prophetic stories and the way he was using it with reference to his own circumstances. There is no need to assume insincerity in this case, any more than there is in the case of the founder of the Mormons in producing his Book. What happened in both these cases was the application to contemporary and personal circumstances of a notion of Scripture properly relevant to very different circumstances.

The important point is that Muhammad had come to think of revelation as at once the eternal and immutable word of God, and as applicable to the changing circumstances of his own situation. Both elements belonged to the concept of revelation as understood by the People of the Book. When Isaiah was commanded to write on a great scroll with a pen words concerning Maher-shelal-hash-baz (Isa. VIII), or to prophesy disaster in the year that Tartan came to Ashdod (Isa. XX); when Jeremiah had a message to give at the time king Zedekiah sent to him Pashur and Zephaniah to enquire about the war against Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. XXI), or when the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth (lay) of the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius the king (Zech. VII), those were all revelations concerned with immediate circumstances. But neither Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah or any other Old Testament prophet thought of his pronouncements as destined to form part of a Book of Scripture for a community. It was the community, long after these prophets had passed away, which gathered up those among their pronouncements in which, though originally addressed to local and particular situations, they nevertheless heard a message

of God which had eternal validity. it was this recognition by the community of the element of eternal validity which made them Scripture.

It was for this reason that later thought among the People of the Book tended more and more to regard the message of the divine messenger as a whole, rather than as piecemeal revelations. In Rabbinic thought it was the whole Torah, not just the Ten Commandments, that was given at Sinai.²² The compiler of IV Ezra pictures Ezra and his scribes at one session producing the twenty-four canonical and the seventy reserved books (IV Ezra. XIV.37-48), just as the writer of Slavonic Enoch represents the Patriarch dictating his visions to his sons. Thus we can understand why Muhammad's contemporaries raised the objection that if his preachments are indeed Scripture that ought to have been sent down all at once (XXV.32/34). He however knew from experience that "inspiration" seizes a man unexpectedly, and he was aware that proclamations from a religious leader are needed as circumstances arise, so he insists that his revelation is parcelled out piecemeal (XXV.32/34; XVII.106/107). The problem facing him was that of adjusting a conception of inspiration derived from one source to a concept of Scripture derived from another, without any clear perception of the nature of the problem. The parallel here with the case of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon is striking.

One inevitable consequence of such a situation, where the prophet himself is setting forth his pronouncements as Scripture for his community, is that the community finds itself bound to regard as of eternal validity pronouncements made in particular situations of limited and temporary relevance, and often made with very little understanding of what they involve when no longer connected with those local and temporary situations. A typical example in the case of the Qur'an is that of the *nasi'* in Sura IX.37, where the exigencies of the war with the Meccans called forth an abrogation of the custom of intercalation that had been introduced into Arabia in pre-Islamic days in order to bring the lunar months into accord with the seasons of the solar year, and by this abrogation has bound the Muslim community for all time to a lagging lunar calendar.²⁸ The regulations concerning polygamy, the veiling of women and slave concubinage were framed similarly in terms of a local situation. But local situations are subject to change, and at times in the Prophet's own lifetime the problems involved in changing situations arose. On his theory of Scripture how were they to be solved? By reference to the archetypal Book, for since this was with Allah He could confirm or abrogate what He wishes (XIII.39).

This notion of abrogation was not itself new. Paul in his Epistles had taught a doctrine of *abrogatio legis* in the sense that the ordinances which had been promulgated by one messenger from God were no longer valid as a whole when a new messenger had come with a fresh revelation of "the way of God" for a new generation of men. Thus Paul declares that the numerous regulations of the Law of Moses were a paedagogus to prepare men for the new law of Jesus, but many of them were abrogated by that new law proclaimed by Jesus (Rom. II-X; Gal. III-V).²⁴ So Montanus in Asia Minor, and Mani in Mesopotamia, though they admitted the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, taught that they were superseded by certain of their own teachings, and so proceeded to lay down laws and ordinances for the new communities they believed they were called to found.²⁵ If, therefore, Muhammad were a newly sent messenger from Allah, his formulation of regulations for the religious and social life of his community would be a natural consequence of his mission, and these regulations would abrogate, for those who followed him, the regulations they had previously been following. Jesus had said: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time ... but I say unto you" (Matt. V.21ff.), a more perfect formulation of the law being given to supersede a less perfect form. So for Muhammad to have made proclamation of new community legislation was quite in keeping with his claim to prophetic office. Those who did not believe in him might raise questions each time something new was proclaimed (IX.124/125,127/128), just as the Jews had raised questions at the new teaching of Jesus. The Meccans might even scoff at his proclamations (IX.65/66; V.57/62), telling him that he is uttering vanity (XXX.58). They might deny that he was sent from Allah (XIII.43), and say: "O Allah, if this be from Thee, rain down upon us stones from heaven" (VIII.32). But in this he

was but meeting with what of revelation before him had met (III.184/181), so his teaching of an *abrogatio legis* was in principle no different from that of those other messengers in whose succession he claimed to stand, for Allah who did the sending of the message could abrogate or confirm as He chose (XIII.39).

In the Qur'an, however, we find a quite different application of the principle of abrogation. The two relevant passages are -

XVI.101/103: "And when We substitute a verse in place of a verse - and Allah knows best what He sends down - they say: 'Thou art only a fabricator.' Nay, but most of them have no knowledge."

II.106/100: "Whatever verse We cancel or cause (thee) to forget. We bring one better than it or its like. Dost thou not know that Allah is powerful over everything?"

The point in both passages is that an earlier proclamation is being superseded by a later one. The first passage would seem to refer to some deliberate alteration of an ordinance by Muhammad, while the other at least suggests that in issuing some injunction he had forgotten an earlier statement of his own with which this new injunction was in conflict, so that when he was reminded of this it was necessary to explain the conflict.²⁶ In any case these verses form the basis for one section of the Masorah of the Qur'an, viz., that known as *nasikh wa mansukh*, which collects the various verses of the Qur'an whose statements stand in real or apparent contradiction with one another, and arranges them to show which are the abrogating and which the abrogated verses.²⁷

Finally, in the culture of his environment, Muhammad seems to have found a further ground on which to establish the superiority of his Scripture to all other Scriptures. If he is the seal of the prophets his religion must obviously be victorious over the other religions (IX.33; cf. LVIII.22),²⁸ and consequently his Scripture superior to theirs.

An exalted conception of the regard in which Scripture should be had seems to have been with him at an early period. We find Scripture referred to as honorable (*karim*, LVI.77/76), glorious (*majid*, L.1), sublime (*'aziz*, XLI.41), blessed (*mubarak*, VI.92,155/156), Which none should touch but the purified (LVI.79/78). It is taught by the Merciful Himself (LV.1 ff.), so that at its recital men ought to do obeisance (*sujud*, LXXXIV.21). It is to be recited in appropriate intonation (*tartil*, LXXIII.4), to which men should listen in silence (VII.204/203).

Much of this may have come to him along with his general concept of Scripture from the People of the Book, and that some of it did so come from them is clear from LIX.21:

"Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, thou wouldst have seen it humbling itself, cleaving asunder out of fear of Allah,"

which is but a reproduction of the Rabbinic legends about Sinai being humble for the reception of the Torah, not proud and disdainful like Tabor and Hermon and Carmel,²⁹ and about how it was wrenched from its anchorage in earth when the Torah came to be delivered upon it.³⁰ The People of the Book, however, were by no means prepared to accept Muhammad's "revelations" as on a level with those in the Books in their possession, even though he claims that Allah has put things in his message in order to convince the *Ahl al-Kitab* and remove their doubts (LXXIV.31 ff.). Allah desires, he tells them, that those who have "the knowledge" may know that this is the truth from their Lord, that they may believe in it and their hearts acquiesce in it (XXII.54/53). Some of them apparently did. Passages which speak of the learned among the Children of Israel recognizing his message (XXVI.197; XXVIII.52.53; XXIX.47/46; XLVI.10/9; VI.114; XIII.36) may mean no more than that they recognized the stories about various Biblical characters which

he told in his preaching, but when we read in XVII.107/108ff. (cf.XIII.36) that those to whom "the knowledge" has been given fall down in obeisance when they hear it recited, fall on their faces weeping, and in V.83/86ff. that the Christians with tears hail the message, and beg Allah to write them down as those that bear witness to it, this, if it can be taken at face value, indicates a much deeper impression made by his message.³¹ This need not be a surprise. At a much later date the curious Messianic mission of Sabbatai Zevi in 1666 caused such a tide of emotion as "never was seen before, nor will be again till the true redemption comes,"³² and the present writer can remember from his boyhood stories of the extravagant emotions stirred in certain groups when John Dowie announced himself in Australia as the Elijah whose coming was promised. A less stirring work than *Millennial Dawn* would be hard to imagine, yet in our own generation Russellite propagandists tell of folk so overcome at hearing it read that they fall on their faces weeping.

As a whole, however, the People of the Book were unresponsive (X.15/16; IV.61/64; II.89/83ff.,176/171; XLI.13/12,26/25; IX.124/125), indeed were rather contemptuous of its claims to be Scriptural (X.15/16; VII.203/202; XLI.26/25; XIII.43; IX.129/130) or to be anything more than his own invention (XXV.4/5; XXI.5; X.38/39; XI.13/16,35/37; XXXII.3/2; XLVI.8/7); calling it a medley of dreams (XXI.5), a vain babbling (XXV.30/32), the uttering of vanity (XXX.58). Since it but increases them in unbelief (V.64/69,68/72), he concludes that Allah has placed a veil between him and them when he recites it (XVII.45/47; XVIII.57/55; cf. XLI.5/4; VI.25),³³ and is encouraged by the assurance that the time will come when men will recognize its message (XXXVIII.88). Indeed, though men reject it the Jinn turn aside to hearken to it (XLVI.29/28), recognizing that it is a marvellous discourse (LXXII.1; cf. XLVI.-30/29).

On this latter point, that of its marvellousness, Islam has built a claim to the Qur'an's uniqueness among books of Scripture. The Merciful Himself taught it (LV.1ff.), but so did He teach Scripture to Moses (VII.145/142)³⁴ and to Jesus (III.48/43). It is true pages, in which are true Scriptures (XCVIII.2ff.), but that was the claim they also made. It was "sent down," but so were the other Scriptures. It recited the "signs" of Allah, but so did they. In it Allah set forth every kind of similitude (XVII.89/91), but the *mathal* was characteristic also of the Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians. If he can claim that it is something that could not have been devised save by Allah (X.37/38), as the same was true of them, for Amos long before had explained how God reveals His secret to His servants the prophets (Amos III.7) If the statements that "it clears up every-thing" (XVI.89/91), and is "an explanation of everything" (XII.111), mean that it contains all knowledge necessary to salvation, the same claim was made for the earlier Scriptures. If angels are its witnesses (IV.166/164), so, according to the Rabbis, were they witnesses to the Torah.³⁵

Wherein then lies this marvellousness which makes it unique? The Arabs claimed that they could produce the like (VIII.31), and so they are challenged on this point.

XI.13/16: "Do they say: 'He has invented it'? Say: 'Then produce ten Suras like it that have been invented, and call upon whom ye will apart from Allah, if ye be truth-speakers.'"

X.38/39: is the same wording save that they are challenged to produce only one Sura.

II.23/21: "If ye are in doubt about what We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a Sura like it, and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if ye are truth-speakers."

Then in XVII.88/90 his critics are told that if Jinn and men were to combine their efforts they could not produce its like. When we ask precisely what it was they could not imitate we have two hints as to the answer. In LII.34, which is a much earlier challenge than those just given, they are challenged to produce a discourse (*hadith*) like it. Then in XXVIII.49, where Muhammad's message is being compared by his audience to that of Moses, he says:

"Produce then a Book from Allah which guides better than the two of them (and) I will follow it, if ye be truth-speakers."

This would seem to mean that its uniqueness lies in the fact that it brings the message giving guidance to the way of Allah, the story of Allah's dealings with men and plans for men, in an Arabic medium that they could understand (XLIII.3/2; XII.2). The revelation formerly given to Abraham and confirmed again and again in the messages brought by the succession of prophets, had been corrupted by the Jews and the Christians, and even what they had in their hands was available only in a strange tongue.³⁷ But now to the last of the prophets Allah had made the message easy in his own tongue (XLIV.58; XIX.97), confirming in Arabic earlier Scripture (XLVI.12/11), that they might be able to take warning (XLII.7/5; VI.92). So it is a Book whose verses are made plain (*fassala*, XLI.3/2; XI.1; VII.114), whose signs are clear (XXII.16), and which will make plain those matters about which the people ask (V.101). This is why it was a marvellous discourse, and inimitable.

"Is it then not enough for them that We have sent down to thee the Book to be recited to them? Verily in that there is a mercy and a reminder for a community which believes" (XXIX.51/50).

There is no statement in the Qur'an that this has anything miraculous about it, beyond the fact that all revelation is in itself miraculous. Yet it is called a "clear sign" (*aya*, XXIX.49/48) and *aya* is the word for "miracle," so that at an early date Islamic orthodoxy developed a theory that the uniqueness of the Qur'an lay in the miraculousness of its matchless perfection as an Arabic composition. The outstanding cultural accomplishment of the pagan Arabs had been their poetry. The Qur'an is not poetry (XXXVI.69). It is in the rhymed prose of rhythmic structure in which the ancient soothsayers used to set forth their gnomic wisdom and which perhaps was a survival of a very ancient Semitic form for the proclamation of religious utterances.³⁸ As Muhammad used it to set forth the final restatement of the original faith of Abraham, however, it reached perfection, which not Jinn and men combined could emulate. This is the famous doctrine of *i'jaz al-Qur'an*, which to the present day has been the strongest factor working against any real critical approach among Muslim peoples to the study of the Qur'an as Scripture.

Notes

¹ cf. II.90/84 which states that they were envious that Allah should have sent down His grace to Muhammad; and II.109/103 which suggests that in their envy they tried to win back some of his converts.

² Bell in his note on this passage suggests that it refers to the oral law which the Jews wished to place on the same level as Scripture. That, however, hardly fits the words indicating some gain made by selling what they had written. This gain is referred to again in III.187/184.

³ i.e. they forget that there are injunctions forbidding such tampering with Scripture.

⁴ These seem to be three examples of what he means by making changes in the text, with what he regarded as the correct text in the latter part of the verse. The first of them *sami'na wa asaina* is given in II.93/87 as what the Children of Israel said when the covenant was made with them at Sinai, and in that passage Muhammad interprets the episode of the golden calf as their punishment for having said "We hear and disobey," when they should have said "We hear and obey." He later learned that these latter words are what they actually did say, and speaks of it with approval (V.7/50; IV.46/49), as it was the phrase he recommended members of his community to use (XXIV.51/50; cf. II.285). Thus it would seem that when he first learned the phrase from the Jews his informants deliberately misled him as to the words "we will do and be obedient" in Ex. XXIV.7, a deception about which he afterwards found out. The second *wasma' ghaira musma'in* Bell takes to be a reference to the *Shema'* which the Jews around him pronounced so

indistinctly that he could not catch it. Possibly all three words are what they said, i.e., when he wanted to learn the *Shema'* they would commence correctly with the "Hear," but then instead of completing it as he expected, they would make it run: "Hear! - what you are not going to hear." The third *ra'ina* is mentioned also in II.104/98, where he urges them to say *unzurna*, instead of *ra'ina*. It apparently refers to some passage containing "behold," "look," "regard" or some such word in Hebrew, which instead of translating by *ra'a = nazara*, they perverted into *ra'a* with an *'ain*, which gave the wrong meaning. So he chides them that they did not use the verb *nazara* when rendering it into Arabic so that he would have understood it properly. A different explanation of these passages is given by J. Obermann in an article "Koran and Agada" in *AJSL*, LVIII, (1941), pp. 53-48.

⁵ There is a well-known tradition, which al-Baidiwi quotes in his comment on III.23/22, relating how Muhammad used to visit the Jewish Beth Hammidrash, and one may assume that in his day they were accustomed to do as they did in 'Umar's day, read their Scriptures in Hebrew and give the meaning in Arabic. See the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari III.198.

⁶ This is the same kind of answer as was made by the founder of the Mormons when his unfriendly critics pointed out that the speeches of Nephi in his Book contained quotations from the Westminster Catechism.

⁷ Tradition has preserved the names of a number of foreigners with whom Muhammad was said to have been in contact in Mecca, any one or whom may have been the person referred to in the verse. At-Tabari assembles these traditions in his Commentary on this verse, and the various references to them are given in the volume *From the Pyramids to Paul*, New York, 1935. pp. 98-100.

⁸ This has been recently discussed again by H. J. Schoeps in his *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit*, Tübingen. 1950, p. 88.

⁹ See on this Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, Tübingen, 1949.

¹⁰ See Schoeps, *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit*, pp. 32, 33.

¹¹ In later Muslim writings Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses are associated with Jesus and Muhammad as a special group set apart among the prophets and distinguished by the title *ulu'l-azm*.

¹² These connections were pointed out by A. Schlatter in a paper, "Die Entwicklung des jüdischen Christentums zum Islam," in *Evang. Miss. Mag.* for 1918, pp. 251-264. and have had attention called to them more recently by H. J. Schoeps in a section "Ebionitische Elemente im Islam" in his *Theo. U. Gesch.* pp. 334-345.

¹³ K. Ahrens, *Muhammad als Religionsstifter*, p. 186, thinks we can see how Muhammad from what he learned of Jewish and Christian teaching was led to fix his attention on Abraham whose religion was anterior to both.

¹⁴ cf. Matt. III.9; Jon. VIII.33-39 (with Strack-Billerbeck's *Kommentar*, I.116 ff.); Gal. III.29, it is noteworthy that the writer of the genealogy of Jesus in Matt. I.1 begins his line of descent of Jesus as Saviour with Abraham.

¹⁵ On this matter or the change of the *qibla* see Bell, *Origin of Islam*, p. 144. It was Snouck Hurgronje in his *Het Mekaansche Feest*, pp. 28ff, who drew particular attention to this sudden change in the Qur'anic picture of Abraham, who in the early Suras is mentioned, as also Ishmael, merely as one of the vague religious figures of the past, but after the breach with the Jews suddenly becomes associated with Arabia and the Arabs, built the Ka'ba and is the first of the Muslims.

¹⁶ See my *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, pp. 120, 121.

¹⁷ Heb. I.1. The same notion lies behind the narrative of the Transfiguration in Matt. XVII, and in Paul's statement in Rom. X.4 that Christ is the "end of the Law," in a somewhat different sense the Talmud states (*Baba mezi'a* 85b, 86a) that R. Yehuda ha-Nasi and R. Nathan are the end of the Mishna (*sof mishna*) and

Rab Ashi and Rabina b. Huna are the end of the teaching (*sof hora'a*), meaning that after their teaching there was nothing to be added. On the idea of **Χριστὸς τέλος νόμου** see now Schoeps *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit*, pp. 551-559.

¹⁸ In actual Manichaean texts this appears clearly in both the Coptic documents, e.g., *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. Polotsky, p. 11 line 25, and in the Chinese text published in the *Journal asiatique* for 1913, p. 125. and is implicit in the statement of the Armenian writer Eznik of Kolb that Mani preached his religion as the final religion and superior to all others. Abu'l-Ma'ali in Kessler's *Mani*, p. 375 says; "they call Mani the Seal of the Prophets," and Ibn al-Murtadi (*ibid.*, p. 355), says that in Yazdanbakht's book Mani was set forth as the Seal of the Prophets, (see also al-Biruni, *Chronologie*, p. 190). The wording of these Arabic writers, however, may have been drawn from the Qur'anic phrase which was familiar to them, and which they recognized was expressing the same idea.

¹⁹ The material in the Coptic *Kephalaia* makes it quite clear that Mani was constructing a tripartite Canon of Scripture in the style of the Jewish and Christian Canons known in the area of his upbringing. See Schmidt in *Ein Mani-Fund in Aegypten*, Berlin, 1933, pp. 35, 36.

²⁰ It is somewhat curious to notice what importance seems to be given to this matter of dietary regulation. One remembers that among the injunctions to the Gentile Christians from the Apostolic gathering in Jerusalem was abstinence from certain foods (Acts XV.20). More to the point, however, are the food restrictions which Mani placed on his community, and which aroused the interest of their contemporaries both in the East and in the West. The Chinese text printed in *Journal asiatique* for 1913. pp. 264ff., comments on this, as does Augustine in his anti-Manichaean writings. e.g., *de moribus Manich.* xiii § 59. 30; xlv § 31-35: x § 36, 37: *de Haer.* xlvi. Similarly among the ordinances of the Montanists were some which enjoined abstinence from certain kinds of food.

²¹ cf. also IV.105/106; XXIV.48/47 ff.

²² *Ex Rabba*, xxviii, 6 goes even further and suggests that all the messages of the later prophets were also given there.

²³ See Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, p. 30; al-Biruni, *Chronologie*, pp. 12 and 62, and the Commentaries on IX.37. There are critical discussions of the matter by C.A. Nallino *Ilm al-Falak 'ind at-Arab*, Rome, 1911, pp. 85-90; Axel Moberg, *An-Nasi' in der islamischen Tradition*, Lund, 1931; J. Fück in *OLZ*, 1933, col. 280 ff., and M. Plessner in *Der Islam XXI*, (1933), pp. 226-228.

²⁴ How this is both a confirmation of God's law and an abrogation of the Mosaic law is discussed in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Bk. VI. § 22 and 23.

²⁵ For Montanus see Lawlor in *ERE*, VIII,828; for Mani see Alexander of Lycopolis. cap. v and *Acta Archalai* cap. xii.

²⁶ al-Wahidi, *Asbab an-Nuzul*, Cairo, 1315 A.H., pp. 211, 212 says that the tradition with regard to the first passage was that unbelievers objected that Muhammad at one time bade his followers do such and such, but later forbade it, or eased the regulations for them, and on p. 23 says with regard to the second passage that unbelievers used to point out how Muhammad would say one thing on one day and then go back on it another day, which to them proved that he was only producing things out of his own head not giving revelation material that he had received from Allah.

²⁷ There were works being written on this subject before the middle of the second Islamic century, if we can trust the lists in *Fihrist* p. 37. The subject occupied the attention of no less distinguished authorities than Ibn al-Kalbi (c.180) and Abu 'Ubaid al-Qasim b. Sallam (d.224). One of the best known treatises is that by Ibn Salama printed on the margin of al-Wahidi's *Asbab an-Nuzul*, and often quoted in Nöldeke-Schwally under the name of Hibatallah.

²⁸ So in the Turfan fragment S 9 d 15 ff. Mani's religion is to rule over all others and in the fragment T II D 126 (Andreas-Henning.II.415) Mani enumerates the points in which his religion is superior to previous religions.

²⁹ cf. the Targum to Judges V.5 in de Lagarde *Prophetae chaldaice* (1872), p. 39; Praetorius *Targum zum Buch der Richter* (1900), p. 11.

³⁰ Friedmann's Nishpahim to *Seder Eliyahu zuta* (Wien, 1904), p. 55.

³¹ cf. XXXIX.23/24: "Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a Book in harmony with itself, a *mathani* at which the skins of those who fear the Lord do creep. But then their skins and hearts soften at the remembrance of Allah. That is Allah's guidance whereby He guides whom He chooses."

³² de Botton quoted in Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 284.

³³ Paul's words in II Cor. iii,14-16 come immediately to mind, but the coincidence in the use of this image is probably fortuitous.

³⁴ This was already familiar teaching. *Ex. Rabba* ii,6 states that God Himself taught Moses the Torah. Jesus said: "I have not spoken of myself. but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (Jno. XII.49). Later Montanus claimed that the phrases he uttered in his preaching were the *ipsissima verba* of the Almighty.

³⁵ Sura IV.82/84 argues that were it from other than Allah it would contain contradictions. In view of the many contradictions it does contain this seems to us strange, but perhaps it was meant to say that the stories etc., which Muhammad was using in his preaching, were not different from those known to and repeated by the Jews and Christians.

³⁶ See the *Orehot Zaddikim* quoted in Ginzberg, [Legends of the Jews](#), V, 417.

³⁷ It is certain that no Arabic version of either the Old or the New Testament was current in Muhammad's day, though it is not impossible that in North Arabia some attempts at rendering portions of it into Arabic had been made. Perhaps Sura XLI.44 reflects the fact that his audiences were accustomed to Scripture in a non-Arabic form.

³⁸ This was argued with great learning by D. H. Müller in his *Die Propheten in ihrer ursprünglichen Form; die Grundgesetze der Ursemitischen Poesie erschlossen und nachgewiesen in Bibel, Keilinschriften und Koran*, Wien, 1896.