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## The Eschatological Kerygma of the Early Qur'an<sup>1</sup>

Forthcoming in *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in the Abrahamic Religions* (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.), edited by Hagit Amirav, Emmanouela Grypeou, and Guy Stroumsa, Leuven: Peeters.

### Introduction

Among the different topics treated in the Qur'an, eschatology – i.e., statements pertaining to the end of the world, the Resurrection (*al-qiyāma*), the “Day of Judgement” (*yawm al-dīn*), and otherworldly rewards and punishments – is particularly fundamental. Not only is the idea of an ultimate reckoning invoked throughout the entire Qur'an, but many of the briefest surahs (for instance, Q 77–92, 95–96, 99–104, 107, and 111) are almost exclusively dominated by eschatological motifs, with only a very limited amount of confirmatory narrative, no polemical exchanges, and no quasi-legal content. It is furthermore striking that such eschatologically focused texts generally exhibit very brief verses. If, as I argue elsewhere, the mean verse length (MVL) of Qur'anic surahs tended to increase over time,<sup>2</sup> the surahs in question must belong to the earliest layer of the Qur'anic recitations – a view that accords well with the fact that many of them exhibit a comparatively low degree of structural complexity, consisting only of a sequence of several paragraph-like verse groups.

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<sup>1</sup> I should like to record my gratitude to David Kiltz and Yousef Kouriyhe for conversations about some of the Biblical and Syriac material treated in this chapter during my tenure at the *Corpus Coranicum* project between 2007 and 2010. I am also indebted to Emran El-Badawi for sharing the proofs of his monograph *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, on which all references to his study are based in the hope that the pagination has remained identical, and to Christopher Melchert for taking the time to produce a detailed list of corrections.

<sup>2</sup> See Sinai, “Inner-Qur'anic Chronology”.

Eschatology, then, can plausibly be held to constitute the first major subject of the Qur'anic proclamations, a sort of stem cell for the genesis of the Qur'an as a whole. This view, while bound to be doubtful to those who would question the feasibility of a relative chronology of the Qur'anic recitations,<sup>3</sup> is not novel: that the original impetus behind Muhammad's first proclamations was eschatology rather than an explicit avowal of monotheism was recognized as early as 1894 by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and restated in 1922 by Wilhelm Rudolph.<sup>4</sup>

A seminal contribution to the study of Qur'anic eschatology is arguably Tor Andrae's German monograph *The Origins of Islam and Christianity* (1926), which establishes a close proximity between the Qur'an and Syriac Christianity, in particular the writings of Ephrem (d. 373).<sup>5</sup> Andrae's work fits in well with the increasing emphasis that present-day scholars have come to place on the importance of Syriac literature as a backdrop to the Qur'an,<sup>6</sup> in particular on the genre of metrical homilies (*mimrē*).<sup>7</sup> The present chapter will in many

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<sup>3</sup> See Reynolds, "Le problème de la chronologie"; for a response see Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology".

<sup>4</sup> Hurgronje, "Une Nouvelle Biographie", pp. 339–340; Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, pp. 28–29. – An earlier publication of mine endorses Harris Birkeland's theory that the short monothematic surahs 93, 94, 105, 106, and 108, which are almost devoid of explicit eschatological references (the exception being Q 93:4), precede the remainder of the Qur'anic recitations, and postulates a subsequent "eschatological turn"; see Sinai, "Qur'anic Self-Referentiality", pp. 107–108. For a partial revision of this opinion see Sinai, "The Qur'an as Process", pp. 425–429 (where I conjecture only the priority of surahs 105 and 106).

<sup>5</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*. The work has been translated into French under the title *Les origines de l'islam et le christianisme*, Paris 1955. (In what follows, all translations of quotations from Andrae's book are mine and were made on the basis of the German original.)

<sup>6</sup> Already Mingana, "Syriac Influence" observes the pervasive presence in the Qur'an of names and religious terms that are etymologically derived from Syriac. More recently, several independent case studies of Qur'anic narratives have impressively confirmed the importance of Syriac sources: Griffith, "Christian Lore"; van Bladel, "*Alexander Legend*"; Witztum, "Joseph Among the Ishmaelites". See also the general remarks in Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, pp. 26–27.

<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, *Biblical Subtext*, pp. 230–253 (but see the concluding section below for some reservations); Griffith, *Bible*, pp. 42–43.

respects retrace Andrae's footsteps, although in contrast to Andrae my focus is above all going to be on those surahs that are likely to be early, rather than on the entire corpus. My chief interest is thus to arrive at a better understanding specifically of the Qur'an's "primary message", its original "kerygma",<sup>8</sup> in the hope of thereby making better sense of how the Qur'anic phenomenon got under way.

The Qur'anic text base upon which I rely in this endeavour merits some clarification. As adumbrated above and justified elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> I make the assumption that, in the absence of opposing considerations, a surah whose MVL is significantly lower than that of another one is likely to be earlier than the latter.<sup>10</sup> Re-arranging the Qur'an's 114 surahs by increasing MVL should therefore give us at least an approximate sense of their relative chronological order, even though such a rearrangement by MVL must by no means be mistaken for a strict relative chronology. My attempt to delineate the Qur'an's primary message will mainly draw on those surahs displaying a MVL below 50 transcription letters, with an emphasis on surahs whose MVL is below 35.<sup>11</sup> For a rearrangement of Qur'anic surahs by increasing MVL and for details on how these values were computed, the reader is asked to refer to Appendix 1.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I borrow both expressions from Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>9</sup> Once again see Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology".

<sup>10</sup> Note that this is a probabilistic assertion: I am not committing myself to the claim that any minute discrepancy in MVL is chronologically significant, only to the weaker claim that statistically significant divergences in MVL create a prima facie probability that the surah with the lower MVL is chronologically earlier.

<sup>11</sup> In order to convey a sense of proportion, it might be useful to note that the Qur'an contains twenty-eight surahs, normally dated to the late Meccan and Medinan periods, exhibiting a MVL transcending a hundred transcription letters (see Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology"). Individual verses can of course be much longer (see, for instance, Q 2:282 with a length of 843 transcription letters).

<sup>12</sup> See in more detail Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology". – Some of the surahs used in this study include verses or verse groups that are relatively uncontroversially identifiable as later interpolations, either because their verse length is markedly higher than that of their literary context or because they employ terminology that is

The set of surahs thus delimited – namely, by the criterion of exhibiting a MVL below 50 – includes all the eschatologically dominated surahs mentioned above, and it excludes many (albeit not all) surahs exhibiting a significant portion of narrative and/or polemics, which are plausibly dated later. However, I do not hesitate to occasionally quote passages from surahs exhibiting a MVL narrowly above 50 (e.g., surahs 50 and 76) when these appear to complement the general picture emerging from my primary text base.

Why is it worthwhile to revisit Andrae's book on Qur'anic eschatology? Firstly, almost ninety years after its publication, its findings and conclusions merit critical scrutiny and partial restating in the light of the current state of Qur'anic scholarship, which has outgrown the tendency of Andrae and other 19th and early 20th century scholars to envisage Muhammad merely as the passive recipient of external influences. In particular, the early Qur'an's complex relationship to the Syriac *mimrē* corpus, which combines striking convergences with a number of equally striking differences, has in my view not yet been satisfactorily described. Secondly, Andrae has an unfortunate habit of quoting Greek translations and adaptations of Ephrem's writings rather than the original Syriac material (and where he does quote the latter, he relies on the now outdated 18th-century Roman edition of Ephrem). Throughout this chapter I shall therefore provide relatively ample references to the metrical homilies and hymns (*madrāšē*) attributed to Ephrem in editions that possess contemporary currency, as well as to eight eschatological homilies by Jacob of

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otherwise characteristic of surahs with much higher MVL. Appendix 1 also includes a list of these putative insertions.

Serugh (d. 521) that Andrae did not consult.<sup>13</sup> It must be noted that the authenticity of many of the homilies ascribed to Ephrem is doubtful, although a pre-Qur'anic dating would still appear to be the most reasonable default position: i.e., in the absence of significant evidence to the contrary, it seems likely that even the pseudonymous works convey a valuable impression of the motifs and concepts that were current in the pre-Qur'anic Syriac homiletic tradition.<sup>14</sup> In any case, my general presentation of the relationship between early Qur'anic eschatology and the Syriac tradition would have sufficient support even if one were to rely only on Ephrem's hymns and on the eschatological homilies of Jacob of Serugh.

## **Q 102 as an entry point**

A convenient entry point for our inquiry is supplied by surah 102, which concisely illustrates the early Qur'anic kerygma's most basic propositions and also provides a first occasion to probe its intersection with Biblical and Syriac-Christian literature.

1<sup>1</sup> Rivalry to have more (*al-takātur*) has distracted you

2<sup>2</sup> until you visit the tombs.

2<sup>3</sup> No! You will come to know!

4<sup>4</sup> Again: no! You will come to know!

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<sup>13</sup> Abbreviations for frequently cited Syriac sources (CN, ES, HF, HP, HS) are decoded in the bibliography at the end of this contribution. Note that *mimrē* are quoted by hemistichs, here abbreviated as "ll." = "lines", whereas *madrāšē* are simply quoted by stanzas.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed assessment see Beck's remarks at the beginning of the translation volumes of ES I–IV (the soundness of which I do not claim to be competent to judge). In two cases, Beck suspects that a particular homily could have remained in flux until, or even date from, the Islamic period: in the case of ES III, no. 4, he assumes a gradual process of literary growth and even detects a possible echo of Islam in it; and ES III, no. 5 he considers to be a pseudonymous apocalypse that dates entirely from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> No! If only you knew with certain knowledge!

**3** <sup>6</sup> You will indeed see the Fire (*al-ğahīm*)!

<sup>7</sup> Again, you will indeed see it with the eye of certainty!

<sup>8</sup> Again, on that day you will indeed be asked about (your earthly) bliss!<sup>15</sup>

The piece is composed of three verse groups, indicated above by bold numerals.<sup>16</sup> First comes a categorical reproach (vv. 1–2), marked off from the remainder of the text by a change in rhyme between vv. 2 and 3.<sup>17</sup> The accusation levelled at the audience is that of vying to have “more” (*k-t-r*) until they are dead and buried.<sup>18</sup> While *takātur* morphologically conveys the

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<sup>15</sup> My English renderings of Qur'anic passages are based on (but not faithful quotations of) the translation by Alan Jones, published in 2007 by the Gibb Memorial Trust.

<sup>16</sup> My division of the text assumes (against Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 232) that vv. 5 and 6 are not linked to each other as counterfactual conditional and main clause. In defense of my construal of the passage, I would adduce the following considerations: (i) the obvious parallelism between vv. 3–4 and vv. 6–7, which suggests that v. 6, like v. 3, marks the beginning of a new subsection; (ii) the fact that *la-tarawunna* in v. 6 is likely to refer to the same thing as in v. 7, namely, to a first-hand encounter with the fire of hell in the hereafter, rather than to a vivid anticipation of it (seeing it in the mind's eye, as it were) in the here and now. Thus construed, v. 6 cannot be conditionally linked to v. 5, for surely the text is not saying that knowing the threat of hell to be true is a precondition for damnation (which would entail that one could escape damnation through ignorance).

<sup>17</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of Qur'anic rhyme see Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 65–115.

<sup>18</sup> I am inclined to construe the occurrence of the verb “to visit” (*zāra*) in Q 102:2 as a casual way of underscoring that death is not the ultimate end: everyone who is buried will inevitably be resurrected and will accordingly have only paid a temporary “visit” to the grave. Intertextual support for my understanding of the verse is found in one of the homilies attributed to Ephrem (considered to be inauthentic by Beck), which paraphrases death in a manner very similar to Q 102:2: “He who sojourns in the womb / will enter the grave and sojourn there” (ES I, no. 4, ll. 19–20). Note that Ephrem's double use of the verb *šrā* may also be perceived as emphasizing, like the Qur'anic *zāra*, the temporariness of one's residence in the grave. – By contrast, Islamic exegesis (*tafsīr*) preserves the view that Q 102:2 is to be understood as referring to a literal visiting of graves. For instance, the early exegete Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (*Tafsīr*, ad Q 102:1–2) tells the story of how two clans of the Quraysh entered into an argument in which each of them boasted (*iftaharū*) of being more numerous or having more illustrious ancestors than the other. This then led them to visit the graves of their ancestors in order to establish proper numbers. I am extremely sceptical of such a literal understanding of *zāra* for the following

connotation of reciprocal effort (“trying to have more than one another”), its derivation from the root *k-t-r* also evokes the vice of *pleonexia*, of insatiably wanting to “have more”, against which Jesus warns his hearers in Luke 12:15 and also in Mark 7:22 (cf. also Romans 1:29, 1 Cor. 6:10, and the admonishment against “wanting to be rich”, *boulesthai ploutein*, in 1 Tim. 6:9).<sup>19</sup> The verse does not, however, need to be construed as a targeted allusion to the New Testament, for similar chastisements of material covetousness are easily come by in the Syriac homiletic tradition: already Andrae refers to Ephrem’s condemnation of the fact that “he who receives asks for more (*šā<sup>o</sup>el yattirā*)”,<sup>20</sup> and similar language is used by Jacob of

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reasons: (i) It suspiciously displays the tendency of a significant part of the early *tafsīr* tradition to interpret the Qur’anic text by embedding it within colourful background narratives. (ii) Muqātil’s narrative is quite clearly not a report enshrining genuine historical information, but simply an extrapolation from and implicitly based on other Qur’anic verses, e.g. the statement cited in Q 34:35 (“And they have said: ‘We have more wealth and children. We shall not be punished’” – note the overlap between the Qur’anic *naḥnu aḡtaru amwālan wa-awlādān* and Muqātil’s use of the phrase *naḥnu aḡtaru sayyidan / ‘adadan*) and Q 57:20, where *takāturun fi l-amwālī wa-l-awlād* is juxtaposed with *tafāḡurun baynakum* (the latter having the same root as the verb *iftaḡara* at the beginning of Muqātil’s anecdote). (iii) Muqātil’s reading is certainly not the only interpretation of 102:2 found in the *tafsīr* tradition; for instance, al-Ṭabarī cites a number of traditions that simply paraphrase the verse as *ḡattā šārū min ahli l-qubūri* or *ḡattā māṭū ḡalālān*. For a reasoned plea in defence of linking the verse to a literal visiting of graves see however Angelika Neuwirth, *Poetische Prophetie*, pp. 127–128. But note that the fact, highlighted by Neuwirth, that 102:2 employs *maqābir* rather than the customary *qubūr* (cf. Q 82:4, 100:9) could simply be due to the need to find a word that rhymes with *takātur* in v. 1.

<sup>19</sup> On the significance of the sixth form see Wright, *Grammar*, vol. 1, pp. 38–40. A link between *takātur* and *pleonexia* is casually suggested, albeit without Biblical references, in Künstlinger, “Einiges über die Namen”, p. 619. For some weighty reservations against this hypothetical link between *takātur* and *pleonexia* see Neuwirth, *Poetische Prophetie*, pp. 126–129. Yet *pace* Neuwirth, I cannot help but remain struck by Künstlinger’s suggestion. It is certainly correct that *pleonexia*, unlike the Arabic term *takātur*, lacks the connotation of competition with others, yet this in no way rules out that the Qur’an’s original audience would have detected the same intertextual resonance in the word as Künstlinger. Of course, Neuwirth is right that my understanding of *takātur* precludes a literal understanding of v. 2 (see previous note).

<sup>20</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 130, referring to CN 74:20. Cf. also CN 74:22: “Avariciously (*ya<sup>c</sup>nā*) he brings together and multiplies treasures ...” Note that *ya<sup>c</sup>nutā* is the word by which the Peshitta renders *pleonexia* at Luke 12:15 (see Kiraz, *Comparative Edition*).

Serugh: “And behold, we are stirred up, agitated, and haughty / and assiduous to acquire more (*yattirātā*) every day.”<sup>21</sup> While Ephrem’s and Jacob’s use of *yattir* may indeed echo the Peshitta’s rendering of Luke 12:15,<sup>22</sup> there is no reason to assume that a similarly direct link obtains between Luke and the Qur’an (see below). Incidentally, the fact that the Ephremic hymn quoted by Andrae repeatedly contrasts man’s exploits and ambitions with the inevitability of his death constitutes a further resemblance to Q 102:1–2.<sup>23</sup>

The initial couplet of surah 102 is followed by two groups of three verses each. The first one of them, Section 2, is opened by an unspecific threat (v. 3) that is immediately repeated (v. 4), whereupon its object is qualified as something that is amenable to being known “with certain knowledge” (v. 5). What the addressees are actually threatened with is only specified at the beginning of Section 3, in v. 6, which explicitly invokes “the Fire” (*al-ğāḥīm*). V. 7 is once again a partial repetition of the preceding verse and leads up to the surah’s ultimate vanishing point, the concluding assertion that the addressees will inevitably be questioned about their earthly “bliss” (v. 8).<sup>24</sup> Sections 2 and 3 thus exhibit a rhetorical

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<sup>21</sup> HS, no. 31, ll. 216–217.

<sup>22</sup> Luke has Jesus justify his warning against *pleonexia* with the words “for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (*en tō perisseuein ... ek tōn hyparchontōn autō*)”, which the Peshitta renders as *yattirutā d-neksē* (other Syriac translations have *yutrānā / yutrānē d-neksē*, which is derived from the same root; see Kiraz, *Comparative Edition*).

<sup>23</sup> This also confirms my rendering of Q 102:2, against the alternative view discussed in n. 18 above.

<sup>24</sup> Although other Qur’anic surahs use the same expression (*al-na‘īm*) to designate paradise, in Q 102:8 it must obviously mean the enjoyment of earthly pleasures during one’s life. For a roughly equivalent occurrence of “pleasure” (*nyāḥā*) and “luxury” (*purpā‘ā*) see ES I, no. 3, l. 271.



development from enigma to resolution that endows the entire surah with a palpably climactic organization.<sup>25</sup>

The fundamental message of surah 102 is at once condemnatory (vv. 1–2) and minatory (vv. 3–8). Indeed, if the rhyme change between vv. 2 and 3 is viewed as the text's main hinge, its structure tantalizingly recalls the sequence of reproach (*Scheltwort*) and threat (*Drohwort*) that has been recognized as a basic literary pattern of prophetic pronouncements in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>26</sup> Surah 102 may thus be viewed as encapsulating what I take to be the two principal dimensions of the early Qur'anic kerygma:

- (i) a certain moral vision that involves both a radical critique of the Qur'an's addressees (cf. surah 102's use of the second person plural) or of "man" (*al-insān*) in general,<sup>27</sup> as well as the endorsement of specific social and religious virtues;
- (ii) the eschatological dimension proper, which ranges from terse threats and warnings asserting a posthumous reckoning to graphic depictions of the ultimate disintegration of the cosmos and of paradise and hell.

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<sup>25</sup> A similar procession from enigma to resolution can be detected in other early Qur'anic proclamations, cf. the use of deliberately ambiguous oath passages, the eschatological purport of which is clarified later in the text (cf. Q 100, discussed below), and of didactic questions (*mā adrāka ...*), as in surah 104.

<sup>26</sup> See Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 184–186 (giving Amos 4:1–2 as an example). Of course, most Biblical prophets threaten their audience with innerworldly punishments rather than with a divine judgement preceded by a universal resurrection. – The same succession of a condemnation of present misbehaviour and an announcement of future consequences also appears elsewhere in the early Qur'an, for example, in Q 104:1–4 and Q 83:1–6.

<sup>27</sup> For some early third-person statements about "man" see Q 70:19–21, 75:5–6.14–15, 90:4, 95:4–5, 96:6–7, 100:6–8, 103:2.

It is one of the main merits of Andrae's work not to have treated the latter dimension in isolation from the former one, and to have recognized how profoundly the Qur'an's conception of righteous behaviour is shaped by anticipation of the Judgement.<sup>28</sup> Following Andrae's lead, I shall first devote significant attention to the early Qur'an's moral vision before turning to explicit statements about the Day of Judgement and the hereafter.

### **The moral vision of the early Qur'an**

The early Qur'an's moral critique of its audience has an obvious social aspect: many of the offences that are so fervently targeted by the early Qur'anic proclamations centre upon avarice (Q 102:1) and a fundamentally misguided attitude to material wealth. Vehement criticism is directed against the excessive "love" (Q 89:20, 100:8) of possessions and their "hoarding" (*ḡama'a*) and "counting" (Q 104:2, 70:18; see also the condemnations of miserliness in 92:8 and 53:34), as well as the illusion that material wealth could guarantee immortality (Q 104:3), when in reality it will be of no avail at all in the hereafter (Q 92:11). Further offences related to the acquisition and retention of property are the use of false measures (Q 83:1–3; cf. 55:7–9 as well as the later passage 26:181–183) and failure to provide for, or downright exploitation of, orphans and the poor (Q 69:34; 74:44; 89:17–19, 90:14–16, 107:2–3). In addition, Q 104:1–3 associate the love of wealth with slander and calumny.<sup>29</sup>

There are also accusations of a specifically religious nature, most prominently the charge of denying (*kaḏḏaba*) the reality of the Judgement (*dīn*) (Q 82:9, 83:11, 95:7, 107:1) or

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<sup>28</sup> See the remarks in Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> This (traditional) interpretation of Q 104:2 is supported by the use of the root *h-m-z* in Q 68:11 and 23:97, and of *l-m-z* in 9:58.79 and 49:11.

of the hereafter (Q 92:9 mentions denial of *al-ḥusnā*, presumably the “fairest” reward that awaits man in paradise).<sup>30</sup> Several passages describe this attitude of denial as an act of “turning one’s back” (*tawallā*, see Q 75:32, 92:16, 96:13; cf. 70:17 and 74:23, which use *adbara*), thus depicting it as the wilful rejection of an evident truth. Man is also indicted for ingratitude to his divine creator and judge (Q 80:17–22, 82:6, 100:6). Three verses (80:5, 92:8–9, 96:7) censure man’s proclivity to “consider himself sufficient” (*istaḡnā*), i.e., his refusal to cultivate a proper attitude of fear (*taqwā*) towards his divine creator and judge.<sup>31</sup> On the behavioural level, we find condemnations of failing to perform the prayer (74:43, 75:31, 77:48) as well as of insincere and ostentatious praying (107:4–6).

These social and religious vices are presented as intimately and inextricably intertwined. For instance, surah 107 identifies “the one who denies the Judgement” (*allaḏī yukadḏibu bi-l-dīn*, v. 1) with “him who repulses the orphan / and does not urge the feeding of the poor” (vv. 2–3): disbelief in the Judgement, the equation implies, is bound to result in insufficient moral effort.<sup>32</sup> Further examples for the interlinking of social and religious vices may be added: Q 107:4–7 associates insincere praying with the “withholding of assistance (*māʿūn*)”, presumably from the same categories of socially disadvantaged persons mentioned

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<sup>30</sup> See also the various woes, threats, and other references to “the deniers” (*al-mukadḏibūn*) in Q 77 and 83:10–12, as well as Q 52:11, 56:51.92, 68:8, and 73:11.

<sup>31</sup> All three occurrences of the verb *istaḡnā* contrast with references to “fearing” / “seeking to protect oneself” (Q 96:12: *taqwā*, Q 92:5: *man aʿṭā wa-ttaqā*) or “being afraid” (Q 80:9: *yaḥšā*), the object of which must be God as the eschatological judge or perhaps, as in Q 73:17, the Day of Judgement itself.

<sup>32</sup> A somewhat weaker connection is asserted in Q 83:1–6: if the addressees were convinced that they are going to be resurrected (and judged), they would not commit the sin of false measuring.

elsewhere<sup>33</sup>; Q 92:8–9 connects miserliness and the illusion of human self-sufficiency with the denial of a reward in the hereafter; Q 83:12 states that the Day of Judgement is only denied by “sinful transgressors”; and a self-incriminating speech of the damned quoted in Q 74:43–47 identifies their misdeeds with failure to pray and feed the poor, idle talk, and denial of the Day of Judgement.<sup>34</sup> Social and religious failings consequently come in a package: the possibility that there could be morally virtuous agnostics is not envisaged.

The early Qur'an, then, depicts the prototypical sinner as someone who, due to his wilful denial of an ultimate reckoning, is puffed up with a false sense of self-sufficiency; his natural desire for possessions (see Q 100:8) being unbridled by any concern about the hereafter, he is driven to ride roughshod over the weakest members of society, especially orphans and the poor. Apparently, the only force that is capable of restraining humans from following their innate selfishness is fear or, literally, anxious “wariness” (*taqwā*) of God as the eschatological judge. The term *taqwā* and its cognates first come into view in verses that are likely to be very early (Q 91:8, 92:5.17, 96:12), and at some point – probably beginning with Q 77:41, 78:31, and 69:48 – spawn references to “the God-fearers” (*al-muttaqūn*) as a collective body,<sup>35</sup> who form a positive counterpoint to “the deniers” (*al-mukaddibūn*).<sup>36</sup> That

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Q 107:7 with 68:12 and 70:21; on the meaning of *mā'ūn* see Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 28 and Rhodokanakis, “Zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft”, pp. 67–68.

<sup>34</sup> See also Q 68:8–15, which implicitly identifies “those who deny” with those who are, *inter alia*, guilty of slander, “withholding possessions”, sin and transgression.

<sup>35</sup> See also Q 51:15, 52:17, 54:54, and 68:34, and cf. the statement in 53:32 that God is “well aware of him who fears”. – While *al-muttaqūn* corresponds to such terms as *hoi phoboumenoi ton theon* (e.g. Acts 13:16.26) or *sebomenoi* (e.g., Acts 17:4), often taken to designate gentiles who were sympathizers of Judaism without undergoing circumcision and converting, I can see little justification to assume that the Qur'anic term refers to a similar historical phenomenon.

<sup>36</sup> See the verses listed in n. 30 above.

literal dread is an important component of *taqwā* is clearly indicated by the early Qur'an's use of various synonyms for fearing and being afraid, such as *ḥašiya* (Q 67:12, 79:19.26.45, 80:9 and 87:10; see also 50:33), *ḥāfa* (Q 55:46, 74:53, and 79:40; see also 50:45 and 51:37) and *ašfaqa* (Q 70:27; see also 52:26), as well as the fact that the foremost objective of the early Qur'an's announcements and descriptions of the Judgement and the hereafter is quite obviously not to inform but to inspire terror (see below). Hence, denial of the Judgement is opposed not simply to an attitude of cognitively deeming the Judgement to be true (which would lack sufficient psychological potency in order to prevail over man's natural selfishness) but to an existential state of anxious wariness that encompasses both cognitive and emotional aspects.<sup>37</sup> Arguably, this notion of *taqwā* constitutes the very core of the early Qur'an's moral vision: as Andrae observes, "the impetus that fuels all good deeds is supposed to be fear of the terrible day".<sup>38</sup>

The intertwining of religious and social vices observed above is therefore ultimately due to the fact that, from the Qur'anic perspective, it is only the existential dread to which anticipation of the Judgement gives rise that enables man to overcome his innate love of possessions and fulfil the requirements of social solidarity. The paramount manifestation of such eschatologically induced solidarity is charitable giving. Thus, Q 92:5 speaks of "the one who gives and is God-fearing / and believes in what is fairest [i.e., paradise]", and another verse in the same surah recommends "giving" as a means of "purifying oneself" (Q 92:18),<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The preceding remarks can be seen as an attempt to unpack Andrae's more concise observation: "The pious are required not only to believe in the Day of Judgement but to *fear* it" (*Ursprung*, p. 85, where some of the same proof texts are cited as above).

<sup>38</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> For further references to self-purification in addition to Q 92:18 see Q 79:18, 80:3, 87:14 and 91:9.

most likely of an undue attachment to transient things. Two further passages laud those “in whose wealth there is a fixed share / for the beggar and the deprived” (Q 70:24–25, cf. also 51:19).<sup>40</sup> A more elaborate list of various kinds of charitable giving is presented in Q 90:13–16, which mentions “the freeing of a slave / or the feeding on a day of hunger / of an orphan near of kin / or someone poor and destitute”. In particular the duty of feeding the poor is frequently highlighted (Q 69:34, 74:44, 89:18, 107:3; see also 68:24).

Apart from almsgiving, the second most prominent type of virtuous behaviour foregrounded by the early Qur'an is prayer (*ṣalāh*). As a matter of fact, “performing the prayer and giving alms” remain crucial markers of the identity of the Qur'anic community in verses that are much later than my primary text base, such as Q 2:43 or 5:55. Returning to the early Qur'anic proclamations, the importance attached to prayer is indicated, for instance, by the fact that in the catalogue of virtues Q 70:22–35, persistence in prayer (vv. 22–23 and 34) forms a bracket around the other pious qualities named there; and in Q 87:14–15, “invoking the name of the Lord” is associated with self-purification (probably through almsgiving, cf. Q 92:18).<sup>41</sup> That the proclamation of the early Qur'anic surahs was accompanied by intense liturgical practice on the part of the messenger and, possibly, a small group of followers would also appear to be reflected by these texts' frequent second-person singular biddings to

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<sup>40</sup> Note that in the early Qur'an, almsgiving is not yet referred to by the term *zakāh*, the earliest occurrences of which as a designation of almsgiving may be Q 21:73, 23:4, and 27:3. It is significant that in Q 18:81 and 19:13 *zakāh* does not mean almsgiving but rather “purity” in general (cf. Syriac *dakyutā*, “purification, purity”; see Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 200). It seems likely that this use of *zakāh* preserves an older acceptance of the word, which the Qur'an then narrows down by increasingly using *zakāh* to refer specifically to alms (= Syriac *zdiqutā*). The background to this semantic development, in the course of which a word with the original meaning of “purity” developed into a designation for almsgiving, would seem to be the notion that charitable giving had a purificatory power, as documented by Q 92:18.

<sup>41</sup> For early Qur'anic references to self-purification see n. 39 above.

pray to, praise, invoke, or recite in “the name of your Lord” etc. (Q 56:74.96, 69:52, 73:8, 74:3, 87:1, 96:1.3.19, 108:2; cf. also 52:48.49). Interestingly, the woe to “those who are heedless of their prayer” in Q 107:4–7 presupposes that some sort of *ṣalāh* ritual was already in existence when this passage was promulgated.<sup>42</sup> Since Q 107 is likely to be a very early surah, this *ṣalāh* ritual should probably be considered to have a pre-Qur'anic origin.<sup>43</sup> Its precise character is difficult to discern, but given the early Qur'an's frequent references to prostration (*sağada*, see 84:21 and 96:19), bowing (*raka'a*, 77:48), and the “glorification” of God (*sabbaḥa*, see 50:39–40, 56:74.96, 69:52, 87:1), it may be that all of these acts were established components of the *ṣalāh*. This conjecture would tie in nicely with the fact that the complaint voiced in Q 84:21 (“When the recitation is recited to them, they do not prostrate themselves”) would appear to suggest that the Qur'anic messenger used to recite his revelations in the context of a public setting, for which the pre-Qur'anic *ṣalāh* rites would be a good candidate. Q 108:2 (“Pray to your Lord and sacrifice!”) might indicate that the *ṣalāh* ritual was not an exclusively liturgical affair but also involved sacrificial rites, but the verse might also be referring to two separate types of rites.

A distinctive feature of the early Qur'anic prayer regimen is the holding of vigils. These certainly involved “glorification” (*sabbaḥa*) and prostration (*sağada*). According to Q 50:39–40, God is to be “glorified” before dawn, before sunset, and during the night.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See Neuwirth, “Rezitationstext”, p. 86.

<sup>43</sup> As pointed out in Neuwirth, “Rezitationstext”, this fits extra-Qur'anic reports compiled by Uri Rubin, according to which the pre-Islamic Meccans would perform prayers to Allāh in the vicinity of the Ka'ba, especially the *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā*; see Rubin, “Morning and Evening Prayers”. – The much later verse Q 8:35, too, implies a pagan *ṣalāh* ritual held at the Ka'ba.

<sup>44</sup> See also Rivlin, *Gesetz im Koran*, pp. 95–6, who emphasizes the distinction between the *ṣalāh* and vigils.

Nocturnal glorification is also mentioned in Q 52:48–49 and 76:25–26, with the latter passage also containing a reference to prostration (“and prostrate yourself to Him at night, and glorify him through the long night”). Vigils are also imposed on the messenger in Q 73:1–2 (“You [singular] who are wrapped up in a robe, / stay up during the night, except for a little!”), where they are associated with recitation, presumably of Qur’anic texts, and the receipt of new revelations (v. 4b–5). It is significant that the stringency of 73:1–2 may later have been mitigated through addition of vv. 3–4a, which reduce the original command to stay awake almost the entire night to “half of it, or a little less / or a little more”. The final verse of the surah, v. 20, which extends to more than half the length of the first nineteen verses and whose status as a later addition is thus hardly open to question, further alleviates the opening injunction by instructing the messenger and his followers to “recite whatever you find it reasonable to recite (*mā tayassara mina l-qurʿān*)”. It should be noted that v. 20 explicitly states that vigils were practised not only by the messenger himself but also “by a party of those with you”. While v. 20 only documents a much later stage of the Qur’an’s process of emergence, the fact that the vigils commanded in surah 73 were practiced collectively rather than only by the messenger is already attested by Q 51:17–18 (“Little of the night they used to slumber, / and in the mornings they used to seek forgiveness”).<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion of this brief synopsis of the early Qur’an’s understanding of virtuous behaviour, we may note what appears to be a reference to celibacy. It occurs towards the end of the catalogue of virtues contained in Q 70:22–35, which qualifies a preceding rebuke of man:

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<sup>45</sup> Neuwith, “Rezitationstext”, p. 88 considers such vigils to have primarily been private devotions of the messenger.



<sup>19</sup> Man was created anxious,

[...]

<sup>22</sup> Except for those who pray,

<sup>23</sup> who persevere in their prayer,

[...]

<sup>29</sup> and those who guard their private parts

<sup>30</sup> – except with their spouses and what their right hands possess;

then they are not blameworthy;

<sup>31</sup> but those who seek more than that are transgressors! –

<sup>32</sup> and those who keep their trusts and their covenant,

[...]

As suggested by my indentation of vv. 30–31, it is perfectly conceivable that these latter two verses could form a later interpolation, given that at least v. 30 stands out not only by virtue of its length but also, and perhaps more importantly, by its paraphrasing of slaves as “what their right hands possess”, a phrase that is otherwise attested only in surahs that must be considerably later than Q 70 (see Q 16:71, 24:31, 33:50.55).<sup>46</sup> Incidentally, the same reasoning

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<sup>46</sup> Neuwirth, *Poetische Prophetie*, p. 441 judges the entire passage Q 70:22–35 to be a later addition, thereby revising her more cautious assessment in Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 202. A number of considerations can be adduced in support of this view: (i) In other surahs, too, categorical denunciations of man like 70:19–21 appear to have been secondarily restricted by means of adding exceptive clauses (see Q 95:6, 103:3; cf. also 84:25); (ii) Q 70:36 connects well with 70:21; (iii) the partial identity of Q 70:22–35 and 23:1–11 could be taken to indicate that the former passage was inserted roughly at the same time at which Q 23 was first promulgated. Nevertheless, since Q 70:22–35 as a whole, with the exception of v. 30, does not display a markedly higher MVL than the remainder

applies to Q 23:5–7, which constitutes a doublet to Q 70:29–31. If this reconstruction is accepted, then the explicit approval of sexual relationships with spouses and slaves in Q 70:30–31 would constitute a secondary toning-down of an originally unqualified esteem of carnal abstinence.<sup>47</sup> In support of this analysis one might add that a very similar retrospective mitigation of overly stringent injunctions clearly occurred in surah 73, as pointed out above.

## **The Syriac background**

I now turn to a consideration of the intertextual background of the distinctive bundle of virtues and vices that the previous section has attempted to untangle. First of all, it is important to recognize *that* such a background exists, as one might otherwise be tempted to infer from the Qur'an's strictures against social exploitation and dishonest business dealings

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of Q 70, I prefer, at least for the time being, to err on the side of caution and retain the passage in question, with the exception of vv. 30–31, as part of the surah's original version. In any case, even if the entire passage 70:22–35 were considered to be secondary, the hypothesis that vv. 30–31 were secondarily embedded in it would remain just as plausible, and my conjecture that an originally unqualified call for celibacy was subsequently mitigated would still stand.

<sup>47</sup> One might object that “guarding one's private parts” simply calls for pudency rather than celibacy and buttress this by appealing to Q 24:30–31, where “guarding one's private parts” occurs in combination with injunctions to lower one's gaze and to shun revealing clothing (cf. also Q 33:35, where the phrase is used without any further behavioural details). Yet if that was indeed the original meaning of the expression, it becomes difficult to make sense of the intent of the exceptive clause in Q 70:30–31 and 23:6–7, for surely sexual intercourse with spouses (and slaves) is opposed to *abstinence* from such intercourse, rather than to modest behaviour and dress. As a further corroboration of my hypothesis, I would also point out that the verb *ḥāfaẓa* in the Qur'anic locution “guarding one's private parts” maps onto Syriac *n̄tar* as used in appeals to “guard” the treasure of virginity (see ES IV, no. 1, ll. 309–310.329). In sum, while I find it impossible to deny that “guarding one's private parts” in Q 24:30–31 and probably also in Q 33:35 refers to pudency rather than abstinence, my analysis of Q 70:29–31 and 23:5–7 inclines me to view this as a secondary acceptance of the phrase that masks an original esteem of celibacy, as do Q 70:30–31 and 23:6–7.

that it must have addressed a society at the very brink of moral collapse.<sup>48</sup> As a matter of fact, the early Qur'an's social critique is part and parcel of an ancient literary tradition. In particular the Qur'anic denunciations of fraud and avarice in Q 83:1–3 or 107:1–2 and its ardent partisanship for orphans and the poor recall similar passages in the prophetic books of the Bible.<sup>49</sup> One early Qur'anic paragraph, a catalogue of virtues contained in Q 90:12–16, even exhibits a palpable structural correspondence to a segment from the book of Isaiah (58:5–7).<sup>50</sup> The inclement view that the early Qur'an takes of its addressees and of humans in general is thus as much a result of its subscribing to a particularly exacting moral vision enshrined in a long literary tradition stretching back to the Hebrew Bible (and, of course, further beyond) as it is an expression of outrage at contemporary social ills.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The classic example for this view is Watt's depiction of Mecca as an international financial hub (Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 3) where the traditional values of tribal society were rapidly crumbling under the pressure of unchecked individualism (see *ibid.*, 20). While Watt's attempt at accounting for the Qur'anic phenomenon as an attempt to create a new religious basis for social solidarity (*ibid.*, p. 73) has been amply criticized before, it still bears pointing out that one of the scenario's main flaws consists in the fact that it rests on an understanding of passages like Q 83:1–6, 89:17–20, or 107 that fails to take their intertextual background into due account.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, the castigation of false measures in Amos 8:4–6 and of those “who defraud the poor” and “rob the needy” in Amos 4:1–3, as well as the concatenation of orphans, the poor and other categories of socially marginalized persons in Maleachi 3:5. Some pertinent material is also found in the Pentateuch, of course, although its general tone is less similar to the Qur'an: thus, Deut. 25:13–16 forbids the use of false measures (cf. also Prov. 11:1), and Exod. 22:21–22 and Deut. 14:29 warn against mistreating orphans and the poor.

<sup>50</sup> The structural similarity of the two passages is noted in Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, p. 10. Both passages are introduced by a rhetorical question that metaphorically encodes the behaviour expected by God as “the fast that I have chosen” or “the steep path”, respectively, and both then proceed to illustrate this mode of conduct by a very similar selection of examples: setting free slaves or “the oppressed”, feeding the hungry and the poor, and showing solidarity with one's relatives (the order is slightly different in the Qur'an).

<sup>51</sup> See also Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 91–92.

This raises the question of which particular formation of this tradition in the Qur'an's historical environment is closest to the early Qur'anic moral vision. As Andrae has shown, Syriac Christianity yields a particularly close fit. The parallels highlighted by him include "the direct motivation of moral action by the idea of the Last Judgement",<sup>52</sup> accompanied by a strong emphasis on the fear of God (Arabic *taqwā*, Syriac *deḥlat alāhā*)<sup>53</sup>; a concern for similar categories of socially marginalized persons, especially orphans and the poor<sup>54</sup>; and the importance and unique salvific effectiveness ascribed to almsgiving.<sup>55</sup> Following A. J. Wensinck, Andrae also points to the Qur'anic evidence for the performance of vigils, which corresponds to the nocturnal Psalm reading that is a prominent feature of Christian monastic piety.<sup>56</sup> Obviously, the same goes for celibacy, of which we saw two putative Qur'anic traces in Q 70:29 and 23:5.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 90, 97, 100, 129.

<sup>53</sup> The central position that fear of the judgement occupies in the Syriac homiletic tradition is well illustrated by ES I, no. 5 (which Beck considers to be inauthentic but which, due to its attestation in several manuscripts, seems to have been remarkably popular), with its multiple occurrences of *deḥlā* (e.g., in ll. 32.36.40.56.104 etc.) and *zaw'ā*, "trembling" (e.g., in ll. 2.32.72.197). See also ES III, no. 1, a homily entirely devoted to the fear of God and the Judgement, or the various references to "trembling" that punctuate HS, no. 31.

<sup>54</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 129 and 182–185. In addition to the material adduced there see e.g. ES I, no. 3, ll. 449–462 (the rich and greedy prey upon the poor, widows, and orphans); ES III, no. 2, ll. 225–226: "The avaricious one (*yā'nā*) robs the orphan / and despoils the house of the widow"; ES III, no. 4, ll 53–54. Against that, ES III, no. 4, ll. 561–570 calls upon the addressees to support the poor, the hungry, orphans, and widows; cf. also *ibid.*, ll. 645–660. Care for orphans and the poor is also prominent in the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* (see Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, pp. 59 and 73).

<sup>55</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 129–130 and 179–182. On almsgiving, see also CN 76:17 and Vööbus, *Didascalia*, pp. 168–170 (pointed out in Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, p. 59).

<sup>56</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 191–196. Cf. Wensinck, *Muhammed en de Joden te Medina*, pp. 104–106 (*id.*, *Muhammad and the Jews of Medina*, pp. 75–77). Wensinck also draws attention to the fact that prostrations formed part of the devotions of late antique Syriac Christians.

<sup>57</sup> *Pace* Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 186 (asserting that the Qur'an contains no references to virginity).

The impression that the moral dimension of the early Qur'anic kerygma is strongly linked to Syriac Christianity is thus amply borne out. An examination specifically of the Syriac homiletic tradition yields further convergences: Just like the early Qur'an, the *mimrē* literature censures the "love" of wealth<sup>58</sup> and its "hoarding" (Arabic *ğama'a* = Syriac *knaš/kannesš*),<sup>59</sup> the insatiable desire to "have more",<sup>60</sup> and the vice of miserliness.<sup>61</sup> The early Qur'an's passing references to the transitoriness of the world and the inevitability of old age and death (Q 75:20–21, 95:4–5) are illuminatingly juxtaposed with the more elaborate treatment of these topics in one of the homilies attributed to Ephrem.<sup>62</sup> Like the Qur'an, the *mimrē* tradition reiterates the Biblical condemnation of false measuring, which appears to

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Q 89:20 and 100:8 (*ḥubb al-ḥayr / ḥubb al-māl*) with ES I, no. 2, l. 987 (*reggat dahbā*) and HS, no. 31, ll. 117.263 (*reḥmat kespā*); see also HP 2:4 (love of "good things", *ṭubē*) and the admonishment not to be a "lover of money" (*rāḥem kespā*) in Vööbus, *Didascalia*, p. 36, ll. 6–7. Denunciations of the love of money in the Qur'an and in the Syriac tradition ultimately echo Matt. 13:22 (condemnation of *hē agapē tou ploutou*) and 1 Tim. 6:9–10 (condemnation of *philargyria*), yet once again there is no reason to attribute to the Qur'anic messenger and his audience any first-hand acquaintance with the pertinent New Testament verses (see the remarks on Q 102:1–2 above and further comments below).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Q 70:18 and 104:2 with ES I, no. 3, ll. 453–476 and *ibid.*, no. 4, ll. 25–28 (hoarding); see also CN 76:16. Jacob of Serugh similarly disapproves of the "gathering" (*kannesš*) of treasures, see HS, no. 192, l. 21.

<sup>60</sup> See the discussion of Q 102:1–2 above.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Q 92:8 and 53:34 with ES I, no. 2, l. 793 and *ibid.*, no. 3, ll. 455.461.

<sup>62</sup> ES I, no. 4. Cf. in particular the Qur'anic accusation that "you love that which is fleeting" (*al-ʿāğīla*) at 75:20 (see also 76:27 and 17:18) with the occurrence of derivatives of *ʿbar* in ES I, no. 4, l. 8 or l. 149 (for a similar statement in the *Synodicon Orientale* see Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 130). Regarding Q 95:4–5, it should be borne in mind that man's decrepitude in old age is also a frequent topos in ancient Arabian poetry, as pointed out in Neuwirth, *Poetische Prophetie*, p. 191.

function as a metonymy for exploitation and fraud in general,<sup>63</sup> and expresses a strong aversion to mockery and slander<sup>64</sup> and ostentatious praying.<sup>65</sup>

Apart from such specific conceptual intersections, there are also some striking affinities of literary form. For example, both the early Qur'an and the *mimrē* literature utilize such Biblically derived forms as woes<sup>66</sup> and beatitudes<sup>67</sup> and employ pessimistic or accusatory statements about “man” (*bar nāšā / al-insān*).<sup>68</sup> More generally, the early Qur'an's

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<sup>63</sup> Q 55:7–9, 83:1–3; ES I, no. 2, ll. 367–404.533–542; ES III, no. 4, app. 6 (formulated, like 83:1–3, as a woe). The Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* also insists on the use of “unaltered weights”, see Vööbus, *Didascalia*, p. 181, ll. 3–4 (pointed out in Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, p. 73).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Q 104:1 with ES I, no. 2, ll. 1315–1404.1501–1678 and ES III, no. 4, ll. 571–574 and app. 1, ll. 69–76. See also Vööbus, *Didascalia*, p. 36, ll. 8–10.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. the condemnation of “those who make a show” (*allaḏīna hum yurā'ūn*) during prayer in Q 107:6, which recalls Matt. 6:5–6 (Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, p. 13), with HS, no. 68, ll. 159–162 (where Matthew 6:5–6 is clearly alluded to). Note the close proximity of *allaḏīna hum yurā'ūn*, Matthew's *hopôs phanôsin tois anthrôpois* (“so that they are seen by the people”; Peshitta: *d-nethzōn la-bnay nāšā*; see Kiraz, *Comparative Edition*), and Jacob's paraphrastic *nḥawwē napšeh* (“in order to show himself”), followed by an occurrence of the root ḥ-z-y in HS, no. 68, l. 161. It also appears distinctly likely that Matthew's wording might be cited verbatim elsewhere in the Syriac homiletic corpus. See also the condemnation of prayer that is vitiated by pride in ES I, no. 2, ll. 1237–1238. The condemnation of neglecting prayer (or praying neglectfully?) in the preceding Qur'anic verse, 107:5, has counterparts in ES I, no. 7, ll. 377–380 (where the verb *ahmi men* is used, thus yielding a noticeable correspondence with the Qur'anic *sahā*) and, more remotely, ES III, no. 2, ll. 95–96.

<sup>66</sup> Q 51:60, 52:11–12, 75:34–35, 77:15 (which recurs as a refrain throughout the rest of the surah), 83:1–3, 83:10–11, 104:1–2, 107:4–7; ES I, no. 5, ll. 348–379; ES III, no. 4, ll. 25–156; *ibid.*, no. 4, appendices 3, 4, and 6 (although Beck is doubtful about the authenticity of the text, it seems improbable that at least its basic structure should be post-Qur'anic). Neuwirth points out that woes already appear in ancient Arabian poetry but agrees that the form ultimately belongs to the Biblical tradition (*Poetische Prophetie*, p. 137).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. the Qur'anic formula *qad aflaḥa man* in Q 87:14–15 and 91:9 with the long list of beatitudes in ES III, no. 4, ll. 641–738 (each couplet of which is introduced by *ṭubā rabbā b-haw yawmā l-aynā d-* or *ṭubaw l-aynā d-*), which is obviously patterned after Matt. 5:3–12.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. the statement about the caducity of man (*bar nāšā*) in ES I, no. 4, l. 1–4, which quotes Ps. 144:4, with Qur'anic *insān* statements such as Q 70:19–21, 75:5–6, 75:14–15, 90:4, 95:4–5, 96:6–7, 100:6–8, and 103:2. For another Syriac parallel to the Qur'anic *insān* statements see CN 75:22–23, the first stanza of which recalls Q 70:19–20 (as well as the later verses Q 17:83, 41:49, and 11:9), while the second stanza is reminiscent of

multifarious reproaches (e.g., Q 75:20.21, 77:48, 82:9, 84:22, 85:19, 87:16.17, 89:17–20, 102:1.2), its enumerations of miscellaneous vices (e.g., Q 74:43–47 and 92:8–9), and the accompanying eschatological threats and warnings could defensibly be described as falling into the same overarching class of “discourses of rebuke” (*mimrē d-makksānutā*) to which an early manuscript assigns three of Ephrem’s homilies.<sup>69</sup> The crucial difference that the Qur’an, unlike Syriac homilies, styles itself as divine speech will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter. But first, we must turn to the second of the two chief dimensions of the early Qur’anic kerygma, namely, eschatology proper.

## **The Qur’anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter**

As underlined by Andrae, the early Qur’an’s evocations and portrayals of the end of the world and the hereafter primarily serve to stoke and keep awake the fearful anticipation of the Judgement that the early Qur’anic proclamations place at the centre of their moral vision.<sup>70</sup> Qur’anic eschatology is therefore moralistic rather than apocalyptic: the Qur’an exhibits no interest in speculating about the future course of history leading up until the end of the world or in reassuring a group of people who seem to be on the losing side of history that they are, in fact, on the winning side.<sup>71</sup> This lack of apocalyptic interest is most

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Q 17:11 and 21:37 (both of which fall well outside my primary text base) and also the numerous Qur’anic warnings not to “seek to hasten” (*istaḡāla*) the Judgement (e.g., in Q 51:14.59).

<sup>69</sup> ES I, nos. 1–3 (all likely to be authentic, according to Beck). According to Beck, the title “sermons of rebuke” (derived from *akkes*, “to rebuke, reprove”) is attested in an early manuscript from the 6<sup>th</sup> century (ES I, introduction to the Syriac edition, p. vii) and can thus be assumed to have been current in pre-Qur’anic times.

<sup>70</sup> See Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 70.

<sup>71</sup> See Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 4: “It is characteristic of Muhammad that he does not exhibit any of the moods and interests of the apocalyptic. Indeed, he betrays a pronounced animosity towards the apocalyptic desire for knowledge.”

immediately apparent from the fundamentally ahistorical character of the way in which the Qur'an represents the Day of Judgement: passages such as Q 81:1–14 or 82:1–5, which enumerate different aspects of the world's eschatological disintegration and the preparations immediately preceding the final reckoning, nowhere attempt to date the end in relation to the present or to spell out the signs by which one would be able to discern that it is imminent.<sup>72</sup> As Andrae remarks, the extended eschatological drama laid out in Matt. 24–25 or in the Book of Revelation appears compressed into a single event.<sup>73</sup>

What the early Qur'an is primarily interested in, then, is not in foretelling when and under which historical circumstances the world will come to an end. Rather, it is concerned to confront its hearers, through the artful deployment of a whole range of literary techniques, with the Judgement they will ultimately have to face and to convince them that this basic fact necessitates a fundamental makeover of the way they live and act. I take it that it is primarily to inculcate such an eschatologically tinged outlook on the world that several Qur'anic verses make the dramatic announcement that the Day of Judgement is, or has drawn, "nigh" (see Q 70:6–7 as well as 54:1, and, even later, 21:1).<sup>74</sup> At the same time, already the early Qur'an insists that only God, not Muhammad, knows when the end will arrive (Q 79:42–46). As indicated by the opening verse of this latter passage (Q 79:42: "They ask you about the Hour: When is the time of its anchoring?"; cf. also 75:6 and 51:12), the Qur'an's insistence that it is

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<sup>72</sup> The only Qur'anic statement remotely reminiscent of the usual apocalyptic previews of history is Q 30:2–4, which predicts a future victory (or defeat, depending on how one vocalizes the main verb) of the Byzantines. Yet even this passage does not explicitly attach any apocalyptic significance to the event in question: the passage is not framed as a prophecy of the end time.

<sup>73</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 62–64.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Jesus' declaration that "the kingdom of God is at hand (*éggiken*)" (Mark 1:15, Matt. 4:17).



not part of Muhammad's mandate to predict the time of the end responds to pressing queries by some of his hearers to be told when exactly the Hour would occur.<sup>75</sup> That such agnosticism about the exact time of the end was not necessarily seen as incompatible with announcements of eschatological imminence is confirmed by a sermon of Jacob of Serugh, which advances a very similar combination of claims.<sup>76</sup>

A further rejoinder to bothersome queries about the precise time of the end is intimated in Q 79:46 and various later passages: since the deceased will spend the period between their individual demise and the Day of Judgement in a sleep-like state of unconsciousness, it will at least *appear* to them that the Resurrection occurs only a short time

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<sup>75</sup> It is probably in response to the same queries that later Qur'anic verses substitute the announcement that the end *is* nigh by the more cautious formula that it *may be* (*la'alla*, *'asā an*) nigh (see Q 17:51, 33:63, 42:17, all of which fall well outside this chapter's primary text base). A different scenario is envisaged in Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, p. 168: after Muhammad had died without the end of the world having arrived, the qualifiers *la'alla* or *'asā an* could have been edited into what were originally unqualified announcements of eschatological imminence like 54:1. In response to this hypothesis, I would point to the numerous verses documenting that the problem of eschatological delay was acute even before Muhammad's death (apart from Q 51:12, 75:6, and 79:42, see also 7:187, 10:48, 21:38, 27:71 etc.). Hence, a toning-down of the imminent eschatological expectation expressed in Q 70:6–7, 54:1, and 21:1 makes perfect sense already during Muhammad's lifetime.

<sup>76</sup> HS, no. 192. From l. 75 onwards, Jacob evokes the question posed by Jesus' disciples in Matt. 24:3 (as well as Mark 13:4 and Luke 21:7) when the end of the world will take place, and Jesus' own statement that nobody, "not even the Son", knows when Hour will come (Matt. 24:36 and parallels). This is followed by a long explanation of Christ's apparent ignorance of the Hour, which appears to conflict with scriptural statements implying that Christ has the same knowledge as the Father (e.g., John 16:15). Jacob resolves the dilemma by arguing that since "the knowledge of the Father and of the Son is the same" (l. 145), Christ only pretended not to know the time of the end (see ll. 129–130 and ll. 183–184). Despite the fact that no human accordingly knows when the end will come, from l. 237 onwards Jacob insists that the end is nevertheless nigh (e.g., ll. 238.272.301–304; it is unsurprising but still significant that these passages use the same Semitic root as Q 70:7 or 54:1, namely, *q-r-b*). – In the light of HS, no. 192 it is justified, I think, to connect the frequent Qur'anic assertion that the "knowledge" of the end is with God (Q 7:187, 31:34, 33:63 etc.) with Jesus' statement in Matt. 24:36 (and parallels).

after their death.<sup>77</sup> As pointed out by earlier scholars, this notion of a slumber of souls is set forth by various Syriac writers ranging from Aphraates to the dyophysite church leader Babay the Great (d. 628).<sup>78</sup> Thus, regardless of when the Day of Judgement will take place in absolute historical terms, it is at least as near as anyone's individual death.<sup>79</sup> To all intents and purposes, then, it is incumbent on people to live their lives as if the end *were* nigh, regardless of how much history still remains to be traversed until the Resurrection is actually going to occur. Exactly the same moralistic, rather than apocalyptic, approach to eschatology is expressed by Jacob of Serugh: "Henceforth, my brethren, hasten the course with good works, / for the road is swift, and time has been cut short for the one who is on it. / Even if the time of the world in its entirety may not be short, / our life flickers, as it is short."<sup>80</sup>

So what does the early Qur'an have to say about the Day of Judgement and the afterlife? Appendix 2 gives an extensive, although doubtlessly preliminary, register of parallels to Qur'anic eschatology from the homilies and hymns attributed to Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh, which permits me to limit myself to a number of salient remarks here.<sup>81</sup> The first and most obvious thing to draw attention to is that the register documents that almost every aspect of the Qur'an's portrayal of the end of the world and of the hereafter has close

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<sup>77</sup> According to Q 79:46, it will appear to the resurrected as if they had spent only a single night in their graves. Later passages speak of a period of ten days (Q 20:103), "only an hour" (Q 10:45, 30:55), and "a short while" (Q 17:52, 23:114).

<sup>78</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 156–163 (citing Hubert Grimme and Wilhelm Rudolph), especially pp. 158–160; O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, pp. 69–70.

<sup>79</sup> This would also seem to be the reason why Q 75:26–30 depicts the individual's death throes by employing stylistic features that in other Qur'anic passages are clearly associated with eschatological themes (namely, a series of temporal clauses introduced by *iḍā* and the eschatologically potent *yawma 'iḍin*).

<sup>80</sup> HS, no. 195, ll. 239–242.

<sup>81</sup> Note that the register in Appendix 2 covers the entire Qur'an rather than just the early surahs.

counterparts in the Syriac tradition; in a number of cases, it is even possible to map characteristic details of the Qur'anic diction onto that of the Syriac sources (for example, the Qur'an's frequent use of *yawma 'idhin*, "on that day", which corresponds to Syriac *b-haw yawmā*, or the verbs *ḥašara* and *'addaba*). This is not to say that Syriac sources are the only literary corpus with which the early surahs engage: for example, as Josef Horovitz has shown in a seminal article, Qur'anic descriptions of paradise deploy some of the stock motives that figure in the banquet scenes of ancient Arabic poetry,<sup>82</sup> no doubt in an attempt to relegate the wasteful revelry of which pre-Qur'anic poets were wont to boast to second place. Horovitz's findings demonstrate that a balanced intertextual reading of the Qur'an must take ancient Arabic poetry into full account (see below). Nevertheless, Appendix 2, taken together with the affinity between the moral vision of the early Qur'an and the *mimrē* literature that was found to obtain above, certainly bears out a very close link between the early Qur'anic kerygma and Syriac Christianity.<sup>83</sup>

Once again, it is not only the content and conceptual field of the early Qur'an's eschatological kerygma that is closely aligned with the Syriac homiletic tradition but also some prominent features of its literary form. For example, one of Jacob's homilies contains a

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<sup>82</sup> Horovitz, "Das koranische Paradies".

<sup>83</sup> It is true that many of the eschatological motifs listed in Appendix 2 are shared by Christianity and Judaism, but see the general considerations in favour of a greater proximity of Qur'anic eschatology to Christianity than to Judaism that are advanced in Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, pp. 29–36. Particularly relevant is Rudolf Leszynsky's observation that Rabbinic literature displays a tendency to exempt all but the most severe Israelite sinners from eternal damnation (Leszynsky, *Mohammedanische Traditionen*, pp. 12–13). As both Rudolph and Leszynsky point out, Q 2:80 and 3:24 confirm that at least some of the Jews who were present in the Qur'anic milieu shared this conviction (2:80: "And they say: The Fire will touch us only for a few days."). The thoroughgoing individualism of early Qur'anic eschatology (see e.g. 80:37 or 53:38–39) is therefore much closer to the Syriac homiletic tradition than to Rabbinic Judaism.

long section describing “the great judgement” that is composed of a series of couplets introduced by “when” (*mā d-*), in a manner that is highly reminiscent of the concatenation of eschatological *idhā* clauses in Q 77:8–11, 81:1–13, 82:1–4, 84:1–5, and 99:1–3.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the *mimrē* literature’s employment of serial parallelism may be relevant to an appraisal of the early surahs’ use of parallelism more generally.<sup>85</sup> Another formal similarity between the two corpora consists in their artful reliance on antithetical juxtapositions in descriptions of paradise and hell. Already the early surahs exhibit a marked predilection for contrastive presentations of the fate of the blessed and of the damned (see Q 55:41–77, 56:10b–56.88–94, 69:19–37, 75:22–25, 77:29–44, 78:21–36, 82:13–16, 83:7–28, 84:7–15, 88:2–16, 92:5–11, 92:14–21, 99:7–8, 101:6–9). Many of these passages have a bipartite structure, consisting of two consecutive sections, one positive and the other negative, which are of roughly equal length and frequently mirror each other in one way or another; Angelika Neuwirth has accordingly coined the term “eschatological diptychs” for them.<sup>86</sup> The *mimrē* literature, too, makes extensive and sometimes very similar use of contrastive juxtaposition.<sup>87</sup> To add one more

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<sup>84</sup> HS, no. 68, ll. 207–280. For another series of *mā d-* statements, see HS, no. 192, ll. 205–224.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. for example the parallelistic usage of *yawma'idhīn* in 75:22–25, 80:37–41 or 99:4–6 with the recurrence of *b-haw yawmā* in ES III, no. 4, ll. 9–24. For further examples of serial parallelism see ES III, no. 3, ll. 105–120 (recurrence of *kmā / mā*, “how ...!”; note that this passage also exemplifies the technique of contrastive cross-cutting, on which see below); HS, no. 32, ll. 141–155 (recurrence of *w-aynā d-*, “and he who ...”; this passage also employs cross-cutting); HS, no. 192, ll. 83–98 (questions), ll. 239–248 (*en / ellā*), ll. 251–272 (*l-mānā*).

<sup>86</sup> Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 180 (basing herself on remarks by Anton Baumstark).

<sup>87</sup> One may distinguish three varieties of contrastive juxtaposition: (i) simple antitheses, where a statement about the blessed contrasts with a statement about the damned (yielding the form AB); (ii) extended diptychs, where a series of statements about one of the two groups is followed by another series about the other group (yielding the form A<sup>1</sup>A<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>... B<sup>1</sup>B<sup>2</sup>B<sup>3</sup>...); and (iii) cross-cutting, where the focus alternates between statements about the damned and the righteous (yielding the form A<sup>1</sup>B<sup>1</sup>A<sup>2</sup>B<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>B<sup>3</sup>...). Simple antitheses are exemplified e.g. by HP 2:4–5 (the sinners have lost their earthly possessions, the just are set free from their earthly suffering) or HP 7:29 (the damned justify God, whereas the blessed praise him). For diptychally structured passages in the

formal similarity not specifically tied to eschatology, it is tempting to view the occurrence of a refrain in surahs 55 and 77 and in the narrative sections of surahs 26, 37, and 54 as a Qur'anic adaptation of the response verse (sg. *'unitā*) that is a standard component of Syriac hymns.

Moving on to further observations arising from Appendix 2, the register shows that a significant number of eschatological motifs in the Qur'an ultimately harks back to verses from the New Testament, chiefly from the synoptic gospels and the Book of Revelation.<sup>88</sup> A good example is the pervasive Qur'anic temporal qualifier *yawma 'idīn*, "on that day" (namely, the Day of Judgement): the expression, whose Syriac counterpart is *b-haw yawmā*, is ultimately descended from the New Testamental phrase *en ekeinē tē hēmera* (see Matt. 7:22) and, even more remotely, from Old Testament references to the "Day of the Lord" as in Zeph. 1:8–18. Other Qur'anic reverberations of New Testament eschatology include the end's being ushered in by an earthquake, the darkening of the heavenly bodies, the falling down of the stars, the eschatological trumpet blast(s), and the claim that the Resurrection will happen "in the twinkling of an eye". Yet despite this considerable New Testament imprint on Qur'anic eschatology, Appendix 2 also demonstrates that in virtually all instances where the Qur'an employs motifs and concepts originating from the Gospels or the Book of Revelation, these figure in the Syriac homiletic tradition as well, usually in multiple

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Syriac sources see ES II, no. 2, ll. 71–230 (hell) and ll. 231–252 (paradise); ES III, no. 2, ll. 359–394 and ll. 395–452 (the righteous and the sinners await the divine judge; note the contrastive focus on clothing or the lack thereof in both sections), ll. 517–558 and ll. 559–665 (the righteous and the sinners are judged), ll. 716–739 and ll. 740–771 (the ultimate fate of the sinners and the righteous); ES III, no. 3, ll. 105–120 (where the section about the damned is considerably shorter than that about the blessed, similar to the unequal proportions of Q 55:41–77). For cross-cutting see ES III, no. 3, ll. 99–104 and ll. 159–166; HS, no. 32, ll. 141–144.147–150.153–154; HS, no. 67, ll. 175–180.183–186 (the just ascend to heaven, the sinners descend to hell).

<sup>88</sup> On the Qur'an's relationship with Revelation see Brady, "Book of Revelation".

instantiations. The situation in all these cases is thus fundamentally the same as with regard to the condemnation of *takātur* in Q 102:1 discussed above, or Q 107:6's overlap with the condemnation of ostentatious praying in Matt. 6:5–6, for which it is again possible to point to a Syriac parallel<sup>89</sup> – i.e., there is no compelling argument to show that the relevant Qur'anic verses are to be construed as targeted allusions to specific verses of the New Testament. More probably, the Qur'anic texts are simply appropriating ideas that had much wider, and much more fluid, circulation in oral Christian sermons for which the Syriac homiletic corpus would have served as a blueprint. To be sure, the hypothesis that sections of the Biblical text itself had a certain presence in the Qur'anic milieu in the form of liturgical readings remains eminently plausible.<sup>90</sup> Yet given that Qur'anic echoes of the New Testament never amount to quotations or paraphrases of substantial portions of text,<sup>91</sup> that they normally have not just one but a number of parallels in the Syriac corpus, and that they often occur in more than one place of the Qur'anic corpus as well, Emran El-Badawi's recent insistence that the Qur'an is engaged in a direct manipulation and recasting of specific Gospel passages seems exaggerated.<sup>92</sup> Instead, the more conventional emphasis by scholars such as Rudolph or,

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<sup>89</sup> See n. 65 above.

<sup>90</sup> A paramount candidate for this would be the Psalms, the nocturnal recitation of which was a prominent feature of Christian monastic piety (Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 193–194) and echoes of which may be discovered in various Qur'anic passages; see Neuwirth, “Qur'anic Readings of the Psalms”, pp. 733–778. On the possible liturgical presence of the prophetic books of the Bible in the Qur'anic milieu see below.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Griffith's observation that “for all its obviously high degree of biblical awareness, the Qur'ān virtually never actually *quotes* the Bible” (*Bible*, p. 55), which reflects similar assessments by earlier scholars; see e.g. Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, p. 18, who prefers to speak of *Anklänge* (which incidentally underlies my occasional utilization of the words “echo” and “reverberation”) rather than citations proper.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, passim (but note that El-Badawi does not discount that oral tradition may also have played a role; see *ibid.*, p. 8). – Arguably, El-Badawi sometimes succumbs to the temptation of overinterpretation, as when he construes Q 6:158's polemical question “Do they await (*yanzurūn*) anything

more recently, Griffith on the Qur'an's link with oral tradition and on the accompanying fluidity of transmission would seem to better reflect the overall picture.<sup>93</sup>

## **The early Qur'anic kerygma and its milieu**

It should by now have become amply clear that I endorse Andrae's claim that the early Qur'an articulates an eschatologically focused type of piety that displays a far-reaching convergence with Syriac Christianity. If one accepts the historian's premiss that a high degree of specific similarity indicates some sort of historical contact, then it seems highly likely that the sermons attributed to Ephrem and Jacob would have functioned as a reservoir of motifs, concepts, and literary forms for oral sermonizing in the Qur'an's wider cultural habitat. Such sermons – which would have encompassed a goodly dose of Biblical diction, allusions, and occasional quotations – were probably delivered in Arabic, which may already in pre-Qur'anic times have come to serve as a vehicle for the spontaneous oral translation of scriptural pericopes from Syriac,<sup>94</sup> as a consequence of which it would have accumulated a suitable vocabulary for the expression of Biblical and specifically eschatological ideas.<sup>95</sup>

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other than that the angels should come to them ...?" as an allusion to Jesus' final command to his disciples in Matt. 28:20: "And teach them to keep (Peshitta: *n-ṭ-r*; see Kiraz, *Comparative Edition*) all that I commanded." (El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, p. 167) Such overinterpretation then vitiates his conclusion that "the Qur'<sup>2</sup>ān confesses a keen awareness of the terminology, sentence structure, and thesis of coherent literary units (chapters and passages) within the Aramaic Gospels themselves" (El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, p. 209). This criticism is not meant to deny that El-Badawi's study is valuable, as indicated by my numerous references to it.

<sup>93</sup> Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, pp. 17–25; Griffith, *Bible*, pp. 52, 54–56, 89.

<sup>94</sup> On the likely nonexistence of a written translation of the Bible in pre-Qur'anic times see Griffith, *Bible*, pp. 41–53; on the possible use of Arabic for spontaneous oral translation of Biblical pericopes or of homiletic material see *ibid.*, pp. 42–43. The hypothesis that during church services held by Arabic-speaking Christians scriptural readings in Syriac may have been accompanied by oral renderings into Arabic appears especially

Notwithstanding my general admiration for Andrae's pioneering work, I am unimpressed by his attempt to substantially flesh out the general framework just presented. In a nutshell, Andrae supposes that Muhammad was exposed to sermons that Nestorian missionaries operating out of South Arabia delivered at one of the seasonal Arabian markets, most likely <sup>c</sup>Ukāz, and that he then subconsciously imitated the basic message and structural pattern of such missionary preaching.<sup>96</sup> This scenario is unsatisfactory for various reasons. Firstly, speculation about the biographical experiences and psychological states of the Qur'anic messenger has rightly fallen out of favour in recent scholarship, requiring as it does a problematic reliance on extra Qur'anic anecdotes about the life and times of Muhammad that may well be later products of the hagiographic imagination. Thus, the appealing concreteness of Andrae's theory is purchased at the price of accepting at face value Islamic reports according to which Muhammad heard Quss ibn Sā'ida preach during a visit to <sup>c</sup>Ukāz. Secondly, it is difficult to share Andrae's certainty that the Qur'an's eschatological piety is to be situated against the background specifically of Nestorian or dyophysite Christianity. The most unequivocal link with the Nestorian tradition that is highlighted by Andrae consists in the Qur'an's reliance on the notion of a slumber of souls, which was indeed endorsed by the dyophysite Babay the Great in the early seventh century. Yet the idea that the resurrected

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attractive in view of the fact that an exactly analogous setting gave rise to the ancient Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, the so-called targums, during the first centuries of the Common Era.

<sup>95</sup> Pace El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, p. 217, the alternative of a direct link between the Qur'an and the Syriac sources examined above and particularly the possibility that Muhammad and/or some of his adherents were "bilingual" appears far less likely, at least if one retains Mecca as the Qur'an's putative place of origin. The presence in Qur'anic Arabic of Syriac loanwords is hardly sufficient to establish that Muhammad or his audience may have been bilingual; the Qur'an may simply have used words that despite their Aramaic (or Ethiopic) origin had long since become an integral part of the Arabic lexicon (see Griffith, *Bible*, p. 18).

<sup>96</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 201–203.



will awake from death as if from sleep – which, as we saw above, provides the Qur'an with a convenient way of maintaining that the Resurrection is subjectively “nigh” without having to make any concrete predictions about when it will occur – is present in the Syriac tradition more widely,<sup>97</sup> and it is at best one facet of Qur'anic eschatology among others. Another major connection that Andrae discerns between the Qur'an and the dyophysite Church of the East is the positive view of marriage and procreation taken by both.<sup>98</sup> However, as I have argued above, two Qur'anic verses (Q 70:29 and 23:5) may reasonably be regarded as reflecting an original esteem of chastity that was obscured by later additions.<sup>99</sup> A final objection to Andrae's focus on the Church of the East consists in the numerous parallels that exist between the early Qur'anic kerygma and the eschatological homilies of Jacob of Serugh, who was certainly not a dyophysite.<sup>100</sup> There is of course no reason to rule out that dyophysites may have preached about the end of the world in very similar terms. Nevertheless, the very specific connection proposed by Andrae between the early Qur'an and the dyophysite church can hardly be considered a proven fact.

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<sup>97</sup> See ES I, no. 4, ll. 105–116; HP 2:5; HF 18:15; CN 53:5; HS, no. 67, l. 396. Of course, the notion that death is analogous to sleep and the Resurrection to awakening is already expressed in several Biblical passages, e.g. Daniel 12:2.

<sup>98</sup> Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 186–191. According to *ibid.*, p. 186 the Qur'an “nowhere mentions – not even by way of a rejection – the chief virtue of the monk, virginity, which is so prominently celebrated both by the Western church and by most Oriental churches”.

<sup>99</sup> Even if Andrae were corrected that the Qur'an does not endorse nor even explicitly reject chastity, this might simply be due to a deliberate rejection of this particular aspect of much contemporary Christian piety.

<sup>100</sup> Andrae (*Ursprung*, pp. 194–196) additionally draws attention to the fact that the Nestorian tradition limited the eight canonical hours to a morning and an evening prayer, on top of which clerics and those striving for exceptional piety were expected to perform a nocturnal prayer. This prayer regime indeed corresponds closely to the impression conveyed e.g. by Q 50:39–40 that Muhammad and his followers originally performed two daily prayers in addition to the holding of vigils.

There is a third reason why Andrae's scenario is unsatisfactory. At bottom, the basic question with which he grapples is how Muhammad, an individual who had supposedly grown up in a pagan environment unfamiliar with the Biblical tradition, could have acquired sufficient knowledge of Christian eschatology in order to be able to compose the Qur'anic texts. Andrae's fundamental concern is therefore to explain the flow of eschatological information into an environment presumed to be unfamiliar with it; and after having identified a plausible gateway through which this influx could have occurred, he is content to suppose that Muhammad simply could not help reproducing, to the best of his ability, the Christian teachings he had soaked up. Such a paradigm, however, is seriously flawed, for there are very good reasons for assuming that Muhammad's audience was familiar not just with Biblically inspired narrative lore,<sup>101</sup> but also with Judaeo-Christian eschatology. As Patricia Crone has recently underlined, the Qur'an's opponents, whose views and utterances are frequently reflected in Qur'anic polemics against them, come across as quite entrenched in their doubts about the Resurrection, which do not just appear to be a reaction to the Qur'an's own teachings. For example, the fact that these opponents are able to label the Qur'anic message of an eschatological resurrection and reckoning as "ancient fables" indicates that they were thoroughly au fait with the general idea (and probably with a fair amount of relevant detail, too).<sup>102</sup> Crone also demonstrates that some of the utterances ascribed to the Qur'anic opponents display acquaintance with time-honoured objections to the Resurrection (e.g., how could God bring back bodies that have been torn apart and

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<sup>101</sup> The Qur'an's allusive style of rendering Biblical narratives evidently presupposes significant prior acquaintance with the stories told; the point is made, for instance, in Griffith, *Bible*, p. 57.

<sup>102</sup> See Crone, "Resurrection", pp. 454–455.

devoured by wild animals and whose matter may thus have entered into other human bodies?).<sup>103</sup> An impressive further indication that the Qur'anic opponents were familiar, even on a terminological level, with Judaeo-Christian eschatology consists in the fact that they are presented as describing man's demise as the "first death" (Q 44:35), which presupposes the description of eternal damnation as a "second death" appearing, *inter alia*, in the Book of Revelation (2:11, 20:6.14, 21:8).<sup>104</sup> As Crone puts it, "pagans though the Messenger's opponents may have been, they were not pagans of a hitherto isolated kind now being exposed to the doctrine of the resurrection for the first time. The non-existence of the afterlife is a fully articulated doctrine to them [...]. Like the Messenger, his opponents are drawing on a polemical armoury built up by participants in the debate about the resurrection outside the peninsula. Both sides, in other words, are contributing to a debate that had by then been going on for a long time in the Near East."<sup>105</sup> In sum, the Qur'an patently addresses a cultural environment that was too thoroughly impregnated by Biblical and post-Biblical ideas in order for Andrae's speculation about Muhammad's individual exposure to Christian eschatology to be fruitful.

While it is a moot question how the Qur'an's milieu of origin is to be most defensibly characterized, I am inclined to envisage it as marked by a syncretistic amalgamation of pagan

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<sup>103</sup> Crone, "Resurrection", pp. 450–451.

<sup>104</sup> Crone, "Resurrection", pp. 457–461.

<sup>105</sup> Crone, "Resurrection", p. 451. – I should note that I do not at present accept important further aspects of Crone's profile of the Messenger's opponents, aspects that seem to be based on very circumstantial evidence – namely, that these opponents hailed from a milieu whose acquaintance with the Biblical tradition was not primarily oral, but drawn from apocalyptic writings (Crone, "Resurrection", p. 463); and that the Qur'anic opponents hailed from "a community that drew its beliefs from either Judaism or a form of Christianity closer to its Jewish roots than was normally the case" (Crone, "Resurrection", p. 469).

Arabian rituals with concepts, narratives, and practices derived from the Judaeo-Christian heritage,<sup>106</sup> as well as some acquaintance with, yet also widespread dismissal of, Judaeo-Christian eschatology. As indicated above, the thematic and formal convergence of the early Qur'an with Syriac homiletic and hymnic literature makes it historically probable that Christian preaching, and perhaps also Christian liturgy, had some presence in this milieu.<sup>107</sup> The appearance in this environment of the early Qur'anic surahs may then be viewed as a highly selective appropriation of Christian eschatological piety, set forth as divine revelation and presented in Arabic. The remainder of this chapter will be taken up by a number of concluding comments on these three basic characteristics of the early Qur'an: its selectivity, its claim to constitute divine revelation, and its Arabicness.

To begin with the aspect of selectivity: There would by now seem to be broad agreement that the Qur'an, despite its manifold continuities with earlier configurations of the Biblical tradition, must not be mistaken for a mere echo chamber but takes up a "corrective stance" towards Judaism and Christianity.<sup>108</sup> Applying such a perspective specifically to early

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Rubin, "The Ka'ba", p. 102, on the tradition that the interior of the Ka'ba was decorated with the images of various prophets, Jesus, and Mary. For a general characterization of the Qur'anic milieu along the lines just suggested see my preliminary remarks in Sinai, *Die Heilige Schrift des Islams*, pp. 47–53, which I hope to flesh out in a future publication. Employment of the term "syncretism" would of course require some conceptual groundwork that I cannot here provide; but see Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man" and Healey, *Religion of the Nabataeans*, pp. 14–16, who prefers to speak of "assimilation" and "acculturation" (I owe my awareness of Healey's discussion to El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, p. 215, n. 13).

<sup>107</sup> As El-Badawi (*Gospel Traditions*, p. 58) reminds us, the "Islamic literary sources mention numerous Christian landmarks in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina", including a Christian cemetery and a *mas'jid Maryam*, as well as Christian tribes in the Hijaz and even Christian clans among the Quraysh.

<sup>108</sup> Thus Griffith, *Bible*, p. 89, which matches El-Badawi's characterization of the Qur'an as undertaking a "dogmatic re-articulation" of pre-existing traditions (El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, pp. 5–10). – In view of my earlier criticism of El-Badawi, I should clarify that I have no quarrel with El-Badawi's notion of re-articulation as such.

Qur'anic eschatology, what one is perhaps first bound to notice, especially against the background of its far-reaching convergence with Syriac homiletic literature, is the consistent elimination of the soteriological and eschatological function of Christ, who is not so much as mentioned until a clearly later period of the Qur'an's genesis.<sup>109</sup> For all its thematic and formal affinities to the Syriac *mimrē* corpus, the early Qur'an shows no trace of the basic Christian conviction that salvation is to be achieved through Jesus Christ. This removal of Christ is bound up with a wider set of Qur'anic eschewals, all of which are extremely unlikely to have arisen from accidents of transmission (such as Muhammad's alleged proclivity for 'misunderstanding' contemporary Christian or Jewish positions that earlier generations of Western scholars were wont to invoke) and must therefore reflect conscious theological choice, or *hairesis* (used here in an emphatically value-free sense). For one, the early Qur'an avoids attaching any salvific significance to orthodoxy, beyond the simple acceptance of the reality of a divine judgement, and limits the requirements for entry to paradise to an attitude of pious eschatological fear, expressed in concrete behaviour like charity and persistent prayer.<sup>110</sup> The early Qur'an also contains no hints suggesting that the messenger and his

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<sup>109</sup> Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, p. 64 (who considers the earliest reference to Jesus to occur in surah 19). One aspect of the early Qur'an's elimination of Christ consist in the fact that it casts God rather than Christ as the eschatological judge who will arrive together with the angels (see Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, p. 36 and El-Badawi, *Gospel Traditions*, pp. 7 and 185; detailed Qur'anic, Biblical, and Syriac references are given in Appendix 2, beginning of section 3). Lest it be objected that the title "your Lord" (*rabbuka*) in passages such as 89:22 (which states that on the Day of Judgement "your Lord" and the angels will come in ranks) might refer to Christ (to whom the New Testament of course commonly refers as the *kyrios*) rather than to Allāh, let me point out that this hypothesis is extremely improbable in view of Q 96:1–2 (which states that "your Lord" created man) and also given the general absence of a further divine figure besides "your Lord" who might be construed as God the Father, especially in the Qur'an's frequent injunctions to invoke and praise "your Lord".

<sup>110</sup> The salvific significance that contemporary Christianity ascribed to orthodoxy is illustrated by the dramatic manner in which the first-person voice in the "Testament of Ephrem" (which Beck plausibly considers to be

adherents practised such key Christian rituals as baptism and the Eucharist, or that they recognized an apostolically authorized ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>111</sup> There is consequently a very considerable set of features that the early Qur'anic kerygma, notwithstanding its extensive appropriation of Christian eschatology, does *not* share with Christianity.

Against this background, the early Qur'anic surahs are best described as putting forward a selectively focused restatement of what they take to be the essential message of an amorphous heritage of previous scriptural revelations associated with such venerable figures as Abraham and Moses (Q 87:18–19; see also 53:36–37)<sup>112</sup> – more particularly, a restatement that identifies the individualistic and moralizing eschatology of Syriac Christianity as the core of this scriptural heritage and readily discards virtually everything else.<sup>113</sup> In doing so, the early Qur'an exhibits a strong concern to safeguard the unrivalled preeminence of God (which also explains its denial of any intercessory activity during the Last Judgement not

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apocryphal) affirms his lifelong adherence to the equal rank of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (see ES IV, “Testament”, ll. 77–100).

<sup>111</sup> The underlying argument is admittedly from silence: since the early Qur'an does not, as far as I can see, contain any hints suggesting that the messenger and his adherents would participate in Christian ecclesiastical rituals (in contrast to other passages implying, for instance, the holding of vigils and an original esteem of chastity), it is inferred that they did not in fact participate in them. I would nevertheless submit that the inference is sound.

<sup>112</sup> Crone (“Resurrection”, p. 463) proposes to identify these “scrolls / scriptures (*ṣuḥuf*) of Abraham and Moses” with apocalypses, arguing that the fact that the Qur'an takes these *ṣuḥuf* to deal with the Resurrection, as indicated by the context of both passages, “rules out the possibility that the scrolls of Moses were the Pentateuch”. This line of reasoning strikes me as inconclusive, for surely one must not rule out that despite the Qur'anic milieu's deep impregnation with Jewish and Christian lore, detailed first-hand knowledge of the Bible may have been in limited supply, and people's notion of the contents of the Biblical canon, in whatever version, correspondingly vague. I would therefore stand by my proposal to construe the expression simply “as a loose way of referring to the Biblical canon [...] via two of its most prominent protagonists” and as indicating a “blurred perception of the Bible” (Sinai, “*Sūrat al-Najm*”, pp. 17–18).

<sup>113</sup> To use the Qur'an's own terminology, the early surahs provide “confirmation” (*taṣdīq*, see Q 10:37 and elsewhere) of Syriac-Christian eschatology.

based on prior divine permission<sup>114</sup>) as well as an utter lack of interest in the debilitating theological (in particular, christological) controversies besetting late antique Christianity, and determinedly displaces all institutionalized religious authority in favour of the Qur'anic messenger's prophetic charisma. All of this, I would submit, distinctly bespeaks an outside perspective on the contemporary landscape of Biblically descended religions, suggesting that the Qur'anic messenger and the original core of his adherents, despite their intimate awareness of Judaeo-Christian lore, did not hail from within any of the communities already populating this landscape. As far as one can tell from the bitter polemics contained in later Qur'anic surahs, the early Qur'an's eschatological restatement of the Biblical tradition profoundly destabilized the syncretistic fusion of paganism and eclectic Biblicism current in its immediate environment. In the medium and long run, the early Qur'an's resolute trimming down of the Biblical tradition cleared the ground for the subsequent emergence of new religious doctrines, practices, and institutions (which of course happened in interaction with Judaism and Christianity), and thus of Islam as an independent religion.

One further deconstructive move inherent in the early Qur'anic texts deserves to be highlighted separately. This is the fact that, unlike Syriac homiletic literature, the Qur'an generally does not defer to any scriptural authority beyond itself. While the Qur'anic proclamations do of course take for granted the existence of scriptures revealed to earlier prophets, such as the *tawrāh* and the *inǧīl*, and profess to be conveying the same religious message as these, such earlier scriptures are not actually treated as endowed with an

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<sup>114</sup> While one class of Qur'anic verses rules out any intercession on the Day of Judgement, a second class of verses recognizes a thoroughly domesticated form of intercession that is dependent on prior divine permission (for references see Appendix 2, at the end of section 3).

authority that is binding upon the Qur'anic proclamations and as meriting explicit citation and interpretation. This constitutes a palpable difference from the way in which the Syriac homiletic corpus relates to the Bible. To be sure, very often Syriac homilists, like the Qur'an, simply present amplifying retellings of Biblical narratives, recycle Biblical diction, or drop subtle allusions that are only recognizable to someone with a good prior command of the Bible.<sup>115</sup> However, one also encounters explicit references to the Bible as an independent textual entity.<sup>116</sup> Sometimes one even comes across passages serving a downright exegetical objective. A particularly intriguing example is Jacob of Serugh's extended treatment of Jesus' statement that nobody, "not even the Son", knows when the Hour will come (Matt. 24:36), a discussion prompted by the fact that Jesus' utterance seems to contradict the assumption, partly based on other scriptural passages (e.g., John 16:15) but also on theological considerations, that the knowledge of Christ and the Father are identical.<sup>117</sup> Elsewhere, Jacob devotes a similarly detailed explanation of the statement in Heb. 4:13 that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes" of God.<sup>118</sup> By contrast, the Qur'anic corpus contains

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<sup>115</sup> For an illustration see ES I, no. 2, ll. 1199–1220, a passage featuring a quick succession of allusions to Mark 12:41, Luke 23:42, and Num. 12:1–15 yet which contains no fully-fledged quotations nor any obvious indications that another text is being referenced.

<sup>116</sup> E.g. HS, no. 31, ll. 183–184 (summarizing 1 Cor. 13:8, presented as something that Paul "said", *emar*); HS, no. 67, ll. 283–284 (paraphrasing Ezek. 37:7, explicitly labelled as something that "has been written", *ak da-ktibā*); HS, no. 67, ll. 402–405 (supporting Jacob's portrayal of the Resurrection by asserting that "the Apostle" = Paul "testifies", *sāhed* to its truth and introducing a report of 1 Thess. 4:15 as something that Paul "said"). See also ES I, no. 2, ll. 1557–1571, which evokes a statement by the "blessed Apostle" (again, Paul) condemning, *inter alia*, backbiting (perhaps 1 Cor. 6:10) and juxtaposes this with a treatment of Noah's cursing of Canaan in Gen. 9:25, arguing that it was due to the latter's mockery of him and that the episode thus support's Paul's point; see also *ibid.*, l. 1601 ("Hear the Apostle ...") and l. 1635, where the explicit quotation marker *w-emar* is used.

<sup>117</sup> HS, no. 192, ll. 75ff. (see above, n. 76).

<sup>118</sup> HS, no. 68, ll. 65–134.



very few verses that both show specific overlap with a particular Biblical statement *and* are clearly marked as referencing another text,<sup>119</sup> while explicitly exegetical digressions on the Bible similar to Jacob's discussion of Matt. 24:36 and Heb. 4:13 are entirely absent from it. The Biblical text therefore has a very different literary presence in the *mimrē* literature and in the Qur'an, something that is unhelpfully obscured by Reynolds' proposal to characterize the Qur'an as a homiletic discourse presupposing an underlying "Biblical subtext".<sup>120</sup> As a matter of fact, the only texts that the Qur'anic surahs actually treat as possessing scriptural status and as deserving significant interpretive effort are earlier Qur'anic surahs.<sup>121</sup> In short, the Qur'an is very much its own scripture.

The reason for this self-sufficiency is to be sought in the second of the three characteristics mentioned above: namely, the fact that already the early Qur'anic proclamations take the "revolutionary step" of presenting themselves as divine speech<sup>122</sup> rather than as human discourse amplifying or commenting on a prior divine revelation, as Syriac homilies and hymns do.<sup>123</sup> This claim is expressed above all by the Qur'an's pervasive use of the divine first person and is further underlined by self-referential passages such as

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<sup>119</sup> But see the quotation of Psalms 37:29 at Q 21:105, marked as something that "We have written (*katabnā*) in the *zabūr*". Cf. also Ps. 1:3 and Q 14:24–26.

<sup>120</sup> Reynolds, *Biblical Subtext*, pp. 230–258.

<sup>121</sup> See in detail Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*.

<sup>122</sup> This is appropriately highlighted in Ammann, *Geburt des Islam*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>123</sup> This is recognized in passing by Reynolds (*Biblical Subtext*, p. 236: "But the Qur'ān does not only recount the words of the prophets. It speaks as a prophet ..."), although he arguably fails to appreciate the difficulty that this creates for his proposal to characterize Qur'anic discourse as homiletic. At the very least, one would have to add that it is God himself who is presented as taking up the role of the homilist in the Qur'an (cf. the characterization of the Qur'an as "targumic speech" delivered by a divine *meturgeman* in Sinai, "Self-Referentiality", p. 125).

Q 80:11–16 or 81:15–29.<sup>124</sup> It is true that the early surahs frequently refer to God in the third person (*rabbuka*, “your Lord”) and that a significant number of them (Q 82, 89, 91, 99–107 and 111) lack occurrences of the divine first person. Other early proclamations, however, are marked relatively unequivocally as divine speech, either by means of a second-person singular address of the messenger or by an occurrence of the divine “I”.<sup>125</sup> The overall impression is thus that the juxtaposition of a divine speaker and a human messenger was present already in the earliest layer of the Qur'an, albeit perhaps less insistently so than in later proclamations.<sup>126</sup> This forms a stark contrast to the *mimrē* literature's frequent and explicit deployment of a human auctorial perspective, usually in the form of dramatic self-incriminations or appeals for God's assistance in delivering the following homily.<sup>127</sup> Syriac homilies and hymns do not attempt to transcend the voice of a human speaker, and indeed make much rhetorical hay over that speaker's inherent sinfulness and inability to adequately depict the divine judgement. The Qur'an, by contrast, squarely styles itself as divine speech, thus drastically outbidding any human preaching of the sort delivered by Jacob. It is a telling measure of the radicalness of the Qur'an's claim to authority that it even spurns the device of

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<sup>124</sup> For a detailed analysis of these passages see Sinai, “Self-Referentiality”.

<sup>125</sup> In a number of surahs this is the case only towards the end (Q 79:42–43.45, 84:24, 86:16–17, 88:21–22.25–26, 96:15–16.18), while other texts with a very low MVL utilize the divine perspective earlier (Q 94:1–4, 74:11–17.26, 108:1, 92:7.10.12–14). Q 81, vv. 19–24 of which speak about the messenger in the third person, may also be considered to be coded as divine speech.

<sup>126</sup> See in more detail Sinai, “Self-Referentiality”, pp. 108–109.

<sup>127</sup> E.g., Jacob of Serugh's disclaimer: “Who gave me the eloquent mouth of a prophet / that I should speak with it of this judgement?”, followed by an invocation of the Apostle Paul who will “teach us the truth” (HS, no. 68, ll. 57–62); or Jacob's opening address of God in HS, no. 192, ll. 1ff. (“The day of your revelation incites me to speak of it. / Open my lips so that I may deliver the homily of your judgement!”), followed by profuse self-incriminations and further requests for divine assistance. Prolonged first-person introductory sections also figure, for example, at the beginning of HS, nos. 31, 67, 193, and 195. For further examples of auctorial self-incrimination or pleas for God's mercy see ES I, no. 5, passim, and ES III, no. 3, ll. 79–88.193–284.

pseudepigraphy, always a convenient means for extending the corpus of revealed texts by driving in the slipstream of past authorities without venturing the assertion that revelation has occurred here and now.

Are there literary precedents for the Qur'an's sustained use of the divine first person at a time when revelation had long since ceased to be a contemporary phenomenon and become solidified into closed textual corpora that were recited, interpreted, or paraphrased? There lurks an evident danger here of carrying the parallel-mongering too far, but an experimental consideration of the question may nevertheless be of interest. The various versions of an alleged letter by Christ believed to have "fallen down from heaven" certainly constitute an intriguing analogue to the Qur'an's extensive employment of the divine perspective.<sup>128</sup> Above all, however, the basic discursive constellation of the Qur'an – a divine "I" or "We" addressing a human "you" (both in the singular and the plural) – may have been perceived (and been meant to be perceived) as reactualizing patterns of discourse that are characteristic of Biblical prophecy.<sup>129</sup> To be sure, it is extremely improbable that the Qur'anic milieu would have been marked by detailed first-hand study of the prophetic books of the

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<sup>128</sup> See Bittner, *Der vom Himmel gefallene Brief* (I owe this reference to a handout distributed by Jane Baun at the conference from which this volume ultimately originates, held at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 18 March 2013).

<sup>129</sup> See also the observation, made in connection with the analysis of surah 102 above, that the Qur'an and Biblical prophecy make similar use of condemnatory and minatory pronouncements. Furthermore, the Qur'anic *qul* statements, which frequently follow the quotation of an objection voiced by Muhammad's opponents (for an early example, see Q 52:30–31), bear some resemblance with the so-called "words of disputation" that are characteristic of the book of Ezekiel, where a certain utterance or objection of the audience is first quoted and then refuted (e.g., Ezekiel 12:26–28: "Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, / Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. / Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God."). See Hossfeld, "Das Buch Ezechiel", p. 493.

Bible. After all, unlike the Torah (*tawrāh*), the Gospel (*inǧīl*), and the Psalms (*zabūr*), the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible do not even figure as a distinct literary corpus in the Qur'an; and with the exception of Jonah, the Qur'an mentions none of the eponymous authors of the prophetic books, such as Isaiah or Jeremiah, by name. Nonetheless, it is possible that prophetic concepts and forms of expression could have circulated in the Qur'anic habitat via the reading of brief prophetic pericopes in a liturgical context,<sup>130</sup> perhaps also the quotation and amplification of prophetic pronouncements in sermons.<sup>131</sup> Neither way of encountering prophetic sound bites would necessarily have entailed a detailed command of the names of specific prophetic figures,<sup>132</sup> but may still have been sufficient to fuel a generic sense that prophets deliver warnings, often in the divine first person, of imminent punishment for miscellaneous social and religious offences, especially a lack of social solidarity with widows and orphans and ungratefulness towards God. It may be that the

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<sup>130</sup> For example, Isaiah 58:5–7, which appears to be reflected in Q 90:12–16, was a popular scriptural reading: it is part of the readings for the Sunday before Lent according to two sixth century Syriac lectionaries listed in Burkitt, *Early Syriac Lectionary System*, p. 28; is divided up among the “lessons” for two different days of the fast according to Vööbus, *Lectionary of the Monastery of ʿAzīzāʿēl*, pp. 12 and 26, pp. 129–130 = fols. 38a–39b, and pp. 133–134 = fols. 40a–40b; and was part of the readings for the third Sunday of the fast according to Vööbus, *Syriac Lectionary from the Church of the Forty Martyrs*, p. xxi and p. 114 = fol. 57b.

<sup>131</sup> That the reading of scriptural pericopes in a liturgical context was not the only setting in which one might be exposed to bits of prophetic discourse is illustrated by the fact that Isaiah 58:5–7, which appears to underlie Q 90:12–16, is cited at four different places in the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum*; see Vööbus, *Didascalia*, pp. 75, 136, 139, 157. See also ES I, no. 1, ll. 280–299, which recaps Isaiah's upbraiding of the daughters of Zion and employs the diction of Isa. 3:24. However, this passage does not employ the divine first person.

<sup>132</sup> Unlike the Pentateuch and the Gospels, the Prophets are not read continuously either in Jewish or Christian services. In addition, prophetic pericopes are usually no longer than ten verses and are frequently marked out in a way that obscures to which prophet they were ascribed. Regarding the quotation of prophetic material in sermons, note that ES I, no. 1, ll. 280–299 (which amplifies Isa. 3:24) only refers to Isaiah as “the prophet”.

Qur'an's employment of the divine first person latches on to such a diffuse awareness among its audience of how and about what prophets generally speak.

Finally, a few remarks about the Qur'an's Arabicness. Already the fact that later surahs emphasize that the Qur'anic revelations are sent down "in clear Arabic language" or "as an Arabic recitation" (e.g., Q 12:2, 20:113, 26:195 etc.) indicates that the Qur'anic proclamations' being in Arabic was perceived as noteworthy.<sup>133</sup> This is not surprising: if indeed there was no written Arabic translation of the Bible in pre-Qur'anic times,<sup>134</sup> then it was with the Qur'an that the Biblical tradition was given its first proper articulation in Arabic. It is vital to appreciate that this Arabicness was not just a linguistic fact but had an important literary dimension. Most visibly, the early Qur'anic proclamations are composed in rhymed prose (*sağ*), "the preferred medium of the *kuhhān* (sing. *kāhin*), the soothsayers, oracles or religious specialists of pre-Islamic Arabia."<sup>135</sup> Pre-Islamic soothsayers are also reported to have employed the literary form of oaths, which figures prominently in the early Qur'anic surahs as well, particularly in their introductory sections (e.g., Q 37, 51, 77, 79, 89–93, 95, 100, 103).<sup>136</sup> Hence, although the early Qur'anic texts are not themselves oracular, they nevertheless seem to intentionally harness certain literary features commonly associated with ancient Arabian mantic discourse in order to effectively convey their claim to derive from

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<sup>133</sup> But see Jones, "Language of the Qur'ān", pp. 29–48, who warns against a simple identification of the language of the Qur'an specifically with the language of poetry.

<sup>134</sup> Griffith, *Bible*, pp. 41–53.

<sup>135</sup> Stewart, "Divine Epithets", p. 22. See also id., "*Saj* in the Qur'an".

<sup>136</sup> See Neuwirth, "Horizont der Offenbarung"; id., "Der historische Muhammad". – It deserves to be pointed out that the pseudonymous "Testament of Ephrem" also contains a series of oaths (see ES IV, "Testament", ll. 77–88), including one by "him who descended on Mount Sinai", which is of course eerily reminiscent of Q 95:2. The passage suggests that oaths may already in pre-Qur'anic times have been employed as a medium of Biblicizing discourse.

divine revelation.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, while the Qur'an emphatically distinguishes itself from poetry (Q 69:41 and elsewhere)<sup>138</sup> and can indeed in many respects be described as “the complete antithesis of contemporary poetry”,<sup>139</sup> scholars like Horovitz and Neuwirth have identified a number of Qur'anic passages that purposefully deploy poetic constructions and motifs, possibly even brief quotations.<sup>140</sup> All in all, the Qur'anic proclamations appear to exhibit a selective engagement with earlier genres of Arabic literature that would certainly have contributed to their credibility as a properly Arabic restatement of the Biblical heritage. In this sense, one might speak of the early Qur'an as an innovative cultural translation or Arabic naturalisation of Syriac eschatology.

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<sup>137</sup> This relatively evident fact is somewhat obscured by my earlier claim that “early qur'anic oaths do not function as invocations of a supranatural authority *beyond* the text, but rather as literary devices *within* the text” (Sinai, “Self-Referentiality”, p. 108). I now think that this is a questionable antithesis.

<sup>138</sup> The various Qur'anic denials that Muhammad was a *kāhin*, *šā'ir* (“poet”), *sāḥir* (“magician”) or *mağnūn* (“possessed by a demon”) would seem to indicate that he was indeed called all these things – probably because they were all associated with some sort of contact with the supernatural, albeit not of the particular kind to which Muhammad laid claim. On the notion that poets were inspired by demons see Ignaz Goldziher, “Ueber die Vorgeschichte der Higāʾ-Poesie”. But see the reservations about the construal just presented that are expressed in Bauer, “Relevance”, pp. 721–722.

<sup>139</sup> Bauer, “Relevance”, pp. 704–706.

<sup>140</sup> On the relationship between the Qur'an and pre-Islamic poetry, see Bauer, “Relevance”, and Neuwirth, *Poetische Prophetie*, pp. 65–67. On the use of poetic motifs in Qur'anic descriptions of paradise see Horovitz, “Paradies”. Meticulous attention to poetic assonances is a particular hallmark of the first volume of Angelika Neuwirth's commentary on the Qur'an, see e.g. Neuwirth, *Poetische Prophetie*, pp. 91–92 (on Q 94:5–6), pp. 148–149 (on Q 104:3), p. 230 (on Q 92:7.10), p. 231 (on *tawallā*), pp. 241–242 (on Q 90:6), p. 244 (Q 90:14–16). See furthermore Sinai, “*Sūrat al-Najm*”, p. 14 (on Q 53:5–6) and p. 25, n. 48 (on the possible link between the early Qur'anic predilection for enigmatic participial paraphrases of the Day of Judgement, such as 80:33: *aṣ-ṣāḥḥa*, 88:1: *al-ğāšiya*, 101:1–3: *al-qārī'a* etc., and metonymic periphrasis, a characteristic trope of ancient Arabic poetry); Sinai, “Religious Poetry”. It is likely that more such instances will come to light in the future, as students of the Qur'an acquire a better command of the pre-Islamic poetic corpus.

## **Appendix 1: The Qur'anic surahs with the lowest mean verse length**

I owe the transcription of the Qur'an on which the values in the following graph are based to Prof. Hans Zirker.<sup>141</sup> The transcription follows the conventions of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (i.e., it uses *ǧ* and *ǧ̣*, etc.; word-initial glottal stops are transcribed). Before computing the length of individual verses, I transformed all verse endings into pausal forms (by omitting brief vowels and *-un/-in*, changing the accusative ending *-an* to *-ā*, and omitting gemination) and then conducted an electronic count of all letters excluding hyphens and space characters. This allowed me to compute the mean verse length (MVL) of all Qur'anic surahs.

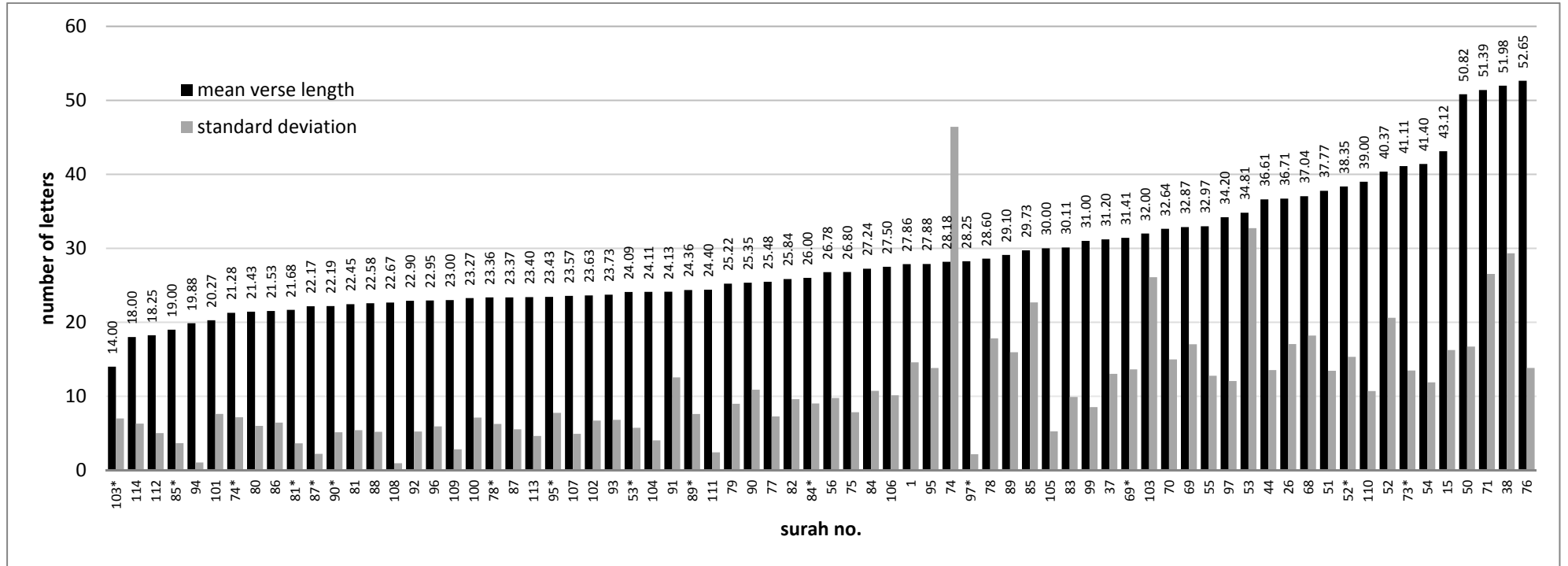
The graph represents the seventy-two surahs that exhibit, on average, the shortest verses, rearranged in the order of ascending MVL (black columns). The grey columns chart each surah's standard deviation, which measures how much the length of individual verses strays from the surah mean. A low standard deviation indicates relatively consistent verse length across the entire surah. Surahs displaying a high standard deviation often contain what appear to be secondary insertions (see, for instance, Q 73:20 and 74:31). Where a surah number is marked with an asterisk, this refers to the surah in question excluding such putative additions. "Q 103\*" thus means Q 103 without v. 3, while "Q 103" refers to the full version of the text. Passages that I would consider to constitute secondary additions to an earlier core are Q 52:21, 53:23.26–32, 69:7, 73:20, 74:31.56, 78:37–40, 81:29, 84:25, 85:7–11, 87:7, 89:15–16.23–24.27–30, 90:17–20, 95:6, 97:4, and 103:3. This list largely corresponds to that

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<sup>141</sup> See <http://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DocumentServlet?id=10802> (8 August 2013).

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in Neuwirth, *Studien*, 201–203 (see also n. 46). – For further comments on the data underlying the graph see Sinai, “Inner-Qur’anic Chronology”.





## **Appendix 2: A preliminary catalogue of parallels to Qur'anic eschatology from Syriac homilies and hymns**

The following register records discoveries made in the course of a relatively superficial trawling of some Syriac texts. While I am under no illusion that occasional mistakes are bound to have crept in (e.g., an accidental omission of relevant Qur'anic verses) and that a more exhaustive examination of the Syriac material would probably yield many more references, the usefulness of the register for other scholars will hopefully outweigh its flaws.

The register is structured thematically and is subdivided into four general sections devoted to general eschatological terminology, cosmic upheaval and the Resurrection, the Judgement, and the hereafter. The left-hand column contains brief descriptions of the term or motif in question, while the middle column enumerates pertinent Qur'anic verses (surahs are listed in reverse order, as this to some degree approximates their probable historical sequence). The right-hand column contains the following information:

(i) "OT" / "NT": Select verses from the Old Testament and, much more frequently, from the New Testament (in one case also from the Apostolic Fathers) that are cited, paraphrased, or alluded to in the Syriac texts, or which appear otherwise relevant. Where Matthew parallels Luke or Mark these latter passages are normally omitted, as they can be easily located. Where a New Testament passage alludes to an Old Testament one, the latter is sometimes given in brackets.

(ii) "Syr.": Passages in the Syriac sermons and hymns attributed to Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh that overlap with the Qur'an (the abbreviations are decoded in the bibliography below; note that the authenticity of some of the sermons ascribed to Ephrem is doubtful).

References to relevant secondary literature are sometimes given in additional notes.

For a comprehensive catalogue and discussion of parallels between the Qur'an and the Book of Revelation see Brady, "Book of Revelation".

<i>Motif</i>	<i>Qur'anic verses</i>	<i>Parallels</i>
<b>(1) Some general terminology<sup>142</sup></b>		
"The day of Judgement" ( <i>al-dīn / yawm al-dīn = yawmā d-dīnā</i> )	multiple occurrences (e.g., 107:1; 95:7; 83:11; 82:9.15.17–18 etc.)	NT: Matthew 10:15, 11:22.24, 12:36 (see El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 189–190) Syr.: multiple occurrences (e.g., HS, no. 31, l. 3; HS, no. 32, l. 1; HS, no. 192, ll. 41.307)
"The hour"	multiple occurrences (e.g., 79:42; 54:1.46 etc.)	NT: cf. Matt. 24:36, 25:13 Syr.: multiple occurrences, e.g. in HF 77–79 and HS, no. 192 (ll. 61.76.89.107.111.117.134–149 etc.)
"On that day" ( <i>yawma 'idīn = b-haw yawmā</i> )	multiple occurrences (e.g., 102:8; 100:11; 99:4.6; 89:23.25; 88:2.8)	NT: Matt. 7:22 (cf. Zeph. 1:8–18) Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 86.233.257; ES III, no. 1, l. 338; ES III, no. 4, ll. 9–156 and app. 3 and 4.
"A hard / bitter day"	74:9–10; 54:8; 25:26	OT: cf. Isa. 13:9 Syr.: CN 75:1; HS, no. 31, l. 91; HS, no. 192, l. 340; HS, no. 193, ll. 225–226

**(2) Cosmic upheaval and the Resurrection<sup>143</sup>**

The end is, or may be, nigh	70:6–7; 54:1; 42:17; 33:63; 21:1.97; 17:51; 16:1	NT: Matt. 4:17 Syr.: ES III, no. 2, ll. 1–8; HS, no. 192, ll. 225–336 (especially ll. 234.238.248.272.274.301–304.315); HS, no. 193, ll. 89–144
The exact time of the end is hidden	79:42–45; 72:25; 51:12–14; 41:47; 21:109; 7:187 (cf. also 43:41–42; 40:77; 23:93–95; 13:40; 10:46)	NT: Matt. 24:36, 25:13 Syr.: HF 77–79; HS, no. 192, ll. 75–224.273.307–310.335

<sup>142</sup> I have not attempted to produce a comprehensive list of occurrences of *dīn* in the sense of "Judgement", a term that is extremely frequent both in the Qur'an and in the Syriac sources. The word as such obviously passed into Arabic from Aramaic (see Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, pp. 131–133).

<sup>143</sup> The following isolated echoes of apocalyptic material are omitted (see Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 62–63): the coming of Gog and Magog (Q 21:96; cf. Rev. 20:8) and the emergence of a "beast" (*dābba*) from the earth (27:82; cf. Rev. 13:11).

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People are heedless ( <i>fī ġafla</i> ) of the coming end	50:22 (about individual death); 21:1.97; 19:39 (cf. also 54:1.2)	Syr.: ES III, no. 2, ll. 1–8 (see also Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 135–137, with quotations from the Greek Ephrem)
The eschatological earthquake	99:1; 79:6–7 <sup>144</sup> ; 73:14; 56:4; 52:9; 22:1	NT: Mark 13:8; Rev. 6:12, 11:13, 16:18 Syr.: ES III, no. 4, l. 3; HS, no. 31, ll. 91.97.117.122; HS, no. 32, ll. 5–6.20–22; HS, no. 67, ll. 110–144.219.243.247–251.417.422.431; HS, no. 192, ll. 355–359.361–364; HS, no. 193, ll. 145.157.163–164
The oceans overflow (Qur'an) / are emptied	82:3; 81:6 (cf. 52:6)	Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 357–358.415; ES III, no. 2, ll. 255–256; HS, no. 32, l. 23; HS, no. 67, l. 261; HS, no. 192, l. 370
The mountains are moved / destroyed / melt	101:5; 81:3; 78:20; 77:10; 73:14; 70:9; 69:14; 56:5.6; 52:10; 27:88; 20:105; 18:47; 13:31	NT: Rev. 6:14, 16:20 (cf. Isa. 54:10) Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 361–364; ES III, no. 2, ll. 259–260; HS, no. 67, ll. 259–260.297–298; HS, no. 192, l. 363–364; HS, no. 193, ll. 165.304
Darkening of the heavenly bodies, especially the sun and the moon	81:1; 77:8; 75:8.9	NT: Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12 (cf. Isa. 13:10; Ezek. 32:7–8) Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 353–356; ES III, no. 2, ll. 271–272; HS, no. 32, l. 9; HS, no. 67, ll. 263–268.270.273–274; HS, no. 192, ll. 367–368; HS, no. 193, ll. 149–150
The stars fall from the sky	81:2?; 82:2	NT: Matt. 24:29; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:13 (cf. Isa. 34:4) Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 350–352; HS, no. 31, ll. 99–100; HS, no. 32, l. 9; HS, no. 67, ll. 269–270; HS, no. 193, l. 158
The heaven melts	70:8; 55:35	NT: 2 Pet. 3:10.12; 2 Clement 16:3 (see Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 66). Syr.: HS, no. 68, l. 207
The heaven is split / stripped away / opened	84:1; 82:1; 81:11; 78:19; 77:9; 73:18; 69:16; 55:37; 25:25	Syr.: ES III, no. 2, l. 269; HS, no. 192, l. 369 Note: See also Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 143 (quoting a passage from the Greek Ephrem corpus: “Then the heavens will be split ...”).
The heaven is rolled up	39:67; 21:104	NT: Rev. 6:14 (cf. Isa. 34:4) Syr.: ES III, no. 1, l. 349; ES III, no. 2, l. 270; HS, no. 192, l. 369

<sup>144</sup> The following verse, Q 79:8, mentions the “throbbing” (*wāġifa*) hearts of the resurrected: the external tremor of the eschatological earthquake thus finds its psychological echo in the trembling of the human psyche. A similar correspondence of external and internal trembling can also be discerned in the Syriac homiletic tradition; see, for instance, the psychological, rather than physical, use of *zawcā*, “trembling”, in ES I, no. 5, ll. 32.107 or HS, no. 31, l. 78.

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The blast(s) of the trumpet	78:18; 74:8; 69:13; 50:20; 39:68; 36:51; 27:87; 23:101; 20:102; 18:99; 6:73	NT: Matt. 24:31; Rev. 11:15; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16 Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 495–498; ES III, no. 2, ll. 243–244; HS, no. 31, l. 93; HS, no. 192, ll. 353–355; HS, no. 193, l. 271 Note: See <i>Andrae</i> , <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 141–142.
The eschatological shout ( <i>ṣayḥa</i> , <i>zağra</i> )	79:13–14; 50:42; 37:19; 38:15; 36:29.49.53; also associated with inner-historical punishments, see 29:40 and parallels	In addition to the references in the preceding entry (cf. <i>Andrae</i> , <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 64–65, who identifies the shout with the call of the trumpet) see HS, no. 67, l. 342 and no. 192, l. 363.
The dead are brought forth from the earth / graves	100:9; 99:2.6; 84:4; 82:4; 70:43; 54:7; 50:44; 36:51; cf. also 21:96	NT: Rev. 20:13 Syr.: HS, no. 32, ll. 27–28.35–52; HS, no. 67, ll. 277–288.309–347.392–395; HS, no. 193, ll. 153.271–333 Note: Jacob's portrayal of the resurrection as a cosmic childbirth amplifies Matt. 24:8 and 1 Thess. 5:3, which compare the onset of the end to the beginning of birth pains (see also ES III, no. 2, ll. 197–202).
The resurrected awake from death as if from a brief slumber	79:46; 46:35; 36:52; 30:55.56; 23:112–114; 20:104; 17:52; 10:45; 2:259; cf. also 18:19	Syr.: ES I, no. 4, ll. 105–116; HP 2:5; HF 18:15; CN 53:5; HS, no. 67, l. 396 Note: For further references, in particular to Aphraates, Narsai and Babay the Great, see <i>Andrae</i> , <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 156–163 and O'Shaughnessy, <i>Muhammad's Thoughts on Death</i> , pp. 69–70.
“In the twinkling of an eye”	54:50; 16:77	NT: 1 Cor. 15:52 Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 499–500; HS, no. 67, ll. 351.358–359.406.446 See also <i>Andrae</i> , <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 142.
All human relationships severed	80:33–37; 23:101; 22:2	NT: Mark 13:12.17; Matt. 24:19 (see El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 170–172) Syr.: HS, no. 67, ll. 135–140.243–244; see also ES II, no. 2, ll. 169–184 (although this scene is set in hell) Note: See <i>Andrae</i> , <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 144.
The downcast eyes of the resurrected	88:2; 79:9; 70:44; 68:43; 54:7; 42:45	Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 364–367; cf. HS, no. 32, l. 87 Note: See <i>Andrae</i> , <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 72.

**(3) The Judgement**

Arrival of the divine judge	89:22; 78:38; 69:16–17;	NT: Matt. 16:27
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(God / Christ) accompanied by the angels; the angels come / stand in file and praise God	37:1.165–166; 25:22;16:33; 15:8; 6:158; 2:210	Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 495–498; ES III, no. 2, ll. 233– 240.285–290.305–308.319–320; HS, no. 32, l. 4; HS, no. 68, ll. 269–270; HS, no. 194, ll. 130.265–266.269– 270 Note: See Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 143; Rudolph, <i>Abhängigkeit</i> , p. 36; El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 7, 185.
The resurrected are assembled ( <i>ḥashara = kanneš</i> )	multiple occurrences of <i>ḥ-š-r</i> (e.g., 67:24; 58:9; 50:44; 46:6; 41:19)	NT: Matt. 24:31, 25:31–32 Syr.: ES III, no. 1, l. 501; HS, no. 31, ll. 95–96; HS, no. 32, ll. 107–108; HS, no. 68, ll. 253–254.257–270
The resurrected are presented before the divine judge	99:6, 69:18;19:80.95; 18:48, 11:48; 6:94	
Only the divine judge speaks; the damned not allowed to proffer excuses or plead for mercy	77:35–36; 40:52; 30:57; 27:85; 16:84	Syr.: ES I, no. 3, ll. 81–98; ES III, no. 3, ll. 61–64; HS, no. 31, ll. 153–154.211; HS, no. 32, ll. 109–110.117.119
All human actions recorded in a book / books	86:4; 83:7–9.18–21.82:10– 12; 78:29; 68:1?; 54:52– 53; 50:4.18; 43:80; 36:12; 23:62; 13:11; 10:21; 6:61	NT: Rev. 20:12 Syr.: ES I, no. 2, ll. 585–608; ES I, no. 3, ll. 29–90.99– 152; ES I, no. 5, ll. 332–335; HS, no. 32, ll. 133–134 (referring to an individual record book as in the Qur'an)
Use of books at the Judgement	84:7–12; 81:10; 69:18– 20.25–26; 52:2–3?; 45:28– 29; 39:69; 18:49; 17:13– 14.71 (some of the Qur'anic passages speak of individual or communal record books)	
Everything, even the most secret sins, is brought into the open	100:10; cf. also the frequent statements that God “knows what is in the breasts“ or the like (e.g., 67:13; 13:10; 11:5 and elsewhere)	Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 85–92.301–329.382–383; ES III, no. 1, ll. 321–324.333–336; ES III, no. 3, ll. 21.133– 134; HS, no. 31, ll. 219–220; HS, no. 68, ll. 182.211– 213
The scales of justice	101:6.8; 99:6–8; 31:16; 23:102–103; 21:47; 7:8–9	Syr.: ES III, no. 5, ll. 13–16 Note: Beck considers this sermon to date only from the second half of the 7th century; see Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 69–70 and 121 on other pre-Qur'anic occurrences of the notion.
The sinners have their	41:20–23; 36:65; 24:24	Syr.: HS, no. 32, ll. 137–140

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misdeeds written on their limbs		
No need to question the sinners about their misdeeds	55:39; 28:78	Syr.: HS, no. 31, ll. 65.153
The sinners are questioned	43:19.44; 37:24; 34:25; 21:23; 16:56.93; 29:13; 15:92–93; 7:6; 2:134.141	Syr.: HS, no. 68, l. 146; HS, no. 192, ll. 9.15
Condemnation of infanticide or abortion; resurrection of children who were killed or aborted	81:8	Syr.: ES III, no. 1, ll. 537–554; ES III, no. 4, app. 1, ll. 77–78 (quoting Job 3:16). Note: The prohibition of abortion and/or infanticide is also found in the Syriac <i>Didascalia Apostolorum</i> , see Vööbus, <i>Didascalia</i> , p. 33, ll. 15–16 (pointed out in Zellentin, <i>Legal Culture</i> , p. 73).
The resurrected grasp their misdeeds	99:6–8; 82:5; 81:14; 78:40; 75:13 and multiple later parallels (e.g., 59:18; 39:7; 31:15; 29:8; 18:49; 6:60.108; 5:105; 3:30)	Syr.: ES I, no. 4, ll. 117–124; ES I, no. 5, ll. 322–335; HS, no. 31, 123–125.212–216; HS, no. 32, ll. 133–136; HS, no. 192, ll. 11–24
The sinners incriminate / judge themselves	75:14; 68:29.31; 21:14.46.97; 7:5 (cf. 100:7)	
Earthly possessions are of no avail	111:2; 92:11; 69:28; 58:17; 45:10; 40:82; 39:50; 15:84; 7:48; 3:10.116	Syr.: HP 2:3–4
No (mutual) help for the resurrected, no stratagems ( <i>kayd</i> = <i>šen<sup>c</sup>ātā</i> )	82:19; 77:39; 70:10; 69:35; 59:12; 52:46; 48:22; 40:18; 31:33; 28:41; 26:101; 3:111; 2:48.123	Syr.: ES IV, no. 4 (Testament), ll. 353–356; HS, no. 32, ll. 114.117.127–128 (see in particular Q 31:33)
No intercession ( <i>šafa<sup>c</sup>a</i> = <i>apīs / etkaššap</i> )	multiple occurrences, incl. 74:48; 40:18; 39:43–44; 36:23; 32:4; 30:13; 26:100–101; 10:18; 6:51.70.94; 2:48.123.254	Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 536–587; ES III, no. 1, ll. 455–456.459–460.465–466 Note: See Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 71–72 and 144, as well as the note in the following entry. Given that the notion of intercession is well attested in the Syriac literature and the Christian tradition more broadly (whether it is endorsed or rejected), I am highly sceptical of El-Badawi's proposal ( <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 190–193) to interpret the Qur'anic term <i>šafā<sup>c</sup>a</i> according to the meaning that the root <i>š-p-<sup>c</sup></i> has in Syriac, namely, as meaning “abundance” rather than

		“intercession”.
Endorsement of intercession (Qur'an: only with divine permission)	53:26; 43:86; 34:23; 21:28; 20:109; 19:87; 10:3; 4:85 (seemingly unconditional endorsement of intercession); 2:255; see also the Qur'anic use of <i>istāğfara</i> , e.g., in 40:7 or 8:33 etc.	Syr.: HP 6:19, 7:25. Note: As Beck remarks in a note to his translation of ES III, no. 1, l. 466, which responds to Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 144, these passages from the Hymns on Paradise conflict with the denial of intercession in some of the sermons attributed to Ephrem (see the references given in the previous entry). Beck plausibly takes this to indicate the inauthenticity of the respective <i>mimrē</i> .
Separation ( <i>faṣl</i> = <i>puršānā</i> ) of the righteous and the sinners	78:17; 77:13–14.38; 60:3; 44:40; 37:21; 32:25; 22:17	NT: Matt. 13:37–43; Matt. 25:32–33 (see El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 193–194); cf. the expression <i>hēmera kriseōs</i> in Matt. 10:15, 11:22.24, and 12:36 (Neuwirth, <i>Poetische Prophetie</i> , pp. 508) Syr.: HS, no. 32, ll. 53–80; HS, no. 67, ll. 145–246 (l. 156: <i>puršānā</i> )

#### (4) Paradise and hell

Those of the right vs. those of the left	90:18–19; 74:39; 56:8–56.90–91 (cf. also 84:7–9; 69:19–24; 17:71)	NT: Matthew 25:31–46 (see Rudolph, <i>Abhängigkeit</i> , p. 31) Syr.: ES I, no. 2, ll. 1101–1130; ES I, no. 5, ll. 356–359; HS, no. 67, ll. 171–172.
The fire of hell is stoked	81:12 (cf. 89:23; 79:36; 26:91)	Syr.: ES III, no. 4, l. 225
The sinners are whisked away by angels or demons	96:18; 47:27; 44:47; 16:28; 8:50; cf. also 32:11; 7:37; 6:61; 4:97 (with similar diction, but probably referring to the moment of death)	Syr.: ES III, no. 1, l. 628; ES III, no. 2, ll. 265–268; ES III, no. 3, l. 124; ES III, no. 4, ll. 213–216.221–224 Note: See Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 72–76 for a comparison of the Qur'anic data with other Jewish and Christian sources and also <i>ibid.</i> , pp. 145–146.
The sinners are shackled by the angels of hell	76:4; 73:12; 69:30.32; 40:71; 36:8; 34:33; 13:5	Syr.: ES III, no. 4, ll. 221–226
The sinners are cast down into the fire	101:8–11 <sup>145</sup> ; 92:11; 76:4; 73:12; 69:31; 44:47; 40:72;	NT: Matt. 25:41; Rev. 19:20, 20:15 Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 264–265; ES II, no. 2, ll. 89–

<sup>145</sup> In my view, the notoriously enigmatic verse Q 101:9 (*fa-ummuhū hāwiyah*) is best viewed as a deliberate pun that would have been simultaneously understood both as an announcement of damnation (“His mother is an abyss” = he will be cast into the pit of fire) and as an imprecation (“May he – paraphrased by ‘his mother’ – perish”; on this latter signification see Fischer, “Eine Qorān-Interpolation”). Unlike El-Badawi (*Gospel*

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	13:5; multiple assertions that the sinners will “roast” in the hellfire (111:3; 92:15; 88:4; 87:12; 84:12 etc.)	164.221–230; ES III, no. 1, ll. 405–412.453–454.481–482; ES III, no. 3, ll. 117–120; ES III, no. 4, ll. 225–226; HS, no. 31, l. 90 (and multiple further references to the fire of hell throughout Jacob’s eschatological homilies)
The sinners are tormented ( <i>ʿaḏḏaba</i> = <i>šanneq, aḥḥeš</i> )	multiple occurrences of <i>ʿaḏḏaba</i> and <i>ʿaḏāb</i> , e.g., 89:13.25; 88:24; 85:10; 84:24; 78:30.40 etc.	NT: Matt. 25:46 (see El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 193, 195) Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 256.264.281.288; ES I, no. 6, l. 45; ES II, no. 2, l. 78; ES III, no. 1, l. 600; ES III, no. 3, l. 37; HS, no. 67, ll. 162.202.240
The sinners are the fuel of the hellfire	66:6; 3:10; 2:24 (cf. also 85:4.5)	Syr.: ES III, no. 2, ll. 158.717.733
The eternity ( <i>ḥ-l-d = l-ʿālam</i> ) of the hellfire	multiple occurrences, e.g., in 98:6.8; 72:23; 64:10; 40:76; 39:72	NT: Matt. 25:46 (see El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 193, 195); Mark 9:43.48 Syr.: ES I, no. 5, ll. 259.289.532; ES I, no. 6, l. 48; ES III, no. 2, ll. 720–731
Paradise = “Eden”	98:8; 61:12; 40:8; 38:50; 35:33; 20:76; 19:61; 18:31; 16:31; 13:23; 9:72	Syr.: multiple occurrences in HP, e.g., 4:10; 5:5; 6:19; 7:8.10.20; 9:1.2.13 Note: For a wider selection of parallels see Künstlinger, “Namen”, 617–619.
The righteous are invited to enter paradise in peace	89:29–30; 50:32–34; 43:70; 39:73; 36:26; 16:32; 15:46; 7:49; cf. also 39:72 and 40:76, where the sinners are commanded to enter hell, and the peace greeting in 56:25–26.90, 14:23 etc.	NT: Matt. 25:34 (see El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , p. 195) Syr.: ES III, no. 2, ll. 530–533.556–557
Paradise as an “elevated garden” ( <i>ḡanna ʿāliya</i> ) on a mountain	88:10; 69:22; multiple occurrences of the phrase “gardens beneath which rivers flow”, e.g., in 98:8; 85:11; 66:8; 65:11; 64:9	Syr.: HP 1:4–5 (see Reynolds, <i>Biblical Subtext</i> , pp. 59–61), 2:10–11, 3:1, 4:8 Note: See Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 146.
The different levels (sg.	58:11; 56:7–10; 46:19;	Syr.: HP 2:10–11; ES III, no. 2, ll. 740–761

*Traditions*, p. 202), I prefer to follow Brady, “Book of Revelation”, p. 220 in linking the *hāwiya* mentioned in Q 101:9 with the “pool of fire” (*hê limné tou pyros*) of Rev. 19:20 and 20:15 (see also the reference to the “angel of the abyss” in Rev. 9:11) instead of the “great abyss” mentioned in Luke 16:26 (which *separates* paradise and hell rather than denoting hell itself). It is clearly Revelation, not Luke, which stands in the background of the “deep chasm” (*peḥtā ʿamiqa*) of fire into which the damned tumble according to ES II, no. 2, ll. 229–230.



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<i>daraġa</i> = <i>dargā</i> ) of paradise	20:75; 17:21; 12:76; 9:20; 8:4; 6:83; 4:95–96; 3:163; 2:253; cf. also, but only with respect to this world, 43:32 and 6:165	Note: See Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 146.
The fruits of paradise, their abundance and easy accessibility	77:42; 76:14; 69:23; 55:54; 56:20.32–33; 55:52.68; 52:22; 47:15; 44:55; 43:73; 38:51; 37:41–42; 36:57; 13:35	NT: Rev. 22:2 (cf. 19:9: paradise as a marriage banquet) Syr.: HP 5:15, 6:11–13.15, 7:3.16–18.21.26, 9:4–6, 10:2.5–7.10–13, 14:8 (cf. in particular HP 9:6 with Q 76:14, 69:23 and 55:54)
No sadness in paradise	35:34; 7:43	NT: Rev. 21:4
No idle talk / shouting in paradise	88:11; 78:35; 56:25; 19:62; cf. 52:23	Syr.: HP 7:22–23 (cf. also 11:2)
No dying in paradise	44:56; 37:58–59	Syr.: HP 7:22 Note: For the expression “to taste death” from Q 44:56 see Matt. 16:28 (cf. Rudolph, <i>Abhängigkeit</i> , p. 14 and El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 168–170).
The inhabitants of paradise are protected from heat and frost	77:41; 76:13.14; 56:30; 36:56; 13:35; 4:57	NT: Rev. 7:16 (see Rudolph, <i>Abhängigkeit</i> , p. 14; cf. Isa. 49:10 and Ps. 121:6, noted in Brady, “Book of Revelation”, pp. 220–221) Syr.: HP 9:5, 11:2 (cf. in particular with Q 76:13)
The springs of paradise	88:12; 83:27–28; 76:5–6.17–18; 55:50.66; 47:15; 13:35	NT: Rev. 7:17 Syr.: HP 1:17, 2:8, 10:6, 11:11–12 Note: See Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , pp. 146–147.
Paradise and hell are separated by a barrier / an abyss	7:46 (cf. 57:13)	Luke 16:26 (see Rudolph, <i>Abhängigkeit</i> , p. 15; Andrae, <i>Ursprung</i> , p. 77; El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , p. 202) Syr.: HP 1:12–13.17
The inhabitants of paradise and the damned see and converse with each other; the blessed mock the damned	83:34; 74:40–48; 37:50–57	NT: Luke 16:19–31 (see Rudolph, <i>Abhängigkeit</i> , p. 15; El-Badawi, <i>Gospel Traditions</i> , pp. 200–201) Syr.: ES III, no. 3, ll. 167–184; ES III, no. 4, 227–228.263–264; HP 1:12–14.17, 7:29; HS, no. 32, ll. 77–78; HS, no. 67, ll. 187–188; HS, no. 193, ll. 161–162
The damned plead with the inhabitants of paradise for water	7:50	Note: For further echoes of Luke 16:24 see ES I, no. 7, ll. 31–32 and ES III, no. 3, ll. 41–42, and HS, no. 16, <i>passim</i> .

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